



Monergism

# The Names and Attributes of Christ

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**by Thomas Boston**

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# **THE BIRTH, GIFT, GOVERNMENT, AND GLORIOUS**

## **NAMES OF JESUS CHRIST, AS SAVIOUR OF SINNERS.**

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Evrlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. ISAIAH 9:6

THESE words bear a joyful intimation or declaration of a great privilege afforded to the children of men; in which the prophet himself shares as one of them, and so is the more feelingly touched with it; and therefore God has employed men to preach Christ to men, that the glad tidings may be brought by such as have equal need of and interest in them with themselves. "For unto us a child is born," &c.

The words are thus plainly connected with the preceding; for the discovery of which we must look back to ver. 2: where the prophet speaks of the light of the gospel breaking up in a dark world by Jesus Christ, as is clear from Matth. 4:12–16. See the case of sinners before Christ appears to them; they are all in darkness, in a blind, uncomfortable, and dangerous condition. (1.) Some are walking in that darkness, they are bestirring themselves for happiness, and to mend their condition, but they see not their way. Such were the Jews, and all formalists. (2.) Some sitting in that darkness, thickest darkness, pining away in their sin, and not aiming to mend their condition, but like condemned malefactors in a dungeon. Such were the Gentiles, and all profane, carnal persons, having no view but to this world's happiness.

Christ coming unto them, their darkness is dispelled. They that walk, see light which they so much wanted; it breaks up to them in their way. Those that sit, it shines in on them, makes its way into their dungeon. Both see where they are, and how to get their condition mended, how hopeless soever it was.

The effect of this light or saving illumination by means of the gospel; ver. 3, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy; they joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." (1.) The increase of the church, by the enlightened sinner's coming to Christ; as where a light is struck up in darkness, all gather about it. (2.) Great joy; some indeed, viz. the unbelieving party among the Jews, had no more joy in it, than owls have in the sun's shining; they grudged it, and fretted at it. And so do the enemies of Christ's kingdom at the success of his gospel. But to the spiritual nation of believers the joy is great on that occasion. Christ's new friends on their coming in, and his old friends whom they join, rejoice together; the former on the happy change of their condition, the latter on the increase of the family.

This joy for the greatness of it is compared, (1.) To the joy of harvest, when people get the corn happily cut down and gathered in. (2.) To the joy of a victorious army, when the battle is over, and they are dividing the spoil of their enemies. A gospel harvest, wherein sinners are reaped and gathered in to Christ, a gospel victory over the devil, and dividing the spoils, are most joyful times; as much more joyful than these, as souls are more precious than sheaves of corn, or the precious things of the world.

The cause of this joy, is a great deliverance or salvation brought about to the nation, ver. 4, "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." They were under a burdensome yoke; that is, the yoke of the law as a covenant of works, binding them to obedience under pain of the curse; now that is broken, and they rejoice on that account. They were obliged to carry heavy burdens on their

shoulders, by a staff over their shoulder, as the Levites carried the ark; that is, they were under the power and dominion of sin, as real drudges to it, in the several lusts thereof, as those who, to the worst of masters, never want the burden-bearing staff off their shoulder; now that is broken, and they joy. They were under a rigid exactor, a tyrant swaying a sceptre over them; that is, they were under the power of the devil; now his sceptre is broken, he has lost his power over them; and they joy.

How quickly was it done? (Heb. Thou hast made to knap asunder.) The yoke, staff, sceptre, were broken with a touch, suddenly and freely; and that by means very unlikely in the eye of sense, as in the day of Midian, when Gideon with his three hundred men, holding lamps in pitchers in their hands, and breaking the pitchers, and blowing with trumpets, but fighting none, routed Midian quite, Judg. 7. So Christ overcame the devil, by his dying on the cross, and the preaching of the gospel mostly by a few fishermen.

The perfection of it shall be such, that the yoke, staff, and sceptre, shall become a burning and fuel of fire, ver. 5, it shall be absolute; or rather the knapping asunder shall become a burning.

Now in the text, the prophet leads us to the author of all these great events; and answers the question, How can these things be done, and done in favour of us poor sinners? "For unto us a child is born," &c. says he. The events are indeed great beyond expression, but so is the author of them. There is a great deliverer working this great deliverance, viz. the Messias, Jesus Christ, of whom only it can be understood, and the ancient Jews did understand it. And herein we have,

1st, His relation to us. Wherein he is held forth, (1.) As "a child born to us," viz., as Samson was to Israel, born to be our deliverer; Judg. 13:5, brought into the world on that very occasion. (2.) As a son given to us, given of the Father as a gift suitable to our necessity. (3.) As

one upon whom the management of the ruined affairs of lost sinners is devolved, in order to retrieve them.

2dly, The incomparable excellency of this our relative. He is a Child, a Son, a Governor, quite extraordinary. Hear his name shewing his nature and perfections. We cannot comprehend his glorious excellencies; he is "Wonderful;" we may see and wonder at them, but can never fully reach them. For wisdom, he is the "Counsellor," with whom the Father took counsel, and whom he has appointed the Counsellor of poor sinners in their most perplexed cases. For power, he is "The Mighty God," to whom nothing is too hard to do. For continuance, he is "The Everlasting Father," abiding for ever and ever; so that through the whole of time, and through eternity, his wisdom and power shall be forthcoming. And then for meekness, and accessibleness to poor rebel sinners, though he be a "Prince," he is "The Prince of Peace;" speaking, working, granting peace, yea, he died for peace. A wonderful one!

Thus much for a general view of the words; to be in our progress more particularly explained.

The expression may be observed to be full of holy exultation. The prophet expresseth himself in a triumphant manner on this subject. In his days Christ was not come; but he saw him in the promise, by faith; and he speaks of him with as great certainty as if he had been come. He saw the need the world had of him; he felt the need he himself had of him; he believed him to be given to lost sinners for a Saviour, a Saviour in whose hand no one's case could miscarry; and that he was given to himself among others; therefore he cries out as in a rapture, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," &c. Q. d. "O my lost brethren, sons of Adam, to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," &c. Hence observe this

**DOCTRINE.** Felt concern in the glad tidings of the gospel, fills one with warm affection towards them. It is that same way in other things; where one's own dear interest is concerned, he will be much

concerned about that thing; as in the case of partners in trade, where there is a good market.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. Wherein this felt concern lies.

II. What is the warm affection which that felt concern fills with.

III. Lastly, Apply.

I. First, Wherein does this felt concern lie? It lies in these two:—

1. Felt need of the benefit of the gospel; Prov. 27:7,— "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." When an indemnity is proclaimed, the man that is not liable to the lash of the law, has no great moving of heart about it; but it makes the condemned man's heart leap within him for joy; Matth. 9:12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." While men are not sensible of their sin and danger, the gospel will be tasteless and unsavoury to them; but no sooner are the sinner's eyes opened, but it will be sweeter than the indemnity proclaimed to rebels can be.

2. Felt liberty of access to the benefit of it, with others, "To us," says the prophet. While a man sensible of his need of an indemnity, yet finds himself excepted in it; that it is for others, but not for him; this strikes a damp in him, he cannot rejoice in it. And unbelief prevailing so far as to say, "There is no hope," will suck the sap out of the gospel-tidings to you.

II. What is the warm affection that felt concern fills with? It is,

1. A warm affection of joy in it. They rejoice in that it is so, that "to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," even though that they have not as yet a special saving interest in him; Matth. 13:44, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that



he hath, and buyeth that field." The sick will joy in the tidings of a physician able and willing to cure them, even before they are actually cured; and sensible sinners believing they may have access to Christ, will joy in that.

2. A warm affection of desire, actually to partake of the benefit. The sinner's felt need tells him he must go to Christ, as felt liberty of access tells him that he may go. And both inflame his desire.

USE 1. The reason why the gospel is so very tasteless to most of the hearers of it, is, they do not feel their own concern in it. They believe not the doctrine of the law, nor the doctrine of the gospel neither, with application to themselves. They are either under the plague of stupidity and insensibleness of their need, or else under the plague of unbelief and hopeless. The news of a good or ill market affects them, for they see their concern in either; but they are not affected by either the threatenings of the law, or the joyful tidings of salvation in the gospel.

2. Labour to see your interest in the gospel, if ever you would be brought to relish it, and entertain it. You need this Saviour, without him ye are undone; ye may have this Saviour; if ye miss him, it is your own fault. Your great interest for eternity lies in this gospel, however ye entertain it.

## **CHRIST PRESENTED TO MANKIND-SINNERS**

Unto us a Child is born. - ISAIAH 9:6

THIS is the first part of the glad tidings so much affecting the prophet. The world waited long for Christ's coming into it; and here the prophet gives the news, that long-looked for is come at last. The

"Child is born." The word rendered child, is a name of the sex, "a man-child," and is just a lad, a lad-child; such was our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a name common to the young of the male sex, competent to them whenever they are born, and continuing with them during their younger years, till they be grown men. The word rendered born, doth signify more, even to be shewed or presented born. It is a custom so natural, that it has ever been in the world, that when a child is born and dressed, it is presented or shewed to its relations, for their comfort. So Machir's children were presented to Joseph their great grandfather, and on that occasion given him on his knees; Gen. 50:23; and Ruth's son to Naomi; Ruth 4:17. So says the prophet, This wonderful child is presented, viz. to his relations. And who are these? He has relations in heaven; the Father is his Father, the Holy Ghost his Spirit, the angels his servants; but it is not these who are here meant. It is to us, the sons and daughters of Adam; we are his poor relations; and to us as his poor relations on earth, sons of Adam's family, whereof he is the top-branch, this Child is presented born, for our comfort in our low state.

DOCTRINE. Our Lord Jesus Christ is upon his birth presented unto us mankind-sinners, as his relations.

In speaking to this presenting of Christ as a born Child, I will shew,

I. What is presupposed in it.

II. To whom he is presented.

III. How he is presented.

IV. The import of this being presented to us.

V. Wherefore he is presented to us on his birth.

VI. Lastly, Apply the doctrine.

I. I shall show what is presupposed in it. It presupposeth,

1. The birth of Christ was expected and looked for. The church, his mother, Cant. 3:11, had an early promise of it; Gen. 3:15. And it was in virtue of that promise he was conceived and born; all mankind besides, by another word, viz., Gen. 1:28, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Though Mary his mother in a proper sense, was no longer than ordinary big with him; yet the church, his mother in a figure, was big with him from that time; Gen. 3:15, for about four thousand years. Many a time the delivery was looked for; and she was in hazard of thinking it a false conception, it was so long a coming forward. Kings and prophets looked and longed for the day; Luke 10:24, "I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." The whole church of the Old Testament also longed for Christ's day; Cant. 8:14, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices.

2. Christ is now born. The happy hour of the long-looked for birth is come, and the Child is come into the world. Angels proclaim it; Luke 2:10, 11, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The fathers, kings, and prophets were in their graves, who died in the faith he would be born; and now it is come to pass. He was really born; a little Child, though the Mighty God; an Infant, not one day old, though the Everlasting Father. Wonderful birth! such as the world never saw before, nor ever shall see again.

3. Some have been employed to present this Child to the friends and relations; and they are still about the work. O honourable employment! more honourable than the office of presenting a newborn prince of the earth to a king, his father. Joseph and Mary had the office of presenting him to the Lord; Luke 2:22. But who has the honour of presenting him to us? Why,

(1.) The holy Spirit has the office of presenting him internally to us; 1 Cor. 2:2, 4, "For I determined (says Paul) not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power." And by him his Father presents him to us; Matth. 16:16, 17, "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Thus sinners have presented to them in his heavenly glory, so as they get a broad sight of him, such as is to be had on earth, by faith; John 1:14, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

(2.) Ministers of the gospel have the office of presenting him to us externally, in the swaddling-clothes of word and sacraments. They are employed to present believing sinners to Christ, 2 Cor. 11:2, "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ;" and to present Christ to sinners, to be believed on. They come with old Simeon, with the holy child Jesus in their arms in gospel-ordinances, Rom. 10:6, 7, 8, and say with John Baptist; John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

4. Lastly, This child is actually presented to us on his birth. Few, if any, were witnesses to his birth, it was so very mean and low in its circumstances; but that there might be no doubt of his being born, he has been, and still is presented to multitudes, Gal. 3:1.

## II. To whom is Christ presented?

1. Negatively, He is not presented to the fallen angels; he was not born for them, they are none of his relations, Heb. 2:16, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Their house was originally more honourable than the

house of Adam; but Christ has put an honour on the house of Adam, above the house of angels. The holy angels are his servants, the evil angels his executioners; but holy men are his brethren.

2. Positively, He is presented to mankind sinners, those of the house of his father Adam. To them is the voice directed, John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. "To us a child is born," Luke 2:10, 11. He was first presented to the Jews, shewed to Israel, John 1:31; but then to all the world indifferently, of whatsoever nation, Mark 16:15. Hence, from the uttermost parts of the earth, songs are heard, upon occasion of shewing him born to them, his glory appearing unparalleled. Particularly,

(1.) He is presented to the visible church, even to all and every one of them. There are indeed many in the world to whom he is not presented; they have neither his voice or fame, nor seen his shape represented in the word; but wheresoever the gospel comes, there Christ is presented to every person as born to them; Acts 13:26, "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." He is now bodily in heaven indeed; yet really, though spiritually in the word and sacraments, presented to sinners, and seen by faith; though the most part will not behold him.

(2.) He is presented effectually to all the elect. Christ is revealed in them, Gal. 1:15, 16. Hence they believe on him, and so it is with all them, however others entertain him; Acts 13:48, "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." They are all as Paul was, in a sense, chosen to see the just one; and their seeing him with a spiritual eye, makes them willing to part with all, and purchase the field and treasure, and the one pearl.

USE. Since Christ is presented to us as a child born, then see well how you entertain the honour done you, in the Prince of Peace being upon his birth presented to you. Some at this season pretend to honour his birth, by observing a day they count the day of it.\* But

where is the divine appointment of that day? is it not like Jeroboam's feast? 1 Kings 12:33, "So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense." And can men soberly think, that their feasting, eating, and drinking, as usual on that day, does indeed honour Christ? But,

1. Embrace him, with old Simeon, in the arms of faith. Knit with him, open your heart to him.

2. Kiss the Son, receiving him as your Lord, and King, and God.

III. How is Christ presented? He is presented,

1. In the preaching of the gospel, Gal. 3:1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" To whomsoever the gospel comes, Christ is presented to them, as being in the word of the gospel to be discerned by faith; Rom. 10:6–8, "But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or Who shall descend into the deep, (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;) but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach." In the word the bridegroom's picture is drawn, in his birth, life, death, &c.; in his willingness and ability to save, &c. It is the looking-glass held before their eyes, in which they may see him; 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

2. In the administration of the sacraments. As in the word he is presented to the ears, in the sacraments he is presented to the eyes. In them there is a lively representation of Christ bleeding and dying on the cross for sinners; "This is my body," &c. Though he is not

corporeally present in the sacraments, yet he is really and spiritually so, to the faith of believers, which realizeth invisible things; Heb. 11:1, "Faith is—the evidence of things not seen." And glorious views are to be had of him there; Luke 24:35, "And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of bread."

3. In the internal work of saving illumination. The Spirit of the Lord not only gives light, but sight, to the elect; not only opens the scriptures to them, but opens their eyes, and reveals Christ in them; Gal. 1:15, 16. This is that demonstration of the Spirit Paul speaks of, which is the immediate antecedent of faith; 1 Cor. 2:4, 5, forecited; without which no man will believe. This is the finding of the treasure, the one pearl, Matth. 13:44, 46.

IV. What is the import of his being presented to us? It bears,

1. Our special concern in his birth. The birth of Christ concerns us nearly; why else is he presented to us? The holy angels had a concern in it, as servants of the family, to carry the tidings of it; the fallen angels found themselves concerned in it, as a birth that would be the ruin of their interest in the world; but we have a peculiar interest in it, as the birth of a Saviour to us; Luke 2:11; the bringing in of a better hope.

2. Our relation to him. He is presented to us as his relatives. Sinners of mankind have a common relation to Christ; a relation to him in respect of his nature he assumed, the human nature; Eph. 5:30, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" a relation to him in respect of his office; he is born the Saviour of the world, and therefore our Saviour; John 4:42, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." 1 John 4:14, "The Father sent the Son, the Saviour of the world." He was born to save sinners, to seek that which was lost, &c.; therefore our Saviour, our seeker.

3. An owning of our relation to him. The presenting of him to us upon his birth, is an open testimony given of our being related to him. Though we are poor and naughty relatives, he is not ashamed to own us, nor does our unworthiness make him disown us; Heb. 2:11, —"He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He is born for our help, to raise up again Adam's broken family; and since he comes to help us, and set us up again, the more poor, and needy, and worthless we are, the more honour redounds to his name at length.

4. Lastly, The comfortableness of his birth to us. Children are presented on their birth to their relations, for their comfort; and so is Christ to sinners of mankind. Never was there such a comfortable birth in the world as this. The whole world of mankind-sinners was born in sin, never so much as one of them all missed the contagion; and so are born children of wrath. By this means the whole world was sitting in a most miserable and deplorable case when Christ, as a public person, was born with a sinless, holy human nature.

#### V. Wherefore is Christ presented to us on his birth?

1. That we may see the faithfulness of God in the fulfilling of his promise. The promise of Christ was an ancient promise, the accomplishment whereof was long delayed; but now we see it is performed in its time; and thence may conclude, that all the rest of the promises depending thereon shall be fulfilled in their season.

2. That we may rejoice in him. The very birth of his forerunner was to be a joy to many, Luke 1:14; how much more his own? The angels sang for joy at the birth of Christ, Luke 2:13, 14. And he is presented to us, that we may join them in their song; for it is matter of great joy; Luke 2:10, 11. And whoever see their danger by sin, will rejoice on Christ's being presented to them, as a condemned man on the sight of the Prince by whom he is to obtain a pardon.

3. That we may look on him, see his glory, and be taken with him, John 1:14. For this cause sinners are often invited to look unto him,



Isa. 65:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Cant. 3:11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." The looking on the forbidden fruit has so vitiated the eyes of mankind, that the things of the world appear as in a magnifying glass; and there is no getting a right view of them, till we behold Jesus in his glory.

4. Lastly, That we may acknowledge him in the character in which he appears, as the Saviour of the world, and our Saviour. For he is presented as a young prince, to be acknowledged heir to the crown. The Father has made choice of him to be the Saviour of the world by office, and given him to us for our Saviour, and presents him accordingly for our acknowledgement.

USE. I exhort you then to believe, that Christ is on his birth presented to you as his relations. And if ye enquire what is your duty on that occasion? I answer,

1. Embrace him cordially; Psalm 24:7, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Old Simeon, when he was presented in the temple, took him in his arms with full satisfaction of soul; Luke 2:28, 29. He is now in heaven as to his bodily presence; but he is presented to you in the gospel, embrace him by faith, with the heart believing on him for all his salvation, renouncing all other saviours for him, betaking yourselves to him for all, for a rest to your consciences and your hearts.

2. Kiss him, Psalm 2:12, with a kiss of love; giving him your hearts, "My son, give me thine heart;" with a kiss of honour, honouring him in your hearts, lips, and lives; and with a kiss of subjection, receiving him as your Lord, King, Head, and Husband.

3. Bless him; his name; Psalm 96:2, "Bless his name." He is God blessed for ever. But we are to bless him, as we bless God, declaratively, proclaiming him blessed; Psalm 72:17; praying from the heart that his kingdom may come; Psalm 72:15.

4. Worship him. So did the wise men of the east; Matth. 2:11. He is the everlasting God, therefore to be adored; Psalm 45:11. "He is thy Lord, and "worship thou him;" thy Husband, thy King, thy God. Worship him with internal worship, consecrating your whole souls to him; and worship him with external worship.

5. Lastly, Present unto him gifts. So did the wise men, Matth. 2:11. Make a gift of your hearts to him; Prov. 23:26; of yourselves wholly, 2 Cor. 8:5; to glorify him in your souls, and bodies, your substance, your all.

## **CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, GIFTED TO SINNERS**

Unto us a Son is given. ISAIAH 9:6

THIS is a second part of the glad tidings which did so much affect the prophet. And therein Christ is proposed, (1.) As a Son. This is not to denote the sex; that was done already in the former part. But it denotes a Son by way of eminency, "fairer than the sons of men." Our Lord Jesus was the Son of God from eternity, he became the Son of Mary in time; Luke 2:7. According to his human nature, he was the Son of Mary; but he is not in respect of that nature called the Son of God, though even in that respect he was a Son quite extraordinary. For as he was man, he was "without Father;" Heb. 7:3; and as he is the Son of God, he was "begotten of the Father;" Psalm 2:7, and "the only begotten of the Father;" John 1:18. But as he was man, he was not begotten at all; and he has "brethren;" Heb. 2:11. Therefore he is

not called "the Son of God" in respect of his human nature. Now, in the preceding clause, he is proposed as a Son in respect of his human nature, being called a lad-child born; therefore here he is called a Son, as the Son of God in respect of his divine nature. And thus he is held forth to us here as God-man, with two distinct natures. (2.) As a "Son given to us." The Father has made a free gift to us poor sinners, of his own Son, for the remedy of our misery. As our misery was great, so the gift is fully proportioned to it, being the greatest that Heaven had to afford, or the world could receive.

DOCTRINE, The Son of God in man's nature, is given to us poor sinners for remedy of our misery.

Here let us consider,

I. The gift itself.

II. The Giver.

III. The party to whom he is given.

IV. Lastly, Apply the doctrine.

I. First, Let us consider The gift itself. Many precious gifts have come from heaven to earth, yea, all we have is Heaven's gift; James 1:17, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." But this is the great gift. On this head, let us consider,

1st, What this gift is.

2dly, Wherein it appears and comes to us.

3dly, What a gift it is.

First, Let us consider What this gift is. It is,

1. A person. Persons are more excellent than things, in their several kinds. All a man hath he will give for his life; a soul is more precious than a world. So this gift is more precious than the whole world. Whatever thou wantest, if thou have Christ, thou art better than to be emperor of the world; if thou hast him not, thou hast nothing that can compensate that want.

2. A divine person. This gift of God is God; John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." O what a gift must God himself be! it is therefore an "unspeakable gift;" 2 Cor. 9:15. The possessor of this gift must needs be blessed; Psalm 144:15, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Here is a mystery, a divine person gifted to poor sinful persons. God has given angels to be ministering spirits to his people; Heb. 1:14; but we will cease to wonder at that, when this comes in view.

3. The second person, the Lord Jesus Christ; John 4:10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The third person, the Holy Spirit, is also given to poor sinners; Luke 11:13,— "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" But here it is the Son that is given, and the gift of the Spirit follows thereupon. Man, by creation the son of God, fell out of God's family; and the beloved Son of the Father is given to bring him in again. He was pitched upon; for he only could be both sent, and send the Spirit, according to the manner of working of the adorable Trinity.

Secondly, Let us consider, Wherein this gift appears and comes to us. Those who send gifts, precious gifts, to others, wrap them up in something that is less precious. And a treasure sent in earthen vessels, is the method of conveyance of the best gifts from heaven to earth. And the Son of God being the gift, was sent veiled and wrapped up in our nature; (Tim. 3:16.) to us. The Son becomes a lad-

child, born of a woman. This veil laid over the gift sent to poor sinners, was,

1. Less precious than the gift itself. The human nature of Christ was a created thing, his divine nature uncreated. What disproportion is between the clay and potter, the creature and the Creator; that was between the veil and the gift wrapped up in it. Hence it was like a most precious pearl, sent in an earthen pitcher; which uses not to contain such a precious thing. Therefore the world received him not, because they perceived him not, seeing only the veil, a few only excepted; Mark 4:11, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Nay, the gift was never clearly seen, till the pitcher it was in was broken in pieces, by his death; and the shells gathered up, by his resurrection, and new cast; and set up in the upper house, by his ascension.

2. Howbeit, it was a cleanly thing. Though men send their precious gifts in some coarse thing, yet it will always be cleanly; they will not send their gifts in a foul thing. The human nature of Christ, though infinitely below the dignity of his divine nature, yet was a holy thing; Luke 1:35, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." His soul was holy, and his body too, perfectly holy; without the least stain or spot; Heb. 7:26, "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners." This gift could not have remained in a rail, having the least spot of sin, more than flaming fire in a tainted cloth, which it would presently burn up. Now, this gift appeared and was sent to us in the veil of the human nature,

(1.) That it might be capable of the treatment it behoved to undergo for our relief. It behoved the Son of God to suffer; Luke 24:26, "For without shedding of blood, there could be no remission;" therefore he behoved to be incarnate, and to appear in our flesh. He put on our nature, as his suffering attire, as prison garments; and so the gift was, as it were, sent us in a winding-sheet; and the Son, the Lord of

life, came down, as it were, in a suit of dead-clothes of our flesh; because he was to die in it. Howbeit, this suit of our flesh is not now laid aside, but turned into a suit for the court, being no more mortal, but immortal, bright, and shining more gloriously than the sun; so that the gift now appears through it, and will for ever most illustriously. A pledge hereof was given in his transfiguration; Matth. 17:2.

(2.) That it might be suited to the weakness of the capacity of the receivers. As he who gifts a sword, sends it in a scabbard, and not naked, lest it should harm the receiver; so God giving his Son to sinners, gave him wrapped up in the vail of human flesh. The Son of God in his unvailed glory would have no more been an object for our eyes to have looked on, than the shining sun to the eyes of an owl. A few rays of his glory, breaking out from under the vail, made his enemies fall to the ground; what would have come of us then, if there had been no vail at all?

Thirdly, Let us consider, What a gift this is. The gift of the Son of God to poor sinners as a matchless gift, singular for,

1. The worth of it; Prov. 8:11, "Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." Many worthy gifts God has given; but this is "the gift of God" by way of eminency, as if he had never given another; John 4:10, "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c. Never did Heaven's bounty appear so much as in this gift; John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. If it were led in the balance with ten thousand worlds, they would be lighter than vanity in comparison of it; nay, balanced with the gift of created graces, and the created heavens, it would down weigh them; as the bridegroom's person is more worth than his jewels and palace.

2. The unsuitableness of it. Ransack the earth and seas, the whole vault of heaven; go through the upper house amongst all the shining angels; no person, no thing, shall be found so suitable for our case as

this gift which is given us; 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." Heb. 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The earth, seas, and air, afford for the back, belly, and purse; but there is nothing there to give life to a dead body, far less to a dead soul. But (1 John 5:12.) "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." The angels in heaven might have condoled our loss, but could not repair it like him; Ruth 4:6, "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance; redeem thou my right to thyself, for I cannot redeem it." Nay, they could not have shown how to do it; Rev. 5:3, 5. But there is in Christ what is suitable to all the cases of all sinners.

3. The seasonableness of it. Many a gift has been marred, by its coming out of season; but this gift was given most seasonably. No sooner was mankind broken and ruined, but as soon the upmaking gift was proclaimed, Gen. 3:15, in a promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Seasonably was the ram afforded for Isaac, while he lay bound on the altar; a type of the Son given to and for poor sinners, when justice had the knife at their throat.

4. The comprehensiveness of it. It is all in one; Rom. 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Whoever have Christ, have all in him, and are complete in him; Col. 2:9, 10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." All grace is in him, relative and real. God giving Christ to sinners, gives them remission of sin, and sanctification. All glory and happiness is in him; 1 John 5:11, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." All that is necessary for our bodies in this life is in him, for he is "heir of all things," and is Lord of the whole creation; Psalm 8:6, &c. Whatever we want is in him,

formally or virtually. He is meat, drink, and clothing, lodging for the soul directly. He is all this for the body indirectly, as money answereth all things.

5. Lastly, The unrestricted freeness of it. As it is absolutely free to some, so it is absolutely free to all; John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is freer than a gift? The joint-stock of the whole world could not have purchased this gift. It is quite below the honour of the Giver and gift, for any to pretend to come with money in their hand to grace's market; 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 all are alike free and welcome to it; Rev. 22:17, "And 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 the water of life freely."

USE 1. Beware of slighting this gift. It is a person, to take notice of the slight put upon it; a divine person, to make the slight highly criminal, and to avenge it; the second person, the Saviour, the Mediator, whose office is to make peace, and there is not another Mediator; Psalm 2:12, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." The slighting of this gift is the sin of this day.

2. Take heed ye miss not to perceive this gift. The Jews were ruined in their unbelief; for they could not see through the vail that the gift was wrapt up in. And so it is to this day. Most men see no farther into the mystery of Christ than the outward appearance it makes in the world, as administered in the word, sacraments, &c.; and they despise it. Look ye inward.

3. Admire the wisdom of God, and his infinite condescension, in the manner of the conveyance of this gift of the Son. Behold him in our



nature, that he might suffer, and guilty ones may approach him.

4. Lastly, See here how you may be made up and enriched for time and eternity. And prize and receive this gift singular for its worth, suitableness, seasonableness, comprehensiveness, and freeness as ye have heard at large. Why should we continue in such a poor condition, when such a gift is made to us, and nothing remains but to receive it?

II. Secondly, Let us consider the Giver. And,

1st, Who is the Giver? The Giver is God; John 4:10, "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c.; and could be no other, since the gift is a divine person. And it is particularly God the Father; John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c.; and could be no other person of the Godhead, since the gift is the Son. Here is the spring and original source of our salvation. The Father saw mankind was ruined, no help for them in the creation; and rather than they should perish without remedy, he makes a gift of his Son to them, for remedy of their misery. And to exalt the Giver's free love and grace herein, observe from the word three things there marked about it.

1. It was his own Son he gave; Rom. 8:32, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," &c. All the sons in the world were at his disposal; but as none of them could redeem his brother, so none of them were made the gift. The angels were his sons improperly; to have parted with one of them, would have been much: but they could not answer the end; so he gave his proper Son, the express image of his person.

2. It was "his beloved Son" that he gave; Luke 20:13, "I will send my beloved Son," &c. He loved upright Adam as his son; he loved the holy angels as his sons; but he had one, the express image of his person, and brightness of his glory; who was "the beloved Son," whom he loved more than them all; and him he gave. Jacob had a

beloved Son, Benjamin; and he could not think to part with him, to venture him to Egypt; but God gave his beloved Son into the world, though to die there without peradventure.

3. It was "his only begotten Son" he gave; John 3:16. Jacob thought it a good reason for refusing to let Benjamin go down to Egypt with his brethren; Gen. 42:38. And every body knows it is hard to part with an only son; Zech. 12:10. So that was Abraham's trial; Gen. 22:2, "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of;" a type of the Father's giving his only Son for sinners.

2dly, What has he given sinners, gifting his Son to them? The tongues of men and angels cannot fully express this. I shall give a general view of it in three things. Giving his Son,

1. He has given them himself. For the "Father is in him," John 14:11; and "they are one," John 10:30. He is "the true God," 1 John 5:20. "The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him," Col. 2:9. So, if you will receive his Son, ye are possessed of the Father for your Father, &c. All the persons of the Godhead are yours, all the perfections of God, all his works, &c. O wonderful gift of the Father!

2. He has given them eternal life. The Son of God is the life; John 14:6; "eternal life," 1 John 5:20. Sinners are naturally in a state of death, yea, they are liable to dying eternally; but behold, in the gift of the Son, the Father has given them eternal life 1 John 5:11. O enriching gift! Life to the dead is the greatest gift that can be bestowed on them. Here is life, legal life, moral life, a life of comfort; and all eternal.

3. He has given them all things; Rom. 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Therefore says the apostle of those who have received Christ, 1 Cor. 3:21, "All things are yours." The Son of

God is the "heir of all things;" Heb. 1:2. Receiving him, we become "joint-heirs with him," Rom. 8:17; and so "inherit all things," Rev. 21:7.

USE 1. Let us admire the love of the Father to poor sinners of Adam's race. The love of the Father is proposed as an object of admiration, in making sinners his sons; 1 John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" But here is a step higher, his giving to them his Son; John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. But, ah, how is it lost on a blind ungrateful world, that take no notice of it! They will be apt to conclude God's special love to them, from his laying to their hands plenty of common favours; but the love of the Father, in giving them his Son, comes not in mind.

2. Dreadful must the hazard of slighting this gift be, as the crime in it is atrocious. As ye would not run in to the deepest of guilt, and expose yourselves to God's fiercest wrath, slight not the gift of his Son made you. God has given us his own Son, his beloved Son, his only begotten Son, and in him, himself, &c. The greater the gift, the greater the love in making it, the greater is the sin, and the greater will be the wrath, for the slighting of it; John 3:19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

III. The third thing is, The party to whom he is given. Here let us consider,

1st, To whom he is given.

2dly, In what respects he is given.

3dly, In what character he is given.

First, To whom is he given? He that believes the Son of God to be given to sinners, and lays the matter to heart, will be ready to say, O

but whom is he given to? I fear he is not given to me; and what am I the better then? But

Christ is given to mankind-sinners indefinitely. It is not to the elect only, but to sinners indefinitely, elect or not elect; sinners of the race of Adam without exception, whatever they have been, whatever they are; whatever qualifications they have, whatever they want. The Father, in making of this gift to us, had no eye to any qualification in us, but our misery and extreme need; and, in the view of that, he made this gift for their remedy.

1. This gift and grant is conceived in the most ample terms, without any restriction to any particular set of men; John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You see here it goes as wide as the world, the world of men, to exclude fallen angels, but none of the family of fallen Adam. Therefore, says the prophet, "To us a Son is given." They will get no approbation of Christ nor his Father, who curtail and hem in this grant, as they consult not his nor his Father's honour therein.

2. Christ is given to mankind-sinners, as the manna was given to the Israelites. Now the manna was given to the Israelites indefinitely; to them who loathed it as well as to them who loved it; John 6:31–33, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And therefore Christ is given to sinners indefinitely, without exception of any; therefore says Christ to the unbelieving Jews, verse 32, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

3. There is made to mankind-sinners indefinitely a gift of the benefits of his purchase, which yet are never given but in and with himself; Rom. 8:32, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

There is a gift of righteousness made to them, Rom. 5:17, which is revealed to faith, chap. 1:17, i. e., to be believed on and trusted to. Eternal life is given them, 1 John 5:11; and a promise of entering into his rest is left them, Heb. 6:1.

4. Lastly, If Christ were not given to mankind-sinners indefinitely, but there were some in the world who have no part in the gift of Christ, then the ministers of the gospel might not offer him to all, nor might all receive him. Not the first; for no man has power to offer to any the Father's gift, to whom it is not given of the Father; more than a servant has power to offer his master's gift to one to whom his master has not made the gift. Not the second, for none can lawfully take what God does not give him; John 3:27, "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." It would be presumption in thee to take a bit of bread, or a drink of water, if God gave it not thee; much more it would be presumption in thee to take his Son, if he gave him not to thee. But it is no presumption in any sinner of mankind to take Christ; 1 John 3:23, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Mark 16:15, 16, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," &c.

Secondly, In what respects is Christ given to them? "To us the Son is given."

1. In respect of allowance to take him. Ye all have the Father's allowance to take Christ, to possess yourselves of him, without fear of vicious intromitting with him. The Father's allowance was proclaimed by a voice from heaven; Matth. 17:5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him;" and by his messengers; Matth. 22:9, "Go ye therefore into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." If you were desiring something of a neighbour that you needed, and he should use no other solemnity in giving it you, but only say, Well, I allow you, take it; would ye question the gift of it, or fear to take it? Now, the Father

gives you the same allowance, Well, I make an offer of my Son to you, and allow you to take him; take him then as I offer him.

2. In respect of legal destination. That is more than a simple allowance. There is an act passed in the court of heaven, destinating and appointing a crucified Christ for the world of mankind-sinners, as a Saviour; 1 John 4:14, "And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world." As the brazen serpent was the ordinance of God for cure to the stung Israelites, the cities of refuge for manslayers among them; so is Christ the ordinance of God for mankind-sinners, John 3:14–16. If ye had an act of parliament appointing a thing for you, ye would not question its being given you; here ye have more,

3. In respect of real offer. The word in the book of God offers him to all without exception, and the preachers of the gospel personally make, or may make the offer, wheresoever they come; Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Hear God's own offer; Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;" the ministerial offer; Matth. 22:4, "And he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my failings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." It is so real, that they will be condemned for refusing it to whom it is intimated. So all are not only allowed and have the gift legally destinate for them; but it is offered to them; God says, Take, and welcome.

4. In respect of the freeness of the offer. There are some gifts so hampered and clogged with conditions in the offer of them, that they are not free gifts, and are in effect put out of the reach of the party-receiver. But this gift is absolutely free; no qualification, no condition, is required of us, that we may have it, but to receive it; Rev. 22:17, "And 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 the water of life freely." No money, no price, is here demanded, Isa. 55:1. More than all that,

5, Lastly, In respect of exhibition. God not only allows, has destinate, and offers freely, this gift to you; but it is exhibited to you, presented and held forth as with the hand, God saying, Ho, sinner, here is my Son, take him. This is done in the word of the gospel to all. The gospel not only offers salvation, which it might do, though the salvation were far off; but it brings salvation along with it to the lost sinner, Tit. 2:11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." And God doth not stay the exhibiting of his Son to sinners, till they say they will take him, as we do sometimes the bringing out of meat to our friends; but as his voice reacheth their ears, his hand holds him forth, saying, Here he is for you, take him. Ye must take him, as we do sometimes with our meat, holding it out in our hand to our friend, and telling him and pressing him to eat.

Thirdly, In what character is Christ given to sinners? He is given of the Father to sinners of mankind in the character of a Saviour. He is given to the elect, and was from eternity, in the character of a surety, undertaking the payment of their debt for them. But he is given to the world indefinitely in the character of a Saviour; John 4:42, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." 1 John 4:14, "The Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world." The world of mankind is a company sick unto death, the earth is the hospital where the sick and wounded lie, Christ is the physician given them by his Father's bounty. It is his office to be physician of the hospital, to cure the sick, and that without any fees from them. Every sick man and woman in the hospital may come to him, and employ him as their own physician. Such a gift in the case of men's bodies would be highly esteemed; but this is a thousand times greater, as the soul is of more worth than the body.

Under this, much is comprehended; but I shall comprehend the same in a threefold character. He is given to mankind-sinners,

1. In the character of a light set up; John 8:12, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He is given to sinners in a suitableness to their case. It is a dark world; by Adam's fall the sun set on mankind; but Christ is arisen the Sun of Righteousness, to whose light sinners are as free as to the light of the sun and moon, by the gift thereof made; Gen. 1:17, "And God set them in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth." And nothing is to hinder their access to it, but their love of 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 were evil."

2. In the character of an atoning sacrifice, slain and offered up. He died in the room and stead of the elect only; but being offered for them, and being of sufficiency for the needs of all, he is made the ordinance of God for taking away the sin of the world of mankind, and as such is gifted to them of the father; even as the brazen serpent to the stung Israelites, and the cities of refuge to the manslayers, to look to and be healed, to flee to and be safe; John 3:14, 15. This is what John asserts in very express terms; 1 John 2:2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Thus the Baptist pointed him out; John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He taketh away the sin of the world, not eventually, but officially. Compare chap. 6:33, "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And thus Christ himself holds out himself as a slain sacrifice, set down for all to eat of and feast on; Matth. 22:4, according to the prophecy; 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."

3. In the character of a crowned king, mighty to destroy the kingdom of Satan, to rescue mankind-sinners his captives and prisoners; 1 John 3:8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 Cor. 1:30, "But of him are ye



in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—redemption." Therefore they are called to receive him into their hearts in this character; Psalm 24:7, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." The case of the conquered world, conquered by the king of the bottomless pit, was so hopeless, that none was able to head them for recovery among angels or men; God therefore anointed and gave them his own Son for a King-deliverer; Psalm 2:6, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Isa. 55:4, "Behold, I have given him—for a leader and commander to the people."

USE 1. Believe it, then, that to us poor sinners the Son of God in man's nature is given; that Christ is given to you in particular; that the Father has made a free gift and grant of his Son Jesus Christ to you, and every one of you.

If ye believe it not, ye make God a liar, disbelieving his gospel; 1 John 5:10, 11, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, That God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." And unless ye believe it, ye will never see Christ; for who can receive from God his Son, when he does not believe he has given him? John 3:27, "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." As there can be no taking from God without a prior giving, so there can be no receiving of Christ by faith without a prior belief that he is given. Why will ye not believe it?

1. Is the gift too much to be granted? Consider the giver, and it is not too much for an infinite God to give. Gifts are expected agreeable to the state of the giver; what is too much for an ordinary person, is not too much for a King. And can any thing be too much for an infinite God?

2. Is the party gifted too great to be made a gift of? Why, consider he is gifted by his own Father; and the gifting of him tends to his own

and his Father's honour, Heb. 12:2; and he is gifted as Mediator; in which respect he says, "My Father is greater than I;" John 14:28.

3. Is the party-receiver too mean and low to have such a great gift conferred on him? Why, truly, this is the language of unbelief. Ye could easily believe that Christ is given to the righteous and holy; and so could the Pharisees. But to believe that he is given to the ungodly and sinners, there lies the difficulty. But pray consider, this gift is not given according to our worth, but our need; and it is evident such need him most; Matth. 9:11–13, "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And Christ and his Father will have the greater glory in that case.

USE. 2. Receive the gift of Christ then at his Father's hand; take him, and possess yourselves of him by faith.

MOTIVE 1. Consider ye have an absolute need of this gift, Matth. 9:12, forecited. Ye perish without him; 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." What need a man starving for hunger has of bread, the naked of clothing; that and more ye have of Christ. That soul of thine that is lost, is crying to thee, O slight not a Saviour! that soul that is sick unto death, Slight not the Physician!

MOTIVE 2. There are some who have as much need as you, to whom yet he is not given, viz. the fallen angels; Heb. 2:16, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." They must perish for ever without remedy, for Christ was neither given for nor to them. Trample not on sovereign love, that has made the gift to you then, and not to them.

MOTIVE 3. Ye must either receive or refuse. The fallen angels, nay, the poor pagans, to whom the gift is not intimated, are neither receivers nor refusers. But in your case there is no midst, to whom he is both given and intimated. Therefore we say, as Heb. 12:25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." It will be heavy to be marked refusers of Christ.

MOTIVE 4. Consider the worth of the gift. Men and angels cannot toll it; Prov. 8:11, "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it." Look into its superlative worth, and resolve to have it, not to let it go. Never such a gift will or can come in your offer again. Therefore buy the truth, and sell it not; take it at any rate, part with it at no rate.

MOTIVE 5. Consider the hand it comes from. Respect to the giver often causeth embracing the gift that one would otherwise slight. The giver is the infinite God. If he should send you a piece of bread out of heaven, as he did the manna, or a cup of cold water; could you take it on you to refuse it? How then will ye adventure, when he sends and gives you his own, his beloved, his only begotten son?

MOTIVE 6. Consider that others before you have received it, and have been made up by it for ever. The saints in glory were once as poor as you; they received this gift; and now they are kings and priests, they inherit all things; and of their happiness there will be no end. So you see that ye may receive it, and that it will be upmaking to you.

MOTIVE 7. Consider that this gift will not always be for the taking as it is now; Heb. 3:15, "While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." If men will go on to refuse it, God will call in his gift, and set a bar between them and it for ever; Luke 14:24, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." So that the day will

come when, if ye would give a thousand worlds for another offer of the gift, ye will not get it; Heb. 12:17, "For ye know how that afterward when Esau would have inherited the blessing he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

MOTIVE 8. Your not receiving will be very heinously taken, as the deepest slight put upon both the giver and the gift. When you make an offer of a gift to a friend, how do ye take that of having it slighted? Think then, how will the father take your slighting the gift of his Son; his Son to be slighted in quality of a gift?

MOTIVE 9. Lastly, It will set you at greater distance from God than ever; and will kindle a keener flame of wrath against you, to burn for ever, than if the gift had never been offered you. The Lamb's wrath is dreadful above measure, 2 Thes. 1:7–9, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 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." Rev. 6:15–17, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

See then, salvation is brought to your door, Christ is exhibited as the gift of God his Father to you. Think how you will entertain it, and that ye must answer before his tribunal for what entertainment you give this offer.

# THE GOVERNMENT ON CHRIST'S SHOULDER

And the government shall be upon his shoulder. ISAIAH 9:6

AS a people whose affairs are ruined have great need of an active and expert governor; so the government of such a people is a great burden. Such a people are lost sinners; and with respect to them these words speak two things.

1. The harden and weight of heading of them, taking the government of them, and management of their affairs. The shoulder is the instrument of bearing burdens; Gen. 49:15,—“and bowed his shoulder to bear,” &c Sinners' affairs were so ruined, that it was hard to find one who had a shoulder fit for the government of them; but infinite wisdom finds out one who had shoulders sufficient for the weight.

2. Jesus Christ, the person on whom this burden was laid. The word signifies the principality. The principality in this case was laid upon this Child, this Son. It has been (Heb.) upon his shoulder. It was laid from eternity by his Father, and is, and shall be on him for ever. Princes are, in the style of the Holy Ghost, burden-bearers; Numb. 11:17,—“And they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.” On him was laid the heading of lost sinners, the retrieving of their desperate affairs, and the government and management of them to salvation.

This is a part of the glad tidings of the gospel, and refers to both the preceding clauses, the copulative being used instead of the relative. Q. d. “Unto us a Child is presented born, unto us a Son is given, on whose shoulder the government is laid.” So the sense is, He is born, presented, and given to us, a Prince and Governor; whom we ought therefore to submit to and receive as our native prince. In this Samson was a special type of him.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ is presented and given to us of the Father as our Prince and Governor, on whose shoulder the burden of the government of ruined sinners of mankind is laid for salvation.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. The occasion of setting up this Prince and Governor.

II. The import of this principality and government laid on Jesus Christ for the benefit of mankind-sinners.

III. The honour, power, and authority belonging to this principality and government of Jesus Christ.

IV. The burden of this principality and government laid on him.

V. Lastly, Improve the doctrine.

I. First, I shall shew the occasion of setting up this Prince and Governor. It was sinners' absolute need, from which free grace took occasion to set up Jesus Prince over them. Their need will appear in three things.

1. Their first prince was gone, to manage their affairs no more. Adam, their natural head, mismanaged the government quite, sunk their interest, rendered himself incapable of the government, betrayed his trust, and deserted them; their matters being brought to such a pass that it was quite beyond his reach to retrieve them.

2. They were left in confusion, in the hand of the enemy Satan. They were no more a people, as not being God's people; Rom. 10:19; broken from God, and broken among themselves. They were scattered like sheep without a shepherd, having none to head them for their good, or to care for them.

3. Their affairs were desperate. They were in a state of enmity with heaven, a state of slavery to hell. None in earth, nor among the

angels in heaven, could be able for the government of them. Allude to Isa. 3:6–8, "When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be then our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing; make me not a ruler of the people. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory." For their matters were beyond recovery by any creature, and no created shoulder fit for the burden.

For such a time as this came Jesus to the kingdom, when none other could or would take the burden of it. When the whole earth could not afford one, Heaven gave sinners a Prince, of shoulders sufficient for the burden.

II. Secondly, I shall shew the import of this principality and government laid on Jesus Christ for the benefit of mankind-sinners. It speaks,

1. His near relation to them; as between a king and his subjects by right, head and members. He is to make one body with them; he the Head, they the members; he the Prince, they the people. So that their interest becomes a joint interest; his honour and their advantage are closely linked together.

2. His eminency among them. Whatever persons come into the blessed society, he alone is the Prince there. The kings and monarchs of the earth are but subjects in Christ's kingdom, to receive, not to give laws. His eminency quite overtops all other.

3. His honourable office he has over them. He is the Governor, the only Lawgiver, to whom they all must submit. His Father put this honour on him, and sinners ought to acknowledge it, and honour him accordingly; John 5:22, 23, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; That all men should

honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

4. His sovereign power and authority over them. He is made a sovereign Prince over the children of men, therefore called the Prince of the kings of the earth; Rev. 1:5. He has an illimited power and jurisdiction rested in his person, in this and the other world; Matt, 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He has power of life and death; so he is called the Prince of life, Acts 3:15.; and the keys of hell and death hang at his girdle, Rev. 1:18.

5. Lastly, The burden of the care and duty belonging to the office and station. Many of the princes of the earth value themselves on the honour, little regarding the duty of their place. But this Prince bears on his shoulder, takes the weight of the charge on him, and performs the duty of it; therefore he is called a Shepherd and Bishop of souls, 1 Pet. 2:25.

III. Thirdly, I shall shew the honour, power, and authority belonging to this principality and government of Jesus Christ. I take up this in these four honours vested in his person.

1. The legislative power belongs to him solely; Isaiah 33:22 "The Lord is our Lawgiver." He gathers a church, which is his kingdom. He is the sole legislator in it; Matth. 17:5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, bear ye him;" a ministerial explication and application of them being all that any can pretend to, being the officers of this Prince. He is an absolute monarch, whose will is the only law; and none but he has the wisdom and goodness to be trusted with absolute power. To him only belongs the appointing of offices, officers, and ordinances in his kingdom. And whatsoever of that sort has not his stamp and superscription on it in his kingdom, is null.

2. The supreme executive power is lodged with him; John 5:22, "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the



Son." And whosoever execute the laws of his kingdom, must have their commission from him, or they intermeddle to their peril. By him rewards and punishments are distributed, and he is Judge of all. Now he judgeth particular persons, churches, and nations; and the time is coming wherein he will appear on his throne with awful solemnity, and judge and sentence the whole world, Matth. 25.

3. The power of granting remissions, receiving into peace with heaven, pardoning and indemnifying criminals and rebels; Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." He exercised that power when he was on earth, and much more now. The scribes quarrelled it; Mark 2:5–7, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" And he wrought a miracle to confirm it; verses 10, 11, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house. And immediately-he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all," &c.

4. Lastly, A large and vast dominion, reaching to both worlds, earth, heaven, Matth. 28:18, and hell, and the passage between the two worlds, viz., death; Rev. 1:18. In his hand is,

1. The kingdom of grace; Eph. 1:22, "And gave him to be the head over all things to the church." All grace and favours of heaven are at his disposal. Kings of the earth can bestow silver and gold, houses and lands, on their favourites; but he righteousness, peace, and joy; Rom. 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

2. The kingdom of glory; Luke 22:29, 30, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and

drink at my table in my kingdom," &c. The eternal weight of glory is in his hand; he is the righteous Judge, whose it is to give the crown of glory; he who admits to, and excludes out of that kingdom.

3. The kingdom of Providence; Eph. 1:22, "And hath put all things under his feet." He rules not only over his kindly subjects, but in the midst of his enemies. The wheel of providence through the world is directed by him. In the same hand the government of the church is lodged, the government of the world is lodged also.

IV. The fourth thing is, the burden of this principality and government laid on Christ Jesus. It is sevenfold.

1. The burden of the purchase of it. It behoved to be purchased by a price of infinite value, and it was laid upon him to do it. "Without shedding of blood there was no remission." And so he redeemed the subjects, not "with silver and gold, but his own blood," 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. The Father is indeed said to give it him, Psalm 2:8; but that giving is the delivering it upon the paying down of the price; Acts 20:28, "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."

2. The burden of a war with the devil, for recovering of it. However dear it cost him, he could not have the possession thereof, without vanquishing the power and force of hell, that was engaged to hold fast what they had got. So on the cross he encountered the serpent; Gen. 3:15; and by his Spirit in the gospel he carries on the war, raising his kingdom out of the devil's kingdom, rescuing the captives and prisoners out of his hands.

3. The burden of subduing them. The designed subjects of his dominion, are born subjects of the devil's kingdom, unwilling to quit with their old master, and to submit to this their new prince; and therefore cannot be brought over without being conquered and subdued, and the burden of this lies on him, Psalm 110:3; who is

mighty in battle, and with the sword of the Spirit makes it effectual in their conversion.

4. The burden of their reconciliation with heaven; Eph. 2:14, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one," &c. He has the peace to make up betwixt God and sinners, that his dominion may be happy in peace with God. And as he purchased the peace by his blood, so he becomes God's messenger of peace to sinners, and travels between the parties till it be made up, and confirmed by a sure covenant of peace entered into.

5. The burden of their defence and protection; Isa. 33:21, 22, "But there the glorious Lord will be unto us as a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with ours, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." The subjects of this prince have many enemies, without them and within them. Satan, the prince of this world is continually making war on them, to withdraw them from their allegiance to their rightful Lord, employs the men and things of this world, and the corruptions lodged within their own breasts, to advance his designs against them: but Christ defends them.

6. The burden of their provision, in all things necessary for life and godliness. He cares for them in all these, from the least to the greatest of their wants; 1 Pet. 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Their food and raiment for their bodies he has the providing of; and his visitation preserves their spirits, laying in new supplies of grace, exciting, quickening, and strengthening it.

7. Lastly, The burden of the whole management and conduct of them through the wilderness, till they come to the heavenly Canaan. Great was the burden that Moses had of the people of Israel through the wilderness. How unmanageable did they often prove! But that was a light burden in comparison of that laid on this Prince. He has the burden of all believers through the world on him, in their life and

death. Great are their wants, and he has them to supply. Their weakness and follies are innumerable; he has them all to bear and correct. They are broken and shattered ships, often dashed on many rocks, he has them all to bring to land.

USE 1. Of Information. This informs us, that,

1. Jesus Christ is the alone head of his church, and supreme governor thereof; and the headship of it, and supremacy over it, is neither competent to Pope nor any earthly King. It is a burden too heavy for the shoulder of any mortal, and none is fit for it but himself alone. And the government appointed by him in it is not alterable by any power on earth, civil or ecclesiastic.

2. That the interests of the church, the kingdom of Christ, and of every particular believer, the members thereof, will certainly be seen to, and brought to a comfortable account at length. Such a governor must needs make his dominion happy; Matth. 16:18, "I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Whatever enemies they have, he is able to master them, and will do it; 1 Cor. 15:25, "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Whatever wants they have, he is able to supply them, and will do it; Phil. 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Whatever is necessary to make them completely happy, he has purchased, and will confer on them; Psalm 84:11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

3. Believers have all reason to be quietly resigned to the divine disposal, and to live by faith in confidence of a blessed issue, whatever be the difficulties they have to grapple with, either in respect of the case of the church, or of their own private case. That holds always sure anchor ground; Isa. 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that

publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth!"

The case of the church is often very low, as now; backslidings are multiplied, iniquity abounds, the Spirit's influences are withdrawn, the disease is proof against all means of cure that can be used by men. We must in that case table the complaint before the great governor himself, roll it on him, leave it with him, and be going on in our duty; Micah 7:7, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Psalm 119:126, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law."

The believer's own private case may be very difficult, in respect of various afflictions, temptations and trials. But even here, there is a broad foundation for the rest of faith; James 1:2, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." There is not one circumstance in all their case, but it is ordered by the governor, John 5:22, for wise ends; Heb. 12:10. And it is still under his management, to go or come, increase or decrease precisely according to his order; Matth. 8:8, 9. And he will turn them all about for good; Rom. 8:28, as being all medicinal; Isa. 27:9.

USE II. Of Exhortation. Receive him then as your prince and governor, renouncing all other Lords which have had dominion over you; Isa. 26:13. Receive him really as your prince and governor; Matth. 11:29, "Taking his yoke upon you, and learning of him;" and not in profession only. The most part of this generation do, in their practice, send Christ that message; Luke 19:14, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" and they will not be governed by him. But,

1st, Receive him as your prince, and governor of your life, to walk according to his orders in your whole conversation; and walk no more after your lusts. And,

1. Let his Spirit be your guide and leader; John 16:13, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." How long

will ye be led with the Spirit of the world, and your own corrupt Spirit? Renounce these, and give up yourselves to be led by his Spirit, or in vain do ye profess Christ to be your Lord and governor; Gal. 5:18, "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." The fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh, speaks you not to be led by the Spirit; ver. 16, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

2. Let his word be your rule; Gal. 6:16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy," &c. Let that determine you what to do, how to speak, and what and how not. David laid it before him, as the pattern he was to copy after; Psalm 119:30, "I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me." But this generation for the most part throw it by, as a thing they have no use for. The way of the world and their own carnal interest, are the rule they walk by.

3. Let his will be the determining point to you. Let your own will be a captive to his; and follow his will, though it should be against the will of all the world. Why will men profess him to be their governor, and will not be swayed by his authority? Luke 6:46, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

And receive him as governor,

1. Of your hearts and spirits; Prov. 23:26, "My son, give me thine heart." Let the proud heart be made to stoop to him, let the covetous heart be purged by him, and the rain foolish heart be made to find the weight of his awful authority. While Christ has not the government of thy heart, thou hast not given him the throne.

2. Of your tongues. Who governs the lying tongue, the wicked, bitter, and malicious tongue? Not Christ, surely; but the devil. Men that will frame lies, and deliberately tell lies, their tongues are their own, not Christ's. Satan fills their hearts to lie, and they run a risk of being struck down with a lie in their mouth, as Ananias was; Acts 5:3. See

Isa. 63:8, "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie."

3. Of your practice. And then ye will have a practice of true piety towards God, and exact justice towards man, Tit. 2:12. That is what Christ's true subjects will exercise themselves in; Acts 24:16, viz. in "having a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." O the fraud and deceit, the injustice and covetous practices that are to be found with many at this day, speak to them to be under the government of the god of this world, not of Christ.

2dly, Receive him as your prince and governor of your lot and condition in the world, resigning the same to his disposal, Psalm 47:4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." And,

1. Be content with the lot carved out for you; Heb. 13:5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And be not murmurers and complainers, grudging, repining at, and blaming your lot. That is a sad character, Jude ver. 16, and betrays into many snares. There is nothing in your lot but what the supreme governor sees meet; and where Christ has the government on his shoulders, it is unbecoming and dangerous to be malcontents.

2. Never go out of God's way to mend your condition, nor do the least ill thing to better your circumstances. That is to pull the government of your lot out of Christ's hand, and take it into your own. And ye may be sure ye will have won nothing by it at longrun; 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?" If you should gain some worldly profit by it, ye get it, and the curse of it; Zech. 5:4, "I will bring it forth, (viz. the curse), saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall remain in the

midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof."

3. In all changes of your lot, acknowledge him for direction and guidance; that whatever way you dispose of yourselves, you may have the comfort of being in the way of God; Prov. 3:5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." He sets us our stations, and we are not to change but at his direction. Let householders in the change of their dwellings, servants in their change of families, single persons in the change of their lot, and, generally, all in every change of their condition, own the governor.

In all these respects receive Christ as your prince and governor, give up yourselves to his government, surrender and submit yourselves to him. And,

1. Take him for your only governor. Renounce all other lords, saying, Isa. 26:13, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." One throne contains not two kings. If ye will have Christ for your Lord, he must have the government of you solely. Let not Satan lord it over you any more, to be led captive at his pleasure. Let not the world be your lord, nor your lusts your lords.

2. Take him for your absolute governor. Christ's government is and must be absolute and illimited; for he is essentially just and good, and we are naturally unjust and evil; therefore we can be allowed no hand in determining how he shall govern us; but, without limitation, we must resign the government of ourselves to him, saying with Paul, Acts, 9:6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

3. Take him for your perpetual governor, giving up yourselves to his government for ever, Psalm 119:112, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end." Some swear



allegiance, to him at a time, and, enduring for a while, they afterwards apostatise. But he is a prince of whose kingdom there must be no end.

4. Take him for your prince and governor presently, without delay, Heb. 3:15, "While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." His royal proclamations are emitted instantly requiring your submission, and he is presented to you as your prince. Delay not, then, a moment longer; the time past may have sufficed to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have subjected yourselves to other lords.

6. Lastly, Take him heartily and willingly. Let your whole souls open to receive this glorious prince; and cordially submit yourselves to his royal sceptre, as a prince whose government will make you happy.

MOTIVE 1. Consider what an excellent prince and governor he is, to whom you are required to submit. The excellencies competent to him as a prince and governor are to be found in none other. He is as far above all the princes of the earth in the excellency of his government, as he is in the dignity of his person.

1. He is perfectly just in his administration, Deut. 32:4. "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." His laws for the government of your life, and your lot, too, are absolutely spotless; and his government, and execution of these laws, are absolutely holy and pure, without the least stain of injustice. Behold his commands, they are most pure, Psalm 19:8, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;" and that in all points, Psalm 119:128, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." His providence is spotless; Psalm 145:17, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." What faults men think they espy therein, are owing to their own blindness.

(2.) He is most wise, infinitely wise; and that wisdom shines forth in the whole of his government; Isa. 28:29, "Wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." His designs are wisely laid, and the means for compassing his designs are wisely managed, so as to prove infallibly successful. The "wheels are full of eyes," Ezek, 10:12. So Isa. 46:10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." So that one may without hesitation absolutely resign himself to his conduct; and so faith makes men do; Heb. 11:8, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

(3.) He is most vigilant and careful; Zech. 4:10, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth." Nothing can be a-contriving against any of his subjects by their enemies, far less can befall them, but he is perfectly apprised of it. There is no surprising of the keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps; and he sees all with his own eyes, which no prince on earth can pretend to.

(4.) He is most tender of his subjects, and of all their interests, his government being exactly calculated for making them truly happy; Rom. 8:28, "All things work together for good to them that love God." There is such a close connection of their duty and interest, that it is impossible for them to neglect their duty; but as far as they do neglect it, they prove false to their interest. He governs them as a father, with the tender affection that one does his own family, Is. 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."

MOTIVE 2. While ye are not under his government, ye are under the government of Satan, Acts 26:18. While this prince governs you not, the prince of darkness doth. And his government, as it is most imperious, so it is most unjust, and destructive of the true interest of souls. He is a cruel lord, and delights in and seeks the misery and ruin of his subjects. We may frame a true notion of his government from his managing of those among whom his power is absolute.

What a wretched way does he manage the poor Pagans, the possessed, and those who are in express compact with him? So does he with others, though in a spiritual and covered way.

MOTIVE 3. Jesus Christ is your rightful prince and governor. Satan is an usurper, the throne belongs to Jesus of right. He is so by the irreversible constitution of heaven; Psalm 2:6, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." He was born a king. Ye were devoted to him in baptism, and as members of his church, ye profess yourselves his subjects, Luke 6:46.

MOTIVE 3. Lastly, If ye submit not to him, he will treat you as rebels, who have broken your faith and allegiance to him, and cast off the yoke of his government. He is presented to you as your lawful prince born; it will be dangerous to refuse him. The day is coming wherein he will judge the world, and behold the end of the rebels against his government; Luke 19:27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Wherefore consider how other lords have had the dominion over you; the necessity of taking him for your lord and governor; if he be your Saviour, he must be your king, Hos. 8:9, 10, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help. I will be thy king." Solemnly give up yourselves to him.

## **CHRIST'S NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME**

And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. ISAIAH 9:6

HERE is held out the incomparable excellency of this Prince and Governor presented to us. "His name is called," so the original carries it. "One hath called his name," i. e. "His name is called,

Wonderful," &c. The connection is, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, on whose shoulder the government is laid, and whose name is called, Wonderful," &c.; so that the scope of this latter part of the text is, to commend the Prince presented to us from his "name," which is here unfolded, to be "a name above every name."

DOCTRINE. The name of Christ by which he is called, is a name above every name, fit to commend him to the souls of poor sinners.

The name is that which follows in several parts here, viz.: "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Many glorious names are used by the princes of the earth; but there is no name among them all like this. None so high and honourable, none so sweet and lovely, none so adapted to make the subjects happy. Consider here,

I. Who calls him by this name.

II. What his being called by it imports.

III. Lastly, Apply.

I. Who calls him by this name? And,

1. His Father has called him by this name, Phil. 2:9, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." His Father best knows what he is, to give him a name expressive of his nature. And he has, by his spirit in the prophet, given him this glorious one. In effect he proclaimed it; Matt. 17:5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. All his people call him by this name, flying to him in their first believing as such a one, and depending on him all along their course of life as such a one.

II. What does his being called by this name import?

1. That he really is what this name bears. God gives no empty titles, nor will empty titles answer the necessities of believers. As his name, so is his nature; the name truly expresses what he is.

2. He manifests himself to be what the name bears. What he is called, he is found to be in the experience of saints.

USE. Study the name of Christ, as represented in the word, so as your souls may be enamoured of him.

## **CHRIST'S NAME WONDERFUL**

His name shall be called Wonderful. ISAIAH 9:6

HERE begins the name of him whom the Father presents and gives to us for our prince. The first syllable of it is "Wonderful."

The word signifies "miracle," a work past reach of the creature's power and skill, or knowledge, and so competent to God alone; Exod. 15:11, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Psalm 77:14, "Thou art the God that dost wonders." Every miracle is wonderful, but every wonderful thing is not a miracle. Our Lord Christ is not only a wonderful one, but a miracle, a miraculous one, one most wonderful. He is beyond the creature's comprehension. So that this is fitly made the first syllable of his name, that men may know, that whatever they know of his excellencies, there is still more behind; and though they may apprehend, they cannot comprehend what he is.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ, who is presented and given to us of the Father for our prince, is and appears to be a miraculous one, a most wonderful personage.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall enquire,

I. Under what notion Christ is held forth as a miracle, a miraculous person.

II. What is the import of Christ as God-man his being and appearing to be a miraculous one.

III. In what respects he is so.

IV. Lastly, Apply the doctrine.

I. I shall enquire, Under what notion Christ is held forth as a miracle, a miraculous person. Ye have heard already, a miracle is a divine work, and competent to God alone, beyond the reach of any creature. Now, Christ is and appears a miracle. Hence it follows, that he is not so called,

1. In respect of his being a miracle-worker. For it is himself, and not his work, that is here called a miracle. Moreover, the prophets and apostles were miracle-workers, John 14:12. Yet this name is above every name, not competent to them, but to him alone.

2. Nor in respect of his divine nature simply, and his eternal generation of the Father. This part of his name does not point him out to us simply as God. For besides that that is, by itself, another syllable of his name, "The Mighty God," the scripture, for all that I can discern, doth not warrant us to call him the work of his Father in that respect. And the Father works miracles through the Son by the Spirit; Luke 11:20, compared with Matt. 12:28. But the eternal generation of the Son is proper to the Father alone.

3. Nor in respect of his human nature simply. This part of his name does not point him out simply as man neither. For though man is indeed a divine work, yet he is not a work competent to God alone; for the scripture owns man himself to be the father of man's flesh; Heb. 12:9. But,

4. Christ is held forth as a miracle, a miraculous personage, as God-man in one person. This part of his name points him out to us precisely as our incarnate Redeemer, and is given him precisely in respect of his incarnation. Behold him, God-man, the Word made flesh; and ye behold the miracle, the miraculous person. So the text, "A child, a son, his name "Wonderful."

Thus he is a work done or made; John 1:14, "The word was made flesh;" a divine work: Heb. 10:5, "When he cometh into the world, he saith,—A body hast thou prepared me; competent to God alone, as a work of creating power; Jer. 31:22, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man." The Son of God in our nature is a miracle indeed, a work beyond the reach of the creature's capacity. Many miracles had been wrought before the Son of God was incarnate, The sea had been divided, the dead raised, a world created out of nothing, which was more; but a greater miracle than any of these, was the incarnation of the Son of God; after all these had been done, this was the creating of a new thing, never any of the kind before.

Wherefore this is the name of our incarnate Redeemer; and when we hear it named, it must represent to us the Son of God in man's nature.

USE 1. O the love of God to poor sinners of mankind! John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The greatest work that ever God did, was for their salvation. He made the world for man, and gave it him, Psalm 115:16; and the visible heavens too, Gen. 1:17; (Heb.) yea the highest heavens also he made for them, and gives to them in his Son, Matt. 25:34. But a greater work than all these he did for them, when he did this miracle of the incarnation of his own Son for them, and gave him, an incarnate Redeemer, to them. O how can we escape the most fearful doom, if we neglect this great salvation! How worthy are they to

perish, that will not be saved, when God has wrought this greatest miracle to save them?

2. What unaccountable stupidity is it in men, not to consider, admire, and be swallowed up in contemplation of this miracle; and not to be in deepest love with this miraculous personage given to them? Ah! have we not all been careless, unmoved spectators of this miracle? How many have never spent a few minutes in the consideration and admiration of him? Have ye not gazed on and wondered at some trifle, more than at this greatest of the works of God? Have ye not been more deeply in love with some person or thing for its shadowy excellencies, than with this miraculous person? Cease to wonder at the Jews' obstinacy, in not being moved to believe by all his miracles; for a greater than them all is here, to wit, his miraculous self; and yet we are unmoved.

II. What is the import of Christ as God-man, his being and appearing to be a miraculous, most wonderful one? Considering this as the name of Christ, to commend him to sinners; it imports,

1. The excellency of his person as God-man. He is an excellent, glorious, and lovely one; Heb. 1:3, "Being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Though the blind world perceive not his excellency, saying as Isa. 53:2, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;" it is not but through their own default, by reason of their blindness; for his glory shines forth, to be perceived by those whose eyes are opened; John 1:14, "We beheld his glory," &c. But the glory of the sun is not seen by the blind man, nor the glory of Christ by unbelievers.

2. The fulness of excellencies in him, our incarnate Redeemer. His name is Miracle, a collective word. There is a confluence of excellencies in him; look to him in every part, and all is excellent in him; Cant. 5:16, "He is altogether lovely." Some excel in one thing, some in another; as Moses in meekness, Samson in strength,



Solomon in wisdom: but none but Christ in all. Moses, we would say, was a miracle of meekness, Samson of strength, and Solomon of wisdom. But Christ is miracle all over: meekness, strength, wisdom, and all other excellencies, meet in him, to a miracle, There is no blemish, no want at all in him; Col. 1:9, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell."

3. The uncommonness and singularity of his excellencies. Miracles are but rare, in respect of the common operations of providence. And Christ among the sons of men is as a standard bearer among ten thousand;" Cant. 5:10; he is a personage of singular excellencies. It is observed, that what is done by miracle, doth in its kind excel what is the product of nature in that kind. The water that was made wine was far better than the wine of the vine, John 2:10. So the man Christ is "fairer than the sons of men," Psalm 45:2. So every excellency in Christ is beyond that excellency in another; so was Christ's meekness beyond Moses's meekness, his strength beyond Samson's, and his wisdom beyond Solomon's, as the sun's light beyond that of the stars.

4. The absolute matchlessness of his person, for excellency and glory; Prov. 8:11, "Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." Seek through all the creatures in heaven and earth, and there is none comparable to him; Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." His match is not to be found among all the ranks of created beings.

1. Among created persons, the like to him is not to be found; Jer. 31:22, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man." Consider them in all their excellencies.

(1.) What are men to this miracle of men? Great men are contemptible, wise men fools, good men's goodness disappears, in comparison with him.

(2.) Consider devils in their knowledge and might, the only excellencies remaining with them; and their knowledge is but ignorance in comparison of his, Rev. 5:3, 5; their power weakness, Matt. 12:29. He can bind them as easily as a giant a little child.

(3.) What are glorified saints, but so many bright stars shining with his borrowed light, wonders of his mercy, monuments of his free love? Rev. 4:10.

(4.) What are angels that never sinned? They are all his servants, Heb. 1:14, to worship him, verse 6. He is the son of the house, they are but servants of it. He is the Lord of angels. Moses was not content with the offer of an angel, but would have himself; Exod. 33:15, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence;" nor was Mary content, till she got himself.

2. Among created things his match is not to be found, however men take the shadow for the substance.

(1.) Worldly good things are not comparable to him, in their greatest abundance and choice of them. Riches, honour, strength, &c. are a poor portion in his room and stead; "Prov. 8:11, "Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." All of them are greater in expectation than fruition, broken cisterns soon running dry, bitter sweets uncommensurable to the desires of the soul; he the quite reverse.

(2.) Spiritual good things do come from him as rays from the sun. Grace is a created quality, heaven itself is but the place where he keeps his court, And as the prince himself is preferable to all the jewels in his crown, and to his palace; so is Christ above all these.

5. The shining forth of his excellencies, fit to draw all eyes upon him. A miracle is the centre of men's eyes, to which all men are ready to look; it is a sight every one would desire to see, and to see narrowly. There is an attractive beauty and glory in this wonderful one. This is a mystery to the world, who are ready to say, as Cant. 5:9, "What is

thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" seeing nothing in him to fix their eyes on him. But,

(1.) His Father's eyes are fixed on him, as the object of his good pleasure; Matt. 3:17, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Lamb is in the midst of the throne above, Rev. 5:6. It is a strange word that is said of the temple; 2 Chron. 7:16, "For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." But a greater than the temple is meant there. The eyes of the Holy Spirit are on him; Zech. 3:9, "Behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of Hosts." Compared with Rev. 5:6, "In the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

(2.) The eyes of the angels are drawn after him, as a most wonderful sight. The faces of the cherubims were therefore made looking towards the mercy-seat; Exod. 25:20, to teach us, that Christ the Mediator, reconciling God and sinners, is the object of the angel's wonder; 1 Peter 1:12, "Which things the angels desire to look into."

(3.) The eyes of all the saints are drawn after him, as the object of their admiration and affection. No sooner are the eyes of the blind soul opened, but they fix on him; John 4:10, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Therefore faith is called a "looking unto Christ;" Isa. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Cant. 3:11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon," &c. And it is not a looking after a wonder of a few days; but it must remain all along their course through the world; Heb. 12:1, 2, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." And when they come to glory,

they will fix, their eyes on him for ever, never weary, but always refreshed with the sight. Therefore "the Lamb is in the midst of the elders," Rev. 5:6; "and the multitude before the Lamb," chap. 7:9.

And that the eyes of all men are not upon him, is because they know him not, are not capable to discern his glory: Psalm 9:10, "And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee."

6. Lastly, The incomprehensibleness of him to any creature. He is a miracle past their reach, the reach of their knowledge as well as their power; Eph. 3:19, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Men are soon non-plussed in the works of nature; there are things there which they cannot comprehend; Job 38 and 39, as in the wind that bloweth; John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou nearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." Eccl. 11:5, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." How much more must they find themselves at a loss in miracles, where the laws of nature are neglected, and God works quite beyond them? Then how must they be quite lost in this great miracle: the Son of God become man? Agur long ago challenged the wit of all mankind to comprehend his name; Prov. 30:4, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" And the Son of God himself declared his name to be past reach; Judges 13:18, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" Whatever the saints know of it, the half is not known, there is still more behind.

USE I. Whosoever do truly discern what Christ is, cannot choose but to love him above all persons and things, and choose him for their portion being offered to them; "Psalm 9:10, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." John 4:10, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou

wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." His matchless excellencies make him such a lovely one, that the discovery of them does command the surrender of the heart to him, and captivates the affections; sinks the value of all created things in competition with him, and enthrones him in the heart; Phil. 3:8, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Hence true believers can neither be boasted nor bribed, frightened nor flattered from his love; Cant. 8:6, 7, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

2. Believers' love to Christ must needs be lasting, everlasting, for his excellencies are infinite and incomprehensible. When we meet with an object among the creatures that commands our admiration and love, we are taken with it; but some defect comes afterwards to be perceived in it, and then the admiration ceaseth, or turns into contempt. At least, the perfections of the object are all seen through, and they become familiar, and the admiration dwindles away into nothing; and what was at first sight admired as new, ceaseth to be so when it affords no more new. But no defect or blemish can ever be espied in him, who is fairer than the sun; and there being an incomprehensible depth of excellencies in him, there is ever place for new discoveries; so the admiration must be kept up for ever; Rev. 22:2, "In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

3. Those whose greatest admiration and supreme love Christ is not the object of, are yet certainly in the midnight darkness of their natural state. Whosoever of you admire and love any created person

or thing as much or more than Christ, ye have never yet seen nor known him; Psalm 9:10, "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." The predominant love of the world, prizing and esteeming the things thereof above him, is a concluding evidence, that ye are walking in the dark, that the scales are yet on your eyes, and that Christ is a veiled Christ to you.

4. Lastly, See here how it is not to be thought strange, that there are who stumble at the doctrine of an incarnate God our redeemer. Corrupt nature is blind and venturous. Our incarnate Redeemer is a miracle, past the reach and comprehension of the creatures. They are blind, and cannot apprehend his glory; yet they are proud and lofty, and will not admit the mystery, because they cannot comprehend it. Now, it cannot be comprehended; therefore either they must be humbled, or stumble at it as a stumbling stone. See Matt. 11:6; 1 Pet. 2:6–8.

III. In what respects is our incarnate Redeemer a miraculous one, a most wonderful personage? This is a subject which no man can fully comprehend, and will never be exhausted by the saints in glory through eternity. We will touch on a few things to show that he is miracle all over. He is wonderful,

1st, In his person and natures. He is God-man, God and man in one person. None such in heaven or earth.

1. The man Christ is the true God, the second person of the glorious Trinity, the one supreme most high God, with the Father and the Spirit; 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." He is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. 1:2, 3. Therefore he

said to Philip, John 14:9, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." He is the Father's fellow, Zech. 13:7; his equal, Phil. 2:6.

2. Christ the Son of God is true man. The eternal Son of the Father is a Son of Adam; Luke 3:23–38, being, as was supposed, "the son of Joseph, which was the son of Adam." He was really human flesh; John 1:14, "The Word was made flesh;" and our flesh, as "made of a woman," Gal. 4:4. He is a man, consisting of a soul; Matth. 26:38, and a body of flesh, and blood, and bones; Luke 24:39; as really man as any man whatsoever.

So he is God and man in one person. Here is a wonderful person indeed, whom we cannot comprehend; true God, yet man; true man, yet God; a mysterious person, undiscerned by most that saw him with their eyes, perceived only by the enlightened eye; John 1:14. The uniting of a soul to an earthly body, forming one person called man, was a work of wonder; but what is the putting together of two pieces of clay, in comparison of the Potter's uniting with his own clay? Should we behold an angel assuming to himself and appearing in a crawling worm, as his own body; we would cease to wonder at it, beholding this surpassing wonder, an incarnate God! Here eternity and a being of yesterday meet together in one person, a child, and yet the Everlasting Father; here infinite and finite meet in one; God and his own creature!

2dly, In his perfections and qualifications; Psalm 45:2, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; "grace is poured into thy lips." All qualities that render one desirable and lovely meet together in him; and all these are in him to a miraculous pitch. So his Father is well-pleased in him, Matth. 3:17; and the Spirit rested on him, ver. 16. And every soul beholding him with an eye of faith, will take up its eternal rest in him. Particularly he is wonderful,

1. In his spotless and unchangeable holiness and purity; Heb. 7:26, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled,

separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." The fulness of the Spirit of holiness is in him; John 3:34, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." The brightest of the saints here below want not their spots; at best they are but fair as the moon; but there is no darkness in him at all. The saints and angels in heaven have but each one their measure of holiness, the fulness of a vessel; they have none to communicate to others; but in him there is the fulness of a fountain, to fill all with holiness; John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

2. In his wisdom; Col. 2:3, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The least portion and the greatest that any have of it in the world, is from him; John 1:9, "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The apostle challenges the whole world with that; Rom. 11:34, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" But his name is the Counsellor, and he hath known the mind of his Father; Matth. 11:27, and can open the sealed book, and look into the secrets there. O the admirable wisdom of Christ, appearing all along in the conduct of his providence in the church and in the world, whereby men and devils are outwitted!

3. In his power. There is nothing too hard for him to do. What astonishing works of power did he while he was in the world! Matt. 11:5, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." And he is the beginning of the creation of God; Heb. 1:2. How often has the song of victory been raised in the church to his praise! Psalm 98:1, "O, sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand, and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." His triumphing over death, devils, hell, and the grave, are lasting monument of his power.

4. In his goodness, mercy, and grace. The Prince of the kings of the earth is the Prince of peace. There is grace in his lips, whereby he speaks to poor sinners; Psalm 45:2, "Grace is poured into thy lips."



Though he has power sufficient to strike terror into the stoutest of his enemies, yet he is a matchless mirror of goodness, patience, and meekness.

5. Lastly, In a word, He is wonderful in the centering of all perfections in him, each in its perfection; Cant. 5:16, "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely."

3dly, He is wonderful all along in his duration. Some are wonderful in one part of their life, some in another; but he is miracle all over his duration. And particularly he is wonderful,

1. In his eternal generation of the Father; Psalm 2:7, "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." He was before he was born; John 8:58, "And Jesus said to them; Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." He was in the beginning of time; John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word;" before time, from everlasting; Prov. 8:22, 23, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." See Micah 5:2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Wonderful One! A Son, and yet from eternity, without beginning of days Heb. 7:3. A Son, and yet his duration of equal extent with his Father's. An incomprehensible One! Who can comprehend this his generation? Begotten from eternity! The same numerical divine essence communicated from the Father to him!

2. In his birth; Matth. 1:23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us." Adam's body was made of the dust, without help of man or woman; Eve of Adam's without the help of a woman; before the laws of generation took place. But after they took place, and had gone on uninterrupted for four thousand years, Christ was conceived of a virgin, without the help of a man,

Heb. 7:3. This was a miracle, a wonderful birth, incomprehensible to us; Luke 1:35, "The angel said unto Mary, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

3. In his life. In his private life, a wonderful infant, lying in a manger, yet worshipped as God; Herod set to kill him, yet he preserved, while the several babes about were slain, that he might not be missed! A wonderful child, ruling the whole world; yet subject to Joseph and his mother. A wonderful youth, engaging the doctors at twelve years of age, having never learned, John 7:15. His public life was one continued wonder, in his temptations, preachings, and miracles, especially in the untainted holiness which ran through his whole life; never a wrong action, word, nor thought, notwithstanding of all he suffered from an ungrateful world.

4. In his death. Betrayed by one of his own; forsaken by them all; acquitted by his judge as innocent, yet condemned to a most cruel death. Astonishing wonder, God dying in man's nature! the beloved Son of God hanging on a cross; heaven, earth, and hell, all pouring in at once floods of suffering on him: but he in the meantime wholly resigned, and patient to a miracle under all; taking the bitter cup of wrath kindly out of his Father's hand, and maintaining his confidence in him, praying for men his enemies, and triumphing over devils on the cross. Cease to wonder at men's laying down their life for their friends; at Samson's dying with the Philistines. A greater wonder is here. The sun had never seen such a wonder, and was struck blind with the sight, and death, astonished, let go its prisoners.

5. In his burial. The Lord of life lying down dead in a grave; the spotless Jesus making his grave with the wicked; the great deliverer from death carried prisoner to its dark regions; is a wonder that may hold us in admiration for ever! The beautiful fabric of heaven and earth pulled down, heavens rolled up and cast by like old rags, would

be no such wonder, as the Christ of God laid down in a grave, and the powers of hell seeming so to have carried the day against him.

6. In his resurrection. Behold him dead and buried, a rock the walls of his grave, closed up with a huge stone, the stone sealed, a guard of soldiers set to watch there; and so for two days the wicked world and hell triumphing over him; but all of a sudden, on the third day, the earth and rocks fall a-quaking and shaking; an angel rolls away the stone; the guards become as dead men; death itself loses its gripes of him; the bands of all the elect's guilt, wherewith it held him, become as tow touched with the fire; and the slain Redeemer rises again, and comes forth; stands conqueror on the field of battle, laden with the spoils of his enemies, death and hell; bringing away the keys of them with him.

7. In his ascension into heaven. Behold him ascending into heaven from the earth, where he stood with his disciples; making his way through the air upward, they looking on, till a cloud received him out of their sight, Acts 1:9, being carried up into heaven, Luke 24:51. Then he was returning conqueror from the battle unto his Father's palace; and he is attended in his triumphal chariot with his captives; Psalm 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive;" and with joyful acclamations and sound of trumpet; Psalm 47:5, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." Behold how he is admired by those of the upper house, while he is coming towards them, as a most wonderful one; Isa. 63:1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Then he enters the gates, and sets them open for all his people to follow.

8. In his sitting at the right hand of God, Heb. 1:3. When the man Christ came into the highest heavens, his Father seated him at his right hand, Psalm 110:1. The most favourite angel never had at any time such an honour put upon him, as this most wonderful man was fixed in, at his first arrival in the upper house, Heb. 1:13 There he sat,

there he sits, and there he will sit, in a state of glory, rest, and expectation of his enemies becoming his footstool, till the mystery of God be finished.

9. In his coming again to judge the world, 2 Thess. 1:7–10. What tongue can express, or heart conceive the wonders that shall then take place about him? The attendance of all the holy angels on him as the Judge, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, the resurrection of all the dead at his coming, their compearance before him, the separating of the sheep from the goats, the sentencing of both, driving the wicked away into hell, and taking the righteous along with him to heaven, will shew him wonderful at that day to those who now see no glory in him.

10. Lastly, In his continuing for ever to be the eternal band of union, and mean of communion, between God and the saints for ever; Rev. 7:17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." 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." Every saint shall shine there as a star in the firmament; but he is the Sun for ever, from whom they shall derive all their light and glory; Rev. 21:23, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." If they are to be as the seven lamps in the temple above, he is and will be as the bowl in the candlestick from which they will all be fed; he only immediately communicating with the Godhead.

4thly, He is wonderful in his offices. And,

1. In his prophetic office. How would men run together to see a prophet of the Lord; how would they admire him? But he is the great prophet, never was there such a one as he. The Spirit came at the times on the Prophets, but he rested on him; Isa. 11:2. They had their

foreknowledge of future events at second hand; but it is his privilege to look with his own eyes into the sealed book; John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." All that they could do, was to teach externally; but he can render his teaching effectual, and that on the weakest and foolishlest creatures that are. Hence he hath chosen the foolish things of the world. So we may conclude, Job 36:22, "Behold, God exalteth by his power; who teacheth like him?"

2. In his priestly office. The priests under the law had their altars of stone, or brass, or gold; their sacrifices of beasts, their offerings of divers sorts. But here is a most wonderful Priest; who is the priest, the altar, and the sacrifice, all in one. He offered himself a sacrifice unto God; and from himself was the sacrifice rendered acceptable. All the sacrifices offered before his, were but as handwritings to own the debt of sin; but could pay none. His sacrifice was truly expiatory, purchased the Spirit, reconciliation with God, and eternal life for sinners. Never was there such a priest nor sacrifice. And he is the great Intercessor, wonderful in respect of the ground of his intercession, the objects of it, the manner of it, and the infallible success of it continually.

3. In his kingly office. Such a wonderful King the world never saw, among all the crowned heads that ever were on it. Zion's King is most wonderful in his victories, rescuing men from the power of the devil, subduing their hearts to him, and conquering their wills; in his defence of his subjects, from the devil, the world, lusts, frowns, and flatteries of the world; in ruining his enemies totally, and completing the happiness of his friends. Christ's kingdom is the most ancient kingdom, being erected on the sixth day of the creation; the most extensive kingdom, reaching both heaven and earth. Never a kingdom had so many enemies and so potent; yet has it stood through all ages, and will stand for ever and ever, without end.

5thly, He is wonderful in his relations. And,

1. He is nearly related to the house of heaven, and so has the highest possible relation. The monarchs of the earth are the creatures of God, the angels are the servants of the house of heaven; but Christ is the Son of that house, the Son of God, Heb. 1:5; and has the management of it all in his hand, John 5:22.

2. He is nearly related to the house of Adam. He is a Son of that house too, the top-branch of it; Luke 3:3, 8. He has a common relation to them all. He is their Saviour by office; 1 Tim. 4:10; the Saviour of the world; 1 John 4:14. He has a nearer relation to the elect. He is their surety and representative, who undertook for them in the covenant; Heb. 7:22, John 5:15; and a yet nearer relation to believers. He is their brother; Heb. 2:11; their father, Isa. 9:6; their husband, 2 Cor. 9:2; and their head, Col 1:18. And thus by his relation to both,

3. He is the centre of union to the two. In him they meet; John 17:2, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." There was war declared between the two houses; and the house of Adam could never have made their part good against Heaven; but the Son of God married our nature to himself, and so brings together the two houses, making peace through the body of his flesh. So, as he is the foundation-stone, on which all believers are laid; he is the corner-stone, joining and knitting heaven and earth.

6th Lastly, He is wonderful in his love; Eph. 3:18, 19, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," viz. his love to the children of men. His love will appear wonderful, if ye consider,

1. The subject of it, the party loving us. He is the eternal Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth. That ever there should have been an eye of love cast from heaven on us, not from among the courtiers, but from the throne, the King himself, is wonderful. That the Father's delight should have made the sons of men his delight, Prov. 8:30, 31, may cause, us to cry out, Psalm 144:3, "Lord, what is man, that thou

takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?"

2. The objects of it, the parties beloved; men, sinful men. Consider them as to their rank of being, and they are the lowest of the rational creatures; but a superior rank, viz., angels, were passed over, and they were made the objects of it; Tit. 3:4, "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." Consider them as to their quality, and they were enemies to him; Rom. 5:10, "For when they were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

3. The effect, force and energy of this love. It is absolutely matchless; never did any love work so powerfully as his. It began (if I may so say) before the world was; Prov. 8:31; and engaged him in suretyship for the debt of an elect world. In time he died for them, he so loved them, Rom. 5:8. It rests not till he have them with himself in the highest heavens, John 17:24, for ever.

4, Lastly, The qualities of it. These are wonderful.

(1.) It is free love; Hos. 14:4, "I will love them freely." There was nothing in the object lovely, to engage it. But as the sun shines without hire on the dunghill, as well as on the bed of roses; so Christ's love was unhired. See the freeness of it, Ezek. 16:8, "When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine."

(2.) It is sovereign love. There were objects equally miserable with fallen man; yet there was no love to them. Christ looked on the fallen part of the creation, and the angelic tribe, and the human tribe, were both before him; and sovereignty passes the former, but fixes the love on the latter.

(3.) It is preventing love; John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Love begets love, as one coal kindles another. But

Christ's love to us had nothing from us of that kind, nor of any other, to kindle it. We never love him, till he love us first; 1 John 4:19.

(4.) It is tender love; 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." It is tender as of a father to his children; Psalm 103:13, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" as of a mother to her sucking child; Isa. 49:15, 16, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." It is tender, as one is to the apple of his eye; Zech. 2:8, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye."

(5.) It is unchangeable love; John 13:1, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2 Tim. 2:19, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." Whatever falls out in the course of the believer's lot and life, though the manifestations of that love may be very variable, yet the love itself never alters. See Hos. 2:19, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

(6.) Lastly, It is everlasting love. It never had a beginning, and will never have an end; Jer. 31:3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

And thus Christ appears to be all over wonderful.

USE 1. For Information. See here,

1. The greatness of the Father's love in giving to us such a wonderful one for our Prince; John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. The love of God appears here to a wonder. O what honour is put upon man, by making such a gift to him, than which Heaven could not give a greater! O what happiness appears to be designed for man by this gift! We may say, as Hiram



King of Tyre said to Solomon, 2 Chron. 2:11, "Because the Lord hath loved his people; he hath made thee king over them."

2. The reasonableness of the believer's superlative love to Christ. Every believing soul loves Christ above all persons and all things. They will love him more than all the world, and all that is therein, and more than their own life; Luke 14:26. And good reason there is for it; for there is no object so lovely. If we look to confessors parting with their goods, their liberty, and their worldly comforts, for Christ, to the martyrs parting with their lives, embracing fires, gibbets, &c., the most cruel deaths for Christ, we will cease to wonder at their so doing, when we consider what a wonderful One he is for whom they undergo the loss of all. Gaining Christ, they are the greatest gainers, whatever they lose; Phil. 3:7, 8.

3. The reasonableness of the gospel-demand of all to receive and submit to Christ as their Prince and Governor. His transcendent excellency entitles him to the principality and government over the sons of men. His merit requires our absolute resignation to him. He is the Father's choice; and in making that choice, he has acted like himself, having chosen for us this most wonderful personage.

4. Lastly, The dreadful sin and danger of the slighting of Christ. The more wonderful and excellent he is, the deeper will the guilt be of refusing him; the deeper the guilt, the more fearful will be the vengeance for rejecting him; Heb. 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

USE 2. Of Exhortation. Be exhorted then to give this wonderful one your heart; Prov. 23:26, "My son, give me thine heart." And,

1. Make him the choice of your soul, saying, Psalm. 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Take him for your portion, as one who is the best of portions. Let your souls solemnly consent to the gospel offer.

2. Part with all for him, as the wise merchant, who sold all that he had, and bought the one pearl of great price, Matth. 13:44, 45. Give up with your lusts and idols; renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, resting on Christ for all, for time and eternity.

3. Dwell in the contemplation of his matchless excellencies. Let it be the substance of your religion to love him, to admire him, to be swallowed up in his love. And let love to him set your souls a-moving in all holy obedience.

MOTIVE 1. Ye can never bestow your hearts so well. What is all the world in comparison of Christ, but loss and dung? Alas! that shadows should have our hearts, while the most substantial good courts it.

MOTIVE 2. Consider that it is for this end Christ is commended to you. We preach Christ, that ye may fall in love with him.

MOTIVE 3. Lastly, Consider how ye will answer it to him before the tribunal, that ye have preferred other lovers to the lovely one.

## **CHRIST THE COUNSELLOR**

His Name shall be called—Counsellor. ISAIAH 9:6

THE scope of this part of the verse being to commend the Prince presented and given to us for our Prince and Governor, this syllable of his name refers to his singular capacity for management of matters, in respect of his vast reach in point of wisdom. Other princes must have their counsellors, by whose advice they may act: but he himself is, and shews himself to be Counsellor, an oracle of government, a Prince in whose own breast is the oracle for right management of all things relating to his dominion.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ, who is presented and given to us of the Father for our Prince, is and shews himself to be the great Counsellor, an oracle of government.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. In what respects Christ is the Counsellor.

II. What is the import of this part of his name.

III. Lastly, Improve the subject.

I. In what respects is Christ the Counsellor.

1st, He is of the secret council of Heaven; Zech. 6:13, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." He is a member of the cabinet-council of Heaven, to which the most favourite angel is not admitted. He has access to the sealed book of the divine decrees; Rev. 5:5; and there is nothing transacted there, nor has been from eternity, but what he is acquainted with; John 5:20, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth." With his Father and the Spirit he is of the council.

2dly, He is the oracle of counsel for the earth; John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Matth. 11:27, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Many counsellors are to be found in the earth; and wicked counsellors for men's destruction, as the house of Ahab were counsellors to Ahaziah, King of Judah, to his destruction, 2 Chron. 22:4. But he is the Counsellor for salvation, outshining all other good counsellors, as the sun doth the twinkling stars. And,

1. He is the Counsellor of the world of men; John 8:12, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but

shall have the light of life." They have all lost their way, their affairs are all in confusion, they know not how to right them. But he is,

(1.) Their Counsellor in respect of office. As the sun is set in the firmament to give light on the earth, so is Christ given for a light to the world, that whosoever will, may have his counsel, and by his counsel get the affairs of their souls retrieved; John 12:46, "I am, come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." Whoever will consult him, are welcome; none shall be refused his wise counsel; John 6:37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out"

(2.) Their Counsellor in respect of capacity, Col. 2:3, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The multitude and variety of their cases cannot confuse him; for his understanding is infinite. Nothing can perplex him, who with one glance of his piercing eye, sees at once through all cases of all men, and can prescribe suitable remedies.

2. He is the Counsellor of the visible church more especially, Micah 4:9, and that in two respects.

(1.) He consults her interest, for her protection and preservation in the world; Micah 4:9, "Why dost thou cry out aloud; is there no king in the; is thy counsellor perished." There are constant conspiracies of devils and wicked men to ruin her; and oftentimes their plots are laid so subtilly, and so powerfully managed, as that the church is brought to the brink of ruin; but he, as her Counsellor, discovers the snare, and powerfully counteracts her enemies; so that she is still preserved. A remarkable instance of which we have in the conspiracy of Haman to destroy the whole nation of the Jews, the history of which you may read in the book of Esther.

(2.) He is still actually counselling her by his word. And her members have the advantage of Heaven's counsels, inculcated on them for their spiritual welfare. The counsel of God in providing a Saviour, is

proclaimed there; the salvation is offered, and they are counselled again and again to embrace it; their way to happiness is cleared; Rev. 3:18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see."

3. He is the Counsellor of the invisible church, of believers, and of every particular believer in it, Eph. 1:22, and that most especially. And,

(1.) The care and management of all and every one of them lies on him; 1 Peter. 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." He is the great Shepherd who brings in the sheep from their straying, feeds and protects them, and at length completes the well-being. To him the Father has committed the charge of all the elect; and on him it lies to bring them into himself in conversion, to manage them during their stay in the world, and to bring them all safe to glory in the end.

(2.) He counsels them effectually, by his word and Spirit, Psalm 25:14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." He has established a communication between him and them, whereby they have his direction and instruction in their particular cases, what way to steer their course. Prov. 3:6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." He is their oracle, whom they are to consult in all things; and his word bears his counsel to them; Psalm 119:24, "Thy testimonies also are my counsellors;" his providence points out their way; Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye;" and his Spirit makes all effectual; John 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

II. What is the import of this part of Christ's name? We may take it up in these seven particulars following.

First, He is of singular wisdom for conduct and management of affairs, Isa. 11:2, 3, "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." Great is the truth committed to him, in bringing an elect world to glory; but he has a head sufficient for the difficult task, which would be too hard for the skill of angels to manage. Nothing can be so intricate for him, but his wisdom can unfold it. For,

1. The fulness of the Spirit of wisdom is lodged in him, to fit him for the great trust of bringing many sons to glory, Isa. 11:2, forecited; and that not by measure, as saints have the same; but without measure, to fit him for every emergency in the case of his trust; so that he can never be at a loss to know what to do; John 3:34, "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" being furnished with wisdom, as the spring with waters continually.

2. He is wisdom itself, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father; under which name Solomon speaks of him, Prov. 8. And Christ's children are wisdom's children, Matth. 11:19.

USE. 1. How fit and suitable is Christ for us then, to conduct us through an evil world, to the place of perfect safety? We live in a deceitful world, where we are environed with snares; how will we ever make our way through it? Let us betake ourselves then to the great Counsellor for conduct, the deceit of the world prompting us to go to him.

2. Put your case in his hand, and trust him with it, how intricate and perplexed soever it is. Though you cannot give a name to it, he can; though you can find no remedy for it in the whole creation; but all says, "It is not in me;" the wisdom of the Counsellor will reach it.

3. See how weak and foolish things fall on and keep the way to happiness, while worldly wise men are bemisted and bewildered, that they never reach it, Isa. 25:8, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein." The Counsellor is on their head, ver. 4; while those slighting him lean to their own understanding, and so wander; Eccles. 10:15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

Secondly, He is a prince of great and noble designs and projects, requiring counsel and wisdom. All the designs and projects of the princes of the earth are but trifles, and childish in comparison of his; they are quite too high for creatures of the deepest reach, 1 Cor. 2:9. We may take them up in these three.

1. He entertained, and has accomplished a design of ransoming an elect world, and so became their Redeemer; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." This was such a high design, that no man whatsoever was able to have fallen on a method of ransoming one of them; Psalm 49:7, 8, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." Silver and gold could not effect it; it behoved to be by blood; that blood behoved to be of infinite value. So the great Counsellor falls on a method to effect it, his own incarnation; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without blemish and without spot."

2. He has been, and is on a project of rescuing one and all of them from the power of the devil; John 10:16, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." This is a difficult task; all the wit and power of hell is engaged against it; and

what is favourable on Satan's side, is, that he is in possession; they are his captives, prisoners and slaves; and they themselves side with him against Christ, being unwilling to be rescued. Yet the Counsellor will not give over the project; but as he has hitherto, so he will to the end carry it on, till there is not one of them all left unrescued; John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

3. He is on a design to have them all together at home with himself in his Father's house, in a state of complete happiness, John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." There are mountains of difficulties lying in the way of this project; but the wisdom of the Counsellor will find a way to roll them all away. This is the building of the temple of the Lord which he has in view, Zech. 6:12; and will perfect over the belly of all difficulties; Zech. 4:7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." For effecting this, there are to be rolled away mountains of difficulties casting up in their case.

(1.) Before death. Their passage through the wilderness is difficult, through their manifold wants, weaknesses, snares and temptations there, that if they were not under the wise conduct of the great Counsellor, it would be impossible they could miss their carcasses falling there; but he will have all safe through; Psalm 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

(2.) In death. It is hard to get safe through the dark valley; but he will have them safe there, where many split, and are broken in pieces. Be the voyage never so dangerous, he will be their pilot; Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Be the way never so much haunted by instruments of destruction, he will carry them safely through; Isa. 35:9, "No lion



shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there."

(3.) In the grave. There their bodies lie, when they leave this world, under the power of death. The bands of death wherewith they are held there, are mighty; the bars of the grave cannot be broken in sunder by created power; but he designs to loose the one, and break the other; Hos. 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

USE 1. Let us then, each for himself, fall in with the noble and great designs of this prince. Satan, the prince of this world, is carrying on designs of destruction; and men fall in with his designs, pursuing their worldly interest as their chief interest, and going on impenitent in their sins. Christ's designs are designs of salvation; fall in with these, seeking chiefly the advancing of your eternal interest, Matth. 6:33, repenting, and turning every one from his evil way.

2. Let us be concerned for the prospering of his counsels; Psalm 72:15, "Prayer shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised." Compare Matth. 6:10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Satan and his agents are engaged against them, and counteract them all they can; stand not unconcerned spectators; for neutrals in this case are enemies to Christ; Matth. 12:30, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Rejoice in the prospering of his kingdom, and mourn for the dishonours done to him.

3. They that reject and oppose his counsels, are fools, and do it to their own loss and hurt; Luke 7:30. For all his counsels are great and noble; and whoso set themselves against them, work for their own ruin; Prov. 8:36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own

soul; all they that hate me, love death." They must perish without remedy, rejecting the counsels of salvation.

Thirdly, He can manage all by himself, and needs no counsel of men, the name of the wisest on earth, may be Consultor; the wisest of men says so; Prov. 11:14, "Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." But his name is counsellor. He is so far a Counsellor, that he is a Consultor of none; Rom. 11:34, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" His servants are about his throne, but not to pretend to give him counsel. Consider,

1. His understanding is infinite. He sees all things at once, and he sees through every thing; whereas the creature's capacity is but finite, seeing but some things, and but some parts of them too. There can then be no lack of counsel in him; and if there were, we would be utterly unfit to make it up. Can the light of a small candle increase the light of the shining sun, or a drop from one's finger the waters of the ocean? Far less can finite add to what is infinite.

2. His counsels were all concerted before we had a being. The plan and method of his government, in every part, was laid down immutably, before there was a man or angel. He hath not councils of yesterday, wherein we might give advice; but "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts 15:18. The elect were chosen to the kingdom from eternity, Eph. 1:4; and the kingdom prepared for them, Matth. 25:34; and all the dispensations of his providence immutably laid down, Zech. 6:1.

3. The execution of them was begun entirely without us. What a sweet surprise was the conduct of the great Counsellor to our guilty first parents in paradise? Did he consult with the guilty pair, how to remedy their case? No; but he surprised them with his counsel. He made us without us at first; and he re-makes us, not only without us, but over the belly of opposition from us, therefore he can manage us without us, both in nature and grace.

4. How often have we seen, that our counsels, had they been mixed with those of the great Counsellor, would have marred all? David would have the child to live, but the great Counsellor would have him to die; for had he lived, he had lived to the reproach of David. Jacob says, "All these things were against him;" yet were they for him; so that if they had not taken place, his family had been in ill case.

USE 1. Let us therefore wholly resign the disposal of our lot to Jesus Christ the great Counsellor; Psalm 47:4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." Let us not carve for ourselves, but leave that to him; believing that to be best for us, which he sees best. First commit your souls to him for eternal salvation, and then put a blank into his hand as to all other concerns. If we are his children, let our Father dispose of us; if his subjects, let our King rule us. "The Father has committed all judgment to the Son," John 5:22. Let not us refuse for our part.

2. Let us wait on him patiently in the way of his dispensation towards ourselves, and towards the church; Isa. 26:8. The church of God, and the interest of religion, are at a very low pass at this day; we are rowed into deep waters, from which no human skill can row us out again. But Christ is the great Counsellor; let him alone; he will see to his own work, and will awake as a giant refreshed with wine. Are we in depths of affliction, trials, and difficulties? The storm is never so boisterous, nor the passage so hazardous, as the pilot Christ needs to call a council what to do.

3. Let us beware of murmuring and fretting at, and quarrelling his conduct. There may be pieces of it which we cannot account for; but there is nothing in it that is wrong, Deut. 32:4. Though we cannot see how all is well that he does, let us believe that he does all well, Jer. 12:1. Murmuring is a charging of the great Councillor foolishly, as if he were not wise enough for to manage us; and that we might pretend to direct him. Remember his name, and be silent, and satisfied in all his disposals.

Fourthly, His manner of conduct, and method of management, is deep and uncommon. Solomon tells us, that "counsel in the heart of man is like deep waters," Prov. 20:5. Christ's name is Counsellor, pointing out his counsels as great deeps; and so they are; Psalm 92:5, "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." The contrivances of the greatest wits among men, are but thin and shallow, in comparison of the way of the great Counsellor; Psalm 77:19, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

1. It is not easily seen into. His way in his conduct of matters is truly mysterious; there is need of wisdom to discern it; Psalm 107:43, and carnal wisdom will not do it; 1 Cor. 2:14, "For 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." Earthly princes have their secrets of government; and therefore no wonder that Christ has his secrets of government, who is the great Counsellor. It is such a deep, and so hard to be seen into, that,

(1.) Carnal, unrenewed men make wretched blunders about it, and quite mistake it. They cannot at all see into the mystery; it is as a parable to them that they cannot understand, Mark 4:11. They are none of the king's friends, and they cannot penetrate into his counsels, nor find out his designs, in his dispensations; Psalm 92:5–7, "O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." Yea, they quite mistake the matter to their own destruction; Mal. 3:14, 15, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness, are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Hos. 14:9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord

are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

(2.) Even the godly themselves are often mightily puzzled and perplexed about it, they know not what to make of it. How was Asaph plunged in the case of the prosperity of the wicked, and adversity of the godly? He was brought to the borders of Atheism by it. And there was no recovering, till he gave over looking with the eye of carnal wisdom, and looked with the eye of faith, Psalm 73:12, &c.

2. His manner of conduct, and method of management, is not to be seen through while we are here, by any whatsoever; Rom. 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Even those who see into his conduct, cannot see through it. There are many plies of the manifold wisdom of God that they cannot unfold; but will remain hid till the light of glory do discover them. By faith we may see so far as to say, "He does all things well." But when the whole web of providence being cut out, is laid before the saints in the light of the upper house, they will doubtless discern a great deal of beauties therein, which they do not now see. For a swatch of these depths, you may take these.

1. Things let go on to the utmost point of hopelessness, before a hand is put to, to work the delivery. This is not the manner of men, whose maxim is, to withstand the beginnings, before the disease grows desperate:

*Principiis obsta: sero medicina paratur,*

*Cum longa per moras invaluere mala.*

But nothing is more ordinary in the conduct of the great counsellor, than to let things go on to the utmost extremity, and then to take the opportunity; Deut. 32:36, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." The chief thing in the

dispensation was about himself; before he was delivered, he was dead, and buried, the stone sealed, the watch set, he lying still so long in the grave; and after that pattern, the greatest deliverances his church or any believer gets, is wrought, as in the case of Joseph.

2. The prince's friends treated like enemies, and his enemies treated like friends. Solomon observes it; Eccl. 8:14, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." This is not the way of men neither, to caress their enemies, and heap favours on them; and to pinch, and lay their hand heavy on their friends. But this is one of the counsellor's depths of management. The ungrateful butler is at court in favour, but Joseph in the dungeon; waters of a full cup wrung out to the ungodly, but godly Asaph plagued every day; Herodias dancing and making merry, but John Baptist's head struck off in a prison.

3. The most unlikely instruments and means chosen, and the most promising laid by. This is not the way of men neither, who choose what bids fairest for the purpose; but it is the way of the counsellor. When the people choose a king, he was one that was the most stately man among them; but not so was the counsellor's choice, 1 Sam. 16:7. Cain was rejected, and Abel accepted. Sarah, who had no procreative faculty, is chosen, when wasted and worn with age, to be the mother of the seed promised to Abraham; and not Hagar, who was in the bloom of youth. So Mary espoused to a carpenter, and none of the ladies of Judea, was pitched upon to be the mother of our Lord. He chose his apostles from among fishermen generally, not from among the learned men of the age, Paul only excepted.

4. Things brought about by means in their own nature, and in the eyes of men, quite contrary to the design. Neither is this the manner of men, but it is his. The blind man is cured with clay laid on his eyes. Joseph is advanced by means of his being sold as a slave, and put

into the dungeon. The wheel of providence that seems to drive away from the design, doth often but take an unknown road to it.

USE I. Let us judge nothing before the time, nor be hasty in our conclusions on the conduct of providence. It will but proclaim our rashness and folly, and we will be forced at length to retract our censures; Psalm 116:11, 12, "I said in my haste, All men are liars." His method of management is often what we cannot rightly judge of till we see the end; Jam. 5:11, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

2. Let us beware of penning up the great counsellor to our known roads. Hence God's people often torment themselves in vain, thinking that, because they cannot see him in all the roads within their view, he is not coming to them at all. In the meantime, he may be making speed towards them, though in a darkened road, where they look not for him, as in the conduct of Jesus towards the disciples; Matth. 14:25–27, "And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." There are many methods of deliverance known to the counsellor, that fall not within the compass of our narrow view; and when we are set on them, we know not whither they do lead; Isa. 42:16, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

3. See here the necessity of acquaintance with the Scriptures, and of faith; 2 Pet. 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." There the mysteries of the kingdom are unfolded, and by

faith the beauty of them is perceived. Those who are strangers to the book of the word, cannot miss to blunder in the book of providence to their own soul's hurt; and unbelief of the word makes beautiful pieces of providence look very odd; for it fixes men's eyes, as if one should stare on the wrong side of arras hangings, having no power to turn up the right side of them; Psalm 73:16, 17, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end."

Fifthly. He does nothing without a becoming reason. There is not one random stroke in the whole of the conduct of providence; Eph. 1:11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The red and black horses came out between the mountains of brass, as well as the rest, Zech. 6:1, 2, and every event is written in the sealed book, Rev. 5. There is a reason for every dispensation, and it is a reason that is good and valid. This appears, if ye consider that,

1. His infinite wisdom sees all things at once perfectly; Psalm 147:5. "His understanding is infinite." The fitness of a means for compassing an end, cannot be hid to him, as it is often unto men; and he cannot be liable to mistake in that matter, though men, through their weaknes, as often pitch on means unfit as fit, Ezek. 1:18, and 10:12. Therefore he does all fitly and reasonably, since he is withal infinitely good.

2. Even those things which sometimes cannot be discerned to have a fitness in them for any good purpose, do in end appear beautiful; those that appear confused at first, when done out appear orderly, so that in end his people are made to say, He has done all things well. So was the dispensation anent Joseph; Gen. 50:20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." All of them, whatever compasses they make, do by virtue of the promise



concenter in God's glory and his people's good, Rom. 8:28, and 9:22, 23.

Thus are the mysterious steps of providence before named all managed, and may be accounted for.

1. Things are let go on to the utmost point of hopelessness, that the power of God may appear the more in bringing about the delivery, and that it may be the more signal mercy to his people, and fill them the more with joy and wonder, John 11:14, 15. The Lord left his people in Babylon, till they were like dry bones lying about the graves; why? see Ezek. 37:13, "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves." Psalm 126:1. 4, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south." Deliverance is sweet at any time; but the more hopeless, the more sweet and surprising is it when it comes.

2. By treating his friends with afflictions and trials, he pours contempt on the world, and all its honour, wealth, and ease; shewing to all thereby, that those things which carnal men set their hearts on, are such things as he hath no value for, else he would never dispose of them at the rate he does. Thereby he invites his enemies to repentance, and renders them inexcusable if they be not gained thereby, Rom. 2:4. And he tries the faith, love, and patience of his own, and thereby lays up for their greater weight of glory, 1 Pet. 1:6, 7.

3. He chooseth the most unlikely instruments and means to accomplish his purposes, that he may stain the pride of all glory, Is. 23:9, that all may be referred to himself as the first cause and last end of all things, which is the reasonable order, 1 Cor. 1:31. Therefore he "put the treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. 4:7, and for the same reason not in the finest, but the coarsest of the sort.

4. He works by contrary means, that he may shew himself to be above means, and to have them at his beck, and to surprise his people more sweetly with the unlooked-for effect of them. The character of divine power is the more deeply engraven on the effect, that the means of themselves are not of that tendency.

USE 1. Then all that the Lord does is well done. There is nothing amiss in it, Deut. 32:4; in the blackest dispensation there is a line of purity. The smoking oven is joined with a burning lamp, Gen. 15:17. Compare Isa. 62:1. In the whole fabric of providence towards the children of men, there is not one wrong pin, there is nothing awry, but everything lies straight to its end.

2. When ye cannot find out the reason, a becoming reason of some dispensation towards the church or yourselves, yet believe that it is not without a becoming reason, and be satisfied in your minds that it is well done, because the counsellor has done it. When you put a straight stick in the water, it appears to your eyes to be crooked; yet you do not think or believe in your judgment that it is really crooked. That appearance is owing to your eyesight, not to the stick itself, which remains straight. So is it with us oft-times in respect of the dispensations of providence. But let faith correct the errors of sense in this matter, Jer. 12:1.

3. Wait ye, and the reason of the most mysterious dispensation will appear in a clear light at length. There is a promise for it; John 13:7, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Since the counsellor does nothing without a reason, he will for his own honour satisfy all his friends with it, and silence his enemies for ever; and thereby he will bountifully reward believing waiters, and confound unbelieving quarrellers of his conduct.

Sixthly, He manageth all with a depth of wisdom. Counsel speaks not only a reasonable management, but a depth of wisdom; for it is to things of the greatest weight and difficulty that counsellors are required; Prov. 20:5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water;

but a man of understanding will draw it out." Hereof take the following evidences.

EVIDENCE 1. His compassing a great variety of ends by one and the same means, and all these designed. What a vast variety of ends did he compass by Joseph's being sold into Egypt? Hereby Jacob was tried, the naughtiness of his sons discovered, Joseph himself proved, Jacob's posterity provided for, Christ was typified, way was made for the greatest events under the Old Testament, &c. So some suffer, and the Counsellor designs the good of many thereby; 2 Cor. 1:6, "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings, which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." In men's management there may be happy undesigned hits; but all these are designed by the infinite mind of the Counsellor.

EVID. 2. That no man can fully reach what is in the womb of providence, in the most open and obvious steps of it. He may see this and the other design in it, but still there is something beyond what he sees; Psalm. 92:5, "O Lord, how great are thy works; and thy thoughts are very deep." Sober-minded men of learning will own, that they cannot have a full and comprehensive notion of the least insect; they know not but the Creator may have put in it some quality which they cannot discern. And sober-minded Christians will own the same in the most obvious steps of providence; Rom. 11:33, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

EVID. 3. The greatest variety of designs in a dispensation is guarded on every side by the wisdom of the Counsellor, that one shall not overthrow, nor interfere with another. Man's wisdom cannot prevent, that where they have many irons in the fire together, some of them must cool, while others of them are working; but every the least design of the counsellor must take, by his wise management; Isa. 46:10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

See Joel 2:7, 8, "They shall run like mighty men, they shall climb the wall like men of war, and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded." For the wheels are full of eyes round about.

EVID. 4. His bringing the greatest of things out of the smallest beginnings. O how often does the Counsellor, in the depth of his wisdom, rear up golden pillars on leaden bases, and make the cloud like a man's hand at first, cover the whole face of the heavens? Thus he manages in the kingdom of nature; for an instance of which, man needs not go without himself; but consider what a minute thing it is from which this body of his, growing to such a bulk, in such comely proportion, with such a variety of organs doth take its rise; Psalm 139:14, "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." In the kingdom of grace; in its beginning in a soul, and in the world, it is as a grain of mustard seed, Matth. 13:31. So Psalm 72:16, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." How low were the beginnings of that kingdom which has now filled the earth? The stone is become a great mountain, filling the earth, Dan. 2:35.

EVID. 5. His making the most weighty and surprising turns in matters, upon the smallest of events. If we trace the turn the affairs of the church took in Mordecai's days, to the overthrowing of Haman's desperate plot, to the first spring of it; we will find it was a vapour that had got up into Ahasuerus's head that he could not sleep, Esther 6:1. In the smallest of things God is very great. He that hangs the earth upon nothing, often makes a very minute circumstance to be the hinge on which great things turn; 2 Kings 3:23.

EVID. 6. His counteracting successfully the united force of devils and men, in all ages, set for the overthrow of his kingdom; Prov. 21:30,

"There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." The subjects of Christ's kingdom are weak, and easily beguiled; Satan is most subtle, watchful, and incessant in his acting against them; the war has been carried on by hell against them through all ages; the generality of the world is on Satan's side; often the feet of the saints are almost slipt; yet the church is preserved, not one of Christ's kindly subjects lost. This proclaims aloud the depth of wisdom in her King, Micah 4:9. See Gen. 3:15.

EVID. 7. Lastly, His outshooting the devil in his own bow, and bringing good out of evil, Phil. 1:12. The malice of hell never appeared more, than in the sufferings Christ himself was put to: yet out of these was the salvation of an elect world brought; and these were they that shook the kingdom of Satan to the foundations. The very temptations and falls of the saints are overruled to some advantage, Rom. 8:28.

USE I. Then whatsoever he doth, is not only well done, but best done, Eccl. 3:14. If thou art out of Christ, whatever thou meetest with in the providence of God, it is that which for the time is best for the glory of God. If thou art in Christ, whatsoever thou meeetest with, is for the time best for God's honour, and best for thee too. For all is the product of the depth of wisdom. The reason of the difference is, that the believer being in God's covenant, God's honour and his good are joint interests secured by the covenant; unbelievers are not so.

2. The believer may securely trust him to whom he has committed his soul, with the management of all that concerns him; Psalm 37:5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Our anxiety should be confined to our duty; to be otherwise anxious, as for provision, protection, and the like, is but the fruit of unbelief; Luke 12:29, "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." Since God stands in the relation of a Father, and is infinitely wise, there is complete ground for the security of faith; Matth. 6:8, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

3. In the case of doubtful events, believe that the Counsellor will do what is best. This is what ye are to believe in such a case; Psalm 85:12, "The Lord will give that which is good." Here is the rest of faith in cases of a doubtful issue: and here one may securely rest waiting the issue, which the depth of wisdom shall in due time bring forth. Dominus meus omnia, &c.—Luther.

Seventhly, and Lastly, He is the best Counsellor; there is none like him. There are many counsellors, nobody wants some; but his name is Counsellor, as if there were not another; for he is the Counsellor by way of eminency.

Here we shall,

1st, Confirm the truth of this assertion, That Christ is the best Counsellor.

2dly, Shew wherein he counsels sinners.

3dly, How he gives his counsel.

First, To confirm the truth of this assertion, That Christ is the best Counsellor, consider,

1. He is of the Father's choice and nomination for a Counsellor to us; 1 Cor. 1:30, "He is made of God unto us wisdom." When the Father from eternity, pitying fallen man in his ruined state, was thinking on a Counsellor, that might by his wisdom retrieve their sinking affairs, he pitched on Jesus Christ; Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." The highest angel was too weak for such a burden; but the Son, who was of the cabinet-council of heaven, was the choice; and sinners are referred to him, Matth. 17:5.

2. He is the saint's choice in all ages for a Counsellor; who all with one voice say; Psalm 73:24, 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion

for ever." Men are by nature out of themselves, and so will keep the guiding of themselves in their own hands; but as soon as they come to themselves, they renounce their own wisdom, will no more believe their own eyes, but by faith choose him for their Counsellor.

3. He never misseth the point in his counselling, Prov. 30:5. "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." The best of counsellors among men will miss at a time; but infinite wisdom is not liable to mistake. He sees, and sees through all that is past and present, and thoroughly foresees all that is to come. How can he err in his counsel?

Secondly, Wherein doth Christ counsel sinners? He counsels them,

1. In their greatest concerns, their concerns for eternity. In these they have least skill; in these a mistaking of their measures is most fatal; so his counsel respects these chiefly. And he counsels them,

(1.) To the way of peace, which they know not, Rev. 3:18. The gospel is Christ's counsel to sinners; thereby he points them the way to the favour of God, the pardon of their sin, the securing to themselves a right to heaven, and freedom from the wrath and curse of God. He presseth and plies them to take that counsel, with the strongest arguments.

(2.) In the way to peace and happiness, how they being set on it, may keep it till they arrive at perfect happiness, Psalm 73:24. His clients are in a wilderness while in this world; and he is to be instead of eyes to them there. In every new emergent difficulty, they have access to his counsel, what course to take in such a temptation, dark step, or case.

2. In their lesser concerns, viz. the things of time. He refuses not to be their Counsellor in the matters of this present life. And,

(1.) In their matters of greater weight, he allows sinners to seek his counsel; and it is their sin that they neglect it, Josh. 9:14. There is an

oracle to be consulted in our temporal, as well as in our spiritual affairs; for the promise reacheth the one as well as the other; Psalm 112:5, "A good man—will guide his affairs with discretion."

(2.) In their smallest matters; Prov. 3:6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." There is nothing so small but the providence of God reaches it, even to the very hairs of the head, Matth. 10:30; and on very small things great matters may depend. Things small in themselves may be very great in their consequences; therefore we have need of a Counsellor in the least.

So Christ is a Counsellor for sinners in all their matters, of whatsoever kind. And this is a peculiar excellency of this Counsellor, that he can give counsel in every thing. Men consult divines in their soul's case, physicians in the case of their body, lawyers in the case of their estate, men experienced in their occupation; but Christ is a Counsellor in them all.

Thirdly, How doth Christ give his counsel.

1. He proposeth his counsel in and by his word; Psalm 119:24, "Thy testimonies are my counsellors." If ye would have his counsel, ye must go believingly to his word. That is it by which the answer is given to those that consult the holy oracle. And there is no case can happen to one, but in the word there is proper counsel for it. This is a mystery to the formal and profane; but the exercised Christian knows it by experience to be true.

2. He clears it, and opens it, and confirms it by his providence; Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." Providence taken by itself, without respect to the word, is a very uncertain light to walk by, as in Jonah's finding the ship going to Tarshish; but when providence is considered in subordination to the word, it is of eminent use for discovering the Lord's mind in particular cases; as in the case of Peter; Acts 10:17, "Now while Peter doubted in himself what this



vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius, had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate." And therefore all tender Christians will be serious observers of providence; Psalm 107:43, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

3. He makes it effectual by his Holy Spirit; John 16:13, "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." He shines on the word, and on the work of providence, sets both in a clear light, and enables, as well as determines the believer to follow it. So the counsel of the great counsellor is the light of life, John 8:12; promised to all Christ's followers. Men following their own wisdom and delusive counsels, cannot expect the Spirit's efficacy; and the word and providence cannot be effectual without the Spirit; but the Spirit makes both effectual to those that wait for Christ's counsel.

USE 1. Then take him for your Counsellor, renouncing all other. And,

1. Renounce your own wisdom, do not lean to your own abilities for the management of yourself; but know your own wisdom to be but weakness and folly; Prov. 3:5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Fallen man lost his spiritual eye-sight, and he can see nothing aright in spirituals till he go to the Counsellor, Rev. 3:18; and he is apt to go wrong even in other things.

2. Renounce the counsel of the world, and shut your ears to it; Prov. 19:27, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Mind it is the character of a happy man, that he "walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners," Psalm 1:1; and the character of one in a natural state; Eph. 2:2, "to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air." They who make the way of the world their rule, must perish with the world.

3. Take Christ for your Counsellor instead of all other; Prov. 23:26, "My son, give me thine heart; and let thine eyes observe my ways." Give up yourselves wholly to his management; let him be your sole Counsellor, and that for all things; you need a guide, the Father has given him to you for that end; Isa. 55:4, "Behold, I have given him for a leader unto the people." Close with him as your guide and counsellor.

USE 2. Follow the counsel that he is giving you. Christ is counselling you all in the gospel; even those that will not consult him, and have refused his counsel, he is counselling still. His counsels are two.

1. He is counselling you to believe in himself, John 6:29; to come to him, to come to his market of free grace, and buy there, without money or price, Rev. 3:18; Isa. 55:1; to take him for a Head, and husband, for all.

2. To be holy; to give up with your sinful courses, that will ruin you; and to betake yourselves to the way of holiness, without which there is no seeing the Lord; Ezek. 18:31, "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?" See both together; Prov. 9:5, 6, "Come, eat of my bread" saith Wisdom, "and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

USE 3. Lastly, Then make use of Christ as a counsellor, by your consulting him daily, that ye may not walk but by his direction. And,

1. Be habitually tender in labouring to know the mind of God, as to sin and duty, in particular cases; and in your common, as well as in your religious affairs, Isa. 28:26.

2. Be upright and sincere in your consulting him, lying open to the divine determination, Jer. 42:20; compare chap. 41:17.

3. Humbly entertain the divine determination, though it fall to be cross to your inclination. Do not, like Baalam, tempt God, till ye get an answer to your own mind, Numb. 22.

4. Beware of going cross to duty cleared, and rejecting God's counsel given, 1 Kings 13.

5. Lastly, Pray much; ejaculatory, and secret; and carefully observe providences, while ye are waiting for the Lord's counsel. The light is from the Lord, if it is strengthening to duty, and overpower corruptions against it.

## **CHRIST THE MIGHTY GOD**

His Name shall be called—The Mighty God. ISAIAH 9:6

THESE words in the Hebrew are, God Mighty One. This is the third syllable of the name of our Lord Redeemer; and as this name is given to him as God-man, so this syllable of it natively respects both, as he is God, he is the true God; as he is man, he is the mighty one; the greatest heroes are but weaklings to him.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ, the prince presented and given to us of the Father, is and shews himself to be true God, the Mighty One.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. That Christ is the true God.

II. That the man Christ is the Mighty One.

III. Lastly, Apply.

I. I shall shew, that Christ Is the true God. This appears from these following things.

1. That he is the true God, the scripture expressly calls him, and asserts him to be so; John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." Acts 20:28, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Rom. 9:5, "Of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever;" the true God; 1 John 5:20, "This is the true God, and eternal life;" Jehovah or Lord; Mal. 3:1, "The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant." This name is peculiar to God only; Psalm 83:18, "That men may know, that thou whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth."

2. The attributes or perfections of God, distinguishing God from all created beings, are in him, and ascribed to him, He is eternal, or from everlasting, Micah 5:2; independent and almighty, Rev. 1:8; everywhere present, John 3:13; omniscient, John 21:17; and unchangeable, Heb. 1:11, 12.

3. The works peculiar to God alone, are done by him, and ascribed to him. He is the creator of all things, John 1:3; and preserver of them in their being, Heb. 1:2, 3. He raiseth the dead by his own power, and at his own pleasure, John 5:21, 26. He is the Saviour of sinners, Hos. 1:7; and there is no Saviour besides God, chap. 13:4; yea, whatsoever the Father doth, he doth, John 5:19.

4. Divine worship, which must be given to God only, Matth. 4:10, is due to him; for the angels are commanded to worship him, Heb. 1:6. Every one is to give the same honour to him, as to the Father, John 5:23. They are blessed that trust in him, by faith resting on him, Psalm 2:12; while they are cursed that put their trust in man, Jer. 17:5. He is the object of prayer, Acts 7:59; and we are baptised in his name, Matth. 28:19.

5. Lastly, He is equal with the Father, Phil. 2:6; and one with him, John 10:30. Now, seeing God will not give his glory to another, Isa. 48:11; it follows, that though Christ is a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from the Father. And therefore he is, with the Father and Holy Ghost, the one supreme Most High God.

II. I shall shew, that the man Christ is the mighty one.

1st, He doth and has done works that no other could do, John 15:24. His works proclaim him the mighty one in all respects; mighty in the reach of his wisdom, mighty in treasures, mighty in moyen and interest, and mighty in battle. And there are four mighty works of Christ to which there is an eye in this his name.

1. His fully answering all the demands of the broken law in the room of the elect, Psalm 89:19. A work none else could have done; a weight none else could have borne; a vast debt none else could have paid, and cleared. But he did it by his birth, life, and death; and completely, so that he got up the discharge, 1 Tim. 3:16.

2. His destroying of sin, Gen. 3:15. The whole sin of the whole elect, he gave a death blow to, at once upon the cross; to the guilt and power of it; so that its utter destruction in them all was as much secured thereby, as Christ's death by his being nailed to the cross; Rom. 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." He is now pursuing that blow, in the conversion and sanctification of the elect; driving out sin by degrees from among them; he will give the last stroke at the last day, and then that hellish flood shall be as much dried up as it had never been.

3. His victory over death and the grave; Hos. 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Sin entering, death went out over the world a conqueror, armed with a sting that none could pluck out. But Christ encountered death, and

dying was the destruction of it, and of the grave its fellow, viz. in respect of all his. The victory will be complete at the last day; 1 Cor. 15:26, "Then the last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death." Isa. 25:8, "Then God will swallow up death in victory.

4. Lastly, His victory over the devil, Gen. 3:15. Satan conquered all mankind in Adam; but here was a man match and more for him. He engaged with the enemy as a tempter, in the wilderness, and he foiled him; as a roaring lion, on the cross, and overcame him, Col. 2:15; as a violent possessor, in the hearts of the elect, from time to time, and he turns him out, out of one after another, till he shall not have a foot of ground in the elect world. And then he will attack him in his proper possession, viz. the reprobate, standing on the left hand of the Judge, and drive him and them away off the earth into the pit. So may we say; Psalm 98:1, "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory."

2dly, He hath all at his command in heaven and earth, whether created persons or things, Matth. 28:18. The man Christ is heir of all things, Heb. 1:2; Lord of all the works of God's hands. Psalm 8. What a mighty one must he then be?

3dly, Lastly, Being God as well as man, his power is infinite. Not that infinite power is subjected in the human nature of Christ, a created thing, and such is his human nature, is not capable of infinite perfections. But the human nature and divine nature make but one person in him; and so he who is the man, is of infinite power.

USE 1. This serves to refute the damnable heresy of those who impugn the supreme Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. This age of apostacy, having been unfruitful under the gospel, comes naturally to question the foundation-points of Christianity, And such is this, that overthrows all our salvation at once. When the Father provided a prince for lost sinners to save them, he gave them one who was God mighty one. None of inferior dignity could serve the purpose.

2. It speaks terror to all the enemies of Christ, in principles or practice. Ah! sinners, why do ye reject him for a prince, trample on his laws? &c. Ye cannot make head against him, who is God mighty one, who can crush you in pieces as a moth. True, he does not at every occasion exert his power against the rebellious sons of men; but pray, consider this is the time of his grace, wherein he is waiting for your repentance; if that were over, then follows that; Luke 19:27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

3. It speaks comfort to the church and every believer in their low estate. Whatever be your wants, he is able to supply them; your weakness, there is might enough in him; be your case never so hopeless, it is never without the reach of his help. Let believers learn to rejoice in their prince, their head in whom they are complete.

4. Lastly, It serves to exhort all to take him for their prince. O kiss ye the Son presented to you in the gospel-offer! renounce other lords, and by faith embrace him. And therefore consider,

(1.) His might will be for you, for your provision, protection, and happiness, if ye be his.

(2.) It will be against you for time and eternity, if ye refuse him.

## **CHRIST THE EVERLASTING FATHER**

His name shall be called the Everlasting Father. ISAIAH 9:6

THIS is the fourth syllable of Christ's name. Having called him a child, a son, a child born, a son given; it is shown here, that though he is a son, he is a Father too; yea, though he is a child born, he is the Father of eternity, i.e. The Everlasting Father, which plainly leads us to his divine nature.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ, the prince presented and given to us of the Father, is himself the Everlasting Father.

In handling this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. In what respects Christ is the Everlasting Father.

II. What a Father he is.

III. Lastly, Improve the subject.

I. In what respects is Christ the Everlasting Father?

1st, He is the Father of all things, who was from everlasting, before all. He is, with his Father and Spirit, one God, the common Father of all by creation; 1 Cor. 8:6, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." Hence. he is called the beginning of the creation of God, Rev. 3:14; from whom all had their beginning. So he is the Father of all men, more particularly, Mal. 2:10; of their souls and bodies, but especially of their souls, Heb. 12:9; all men, yes, all creatures whatsoever, owing their being to him, as a son to the father. And so being before all creatures, himself is uncreated and eternal, Prov. 8:23.

2dly, He is the Father of all believers, in a peculiar manner, who will be to everlasting; and that in two respects.

1. As he is, with his Father and Spirit, one God, Eph. 4:6; the one God and Father of the family of heaven, who has adopted believers for his sons and daughters, 2 Cor. 6:17, 18. And thus we call him, with the Father and Spirit, our Father, Matth. 6:9.

2. As he is Mediator, God man; Heb. 2:13, "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me." So believers are his children, his seed, Isa. 53:10; standing in a peculiar relation to him as such. And of this relation there is a threefold ground.



(1.) Believers are of his flesh and of his bones, Eph. 5:30. A plain allusion to the woman's being formed of Adam's body; whereby it comes to pass, that all mankind do entirely owe their original to Adam; all his posterity being born of the woman who was made of him. So all believers owe their original entirely to the body of Christ, cast into the sleep of death on the cross; Rom. 7:4, "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." Isa. 53:10, "When then shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." And herein Abraham was a type of him; of whose body, when in a sort dead, a seed innumerable as the stars did spring, Rom. 4:18, 19; Heb. 11:12. So from the body of Christ dead on the cross and grave, spring the innumerable company of believers that ever were, are, or shall be; John 12:24, 32, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

(2.) They are begotten of him into their new life and nature, which they have as believers, Deut, 32:6, 18. The seed is the word of the gospel, James 1:18; that incorruptible seed, 1 Pet. 1:23; quickened by his Spirit, John 6:63; whereby being made to believe, and so united to Christ, they are made new creatures, Eph. 1:13; 2. Cor. 5:17. So that as they owe the purchase of their gracious being to his merit, they owe their actual gracious being to his Spirit, both wholly.

(3.) They do in a peculiar manner bear, and were appointed to bear Christ's image, as children of that Father, Rom. 8:29. Believers bear not only the image of God, but the image of Christ. There is a difference betwixt these two. The latter implies all that the former does; but it takes in more also. There are two parts of, it.

1. Conformity to Christ in his holiness. And in this respect believers are like him, as the wax impressed with the seal bears the like figure, Eph. 1:13. John 1:16. And here is the image of God, which all believers do bear, and which is a part of the image of Christ. This

image of God believers have not at the first hand, as Adam had it; but at the second hand, viz. from Christ; as Adam's children would have had it from him, if he had stood, and as we now actually have Satan's image, impressed by Satan at the fall on Adam, and by Adam communicated to us. So God being to restore his image to fallen man, first impressed it on the man Christ, that from him it might be communicated to believers in him. The man Christ was made like God, as a son is like a father; and believers are made like the man Christ. On the man Christ that image was impressed, and from him it is expressed on us, and thence called Christ's image.

That is, God making the man Christ the second Adam, made him after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. So believers being created again in Christ, he communicates to them of that knowledge, righteousness, &c. which image of Christ, begun now, will be perfected after in all believers. All this is clear from 1 Cor. 15:49, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly;" Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Hence believers are said to be "created in Christ," Eph. 2:10. As Eve was made in the image of God, being made in the image of Adam, Gen. 2:18, so the church is made in the image of Christ.

2. Conformity to Christ and his sufferings. This is it that is particularly aimed at, Rom. 8:29, compared with verse 28. Hence believers are said to be "partakers of the sufferings of Christ," 1 Pet. 4:13. And their sufferings are called his, 2 Cor. 1:5. In his sufferings he gave us an example to follow, 1 Peter 2:21. What can be more natural than that the members of a suffering head be suffering members? that the followers of a crucified Christ bear the cross after him?

This conformity lies in three things; for the wicked suffer too.

(1) Believers' sufferings are destructive of sin; Isa. 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." The more Christ suffered, the more the works of the devil were brought near to ruin. The man who by his sufferings is made more holy, more loosed from the world, more pressing after God in Christ, is conformed to Christ in his sufferings. Though indeed the progress may not be sensible sometimes, more than that of the sun in the firmament, or a tree in the earth.

(2) Believers welcome their sufferings on that account, as they tend to the ruin of sin; as the sick man does a bitter drug for the sake of health, Matth. 16:24, 25. It is true, they may have their fits of impatience under the rod, and may be desirous to be free; but they will turn towards a resignation. Our Lord Jesus, who never in the least murmured, said, Matth. 26:39, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

(3) Believers' sufferings will have a happy and glorious issue. As Christ went to the crown by the cross, so will they, 1 Tim. 2:12. While the sufferings of others will end in eternal suffering, their present sufferings will end in glory: their longest and blackest night will have a blessed morning, an eternal day; with which their worst nights of trouble are not to be compared, Rom. 8:17.

Thus he is the believer's Father, and he is their everlasting Father.

1. The relation is never interrupted from the first moment it is made. Once in God's family, never out of it again, for shorter or longer time. Their Father may frown on them, and chastise them, and hide his love from them; but he is their Father still, Psal. 89:30–33. The adoption lasts, they are still of Christ's body, their new nature is never lost, and his image is never quite defaced in them.

2. The relation is never ended. He will be their Father through all eternity. Among men there is no interruption of the fatherly relation,

while the father and the son live; but death dissolves it. But here death cannot dissolve the relation, Rom. 8:38, 39. He will be, and they will be for ever; and he will be their Father for ever, and they his children, Rev. 21:7.

## II. What a Father is Christ? He is a non-such Father.

1. He is the most honourable Father; the King of kings, and Lord of lords. None whose eyes are opened, but they value this relation to Christ more than all the fading honours of a world, 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Moses preferred it to the being called the son of the daughter of a king, Heb. 11:24, 25.

2. The most loving and compassionate Father. His love has gone beyond that of fathers, and mothers too, even to their sucking children, Isa. 49:15, 16. David wished he had died for his rebellious son, but Christ really died for his.

3. The most helpful Father. Many times fathers, though they fain would, cannot help their children: but he can help his in all cases. In the greatest danger he is a refuge; in all wants, he has store for their supply; if they be held at short commons at any time, it is because he sees it best for them. In death, when neither father nor mother can help, he will, Psal. 48:14, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." He is ever a present help.

4. The richest Father, that has the best inheritance to give his children; 1 Pet. 1:4, "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." He has prepared for them a better country, a glorious city, a palace for their mansion-house; and the richest treasures; and these such as shall never go from them, nor they from them.

5. The wisest Father, "God only wise." To his disposal one may securely resign himself absolutely. He ever seeks his childrens' welfare: and he cannot be mistaken in his measures.

6. Lastly, He has provided the best attendants for his children in their life. Angels are ministering spirits to them during their life, Heb. 1:14.; and at their death they carry their souls into heaven, Luke 16:22. Yea himself is ever with them, in life and in death.

USE. Then, sinners, take him for your everlasting Father. Come out of Satan's family: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate. Forget your father's house, and your own people." He is presented and given to you the Everlasting Father; receive him. And,

1. Ye that are fatherless. The father of your flesh is dead and gone; ye have the fewer to care for you, and see to your welfare. Here is an everlasting Father for you.

2. Ye that see yourselves in a helpless case, like orphans in the world. Created props and pillars have been taken from you, one after another; and ye see yourselves fram'd sted.\* Here is a Father for you, Hos. 14:3, "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

3. All of you will find yourselves in such a case as none in the world will be able to relieve. Choose him now for your Father, who will be everlasting.

MOTIVE 1. He is your Father by creation, let him be your Father by choice. He has the first and best right to you; if one is to serve, will he not rather choose to serve his father than another?

MOTIVE 2. There are blessed privileges of this state. As,

(1.) You will have access to him with holy boldness, Eph 3:12. He will be well pleased with your voice, Cant. 2:14.

(2.) Special immunities and freedoms, as king's children; freedom from the law as a covenant of works; free from the curse; free from the hurt of everything.

(3.) Fatherly love and pity, Psalm 103:13. He will distinguish between weakness and wickedness. He corrects with a fatherly reluctancy; Lam. 3:33, "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

(4.) Protection; Prov. 14:26, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge." Provision both for soul and body, and seasonable correction.

(5.) An inheritance and portion, according to the Father's quality. Rom. 8:17, "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

MOTIVE 3. Lastly, If ye take him not for your Father, ye cannot escape him as your wrathful judge.

## **CHRIST THE PRINCE OF PEACE**

His name shall be called the Prince of Peace. ISAIAH 9:6

THIS is the last syllable of the name of our glorious Redeemer. It consists of two letters. (1.) He is a Prince, an eminent one. (2.) Peace. He is the Prince of Peace. As the Father of eternity is the everlasting Father; so the Prince of Peace is the peaceful Prince.

DOCT. Jesus Christ presented and given to us of the Father, is the peaceful Prince.

Of Christ's principality we have already spoken; we are now to consider him as the peaceful Prince. And in prosecuting this doctrine, I shall only show in what respects Christ is the peaceful Prince; and then make some practical improvement.

In what respects is Christ the peaceful Prince? And,

First, More generally, we take it up in these three particulars. He is the peaceful Prince,

1. In respect of disposition. He is a prince of the most peaceful disposition; Matth. 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Peace is woven into his nature. Though he is the mighty One, who is of such power as to frown a sinner to destruction; yet his great power is tempered with the greatest meekness and peacefulness. The prince of this world is the roaring lion; the Prince of heaven, the Lamb, John 1:29, even on his throne, Rev. 5:6.

2. In respect of action and operation. Peace is his work he pursued all along, and doth still pursue; Eph. 2:14, "For he is our peace." He is the great peace-maker. Adam's sin and the sin of his posterity set all at red war, and kept them so: but Christ the second Adam travels for peace. "Blessed are the peace-makers," and he is blessed for ever on his peace-making, Phil. 2:8, 9.

3. In respect of the state of his kingdom; Rom. 14:17, "The kingdom of God is peace." Peace in the language of the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament is prosperity; so a peaceful prince is a prosperous one. Thus Solomon was a type of him, who had a reign of the greatest peace and prosperity, Psalm 72:7. His subjects may enjoy peace whoever want it.

Secondly, More particularly. And,

1st, He is the peaceful Prince, peaceful of disposition, in the following respects.

1. He bears long with his enemies, he is long-suffering, 2 Pet. 3:9. Many calls he gives them which they neglect; but he calls them still; many affronts they do to him, yet his deserved wrath is held in; and still he waits, if so be they may be brought to repentance, Rom. 2:4. There must be a mighty inclination to peace where it is so.

2. He bears much at the hands of his friends, but never casts them off, John 13:2. O the weakness, witlessness, and folly that hangs about them! O the ingratitude, untenderness, and backslidings they fall into! They reflect dishonour many times on him by their way; but they experience him to be the Prince of peace, Psalm 78:38.

3. He is easy of access, for poor sinners. The worst of sinners may have access to him if they will; John 6:37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Papists make mediators to him; but there needs none to him; whoever comes to him is welcome. And there needs none to God but him. Whatever is their business in the court of heaven, he will readily do it for them.

4. He is ready to forgive, Psalm 86:5. His offending friends are readily pardoned, and restored to wonted favour; his rebellious enemies are readily pardoned on their submission, and received into the number of his friends. His peacefulness is such, that peace is his delight.

5. He is very familiar with his true subjects. He treats all his servants, not as servants, but as friends; and communicates to them his secrets; John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Love and good-will shines forth in his countenance.

6. The afflicting of his people, is as it were against the grain with him; Lam. 3:33, "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." There is a necessity for it, for which he is obliged to do it; 1 Pet. 1:6, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." The apostle distinguished between men's correcting and his in Heb. 12:10, "They verily for a few days chastened us, after their own pleasure: but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." And in it



he carries along the pity of a father, Psalm 103:13, 14, and so is afflicted in their affliction, Isa. 63:9.

7. Lastly, He bore his own sufferings with the utmost peaceableness, meekness and patience. The angels sang at his birth, Peace on earth; and the earth never saw such a pattern of peace. In his life, which was a continued suffering, he never shewed the least discomposure. In his death, he prayed for his enemies.

2dly, He is the peaceful Prince, peaceful in action and operation. He acted for peace, as never another did. He brought about such peace as had never been known, if he had not taken it in hand. And here we may consider,

1. What peace is effected by this Prince of peace.

(1.) Peace with God; Isa. 53:5, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." Sinners were at war with God, and God with them; and there could be no peace betwixt the parties, till the Prince of peace turned to be Mediator of the peace. The war went on, sinners doing as they could against God, and God in a state of war with the sinner, blocking up all commerce with heaven of a saving sort, &c. But he steps in, lays hands on both, and makes up the peace.

(2.) Peace among men. Men's peace with God being lost, the peace among themselves was broken too. See the case of mankind by nature in this point; Tit. 3:3, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But Christ brings them together in him again, to love and charity one to another, Isa. 11:6. And wherever he makes peace with God for a man, he implants love to men in that man's heart. Particularly, he made peace between Jews and Gentiles, Eph. 2:14.

(3.) Peace within men, peace of conscience; Rom. 14:17, "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Sin by itself breaks the peace within one's own breast. The

guilt of it is like a thorn in the flesh, that till it be plucked out ceases not to gall; the reign of it is like a tyrant in the house, that enslaves, and keeps in disturbance all therein. Christ the Prince of peace, by his blood and Spirit, only can restore the true peace within.

2. What is his work about the peace, that threefold peace?

(1.) He purchased it by his precious blood, Eph. 2:14, 15. There is a peace the wicked have, that is a stolen and usurped peace, known by this mark that it is a peace in sin, James 3:17. But the peace of the Prince of peace is a dear-bought peace. It cost him to be denied to his own peace, and swim through a red sea of suffering for it; Isa. 53:5, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him."

(2.) He makes the peace by his own efficacy. The covenant of grace is the covenant of peace, and he is the Mediator of it. He travels betwixt God and the rebel sinner, till the reconciliation is made. He does by his Spirit bring the sinner into the covenant of peace, and by his intercession obtains peace with God for him. He by the same Spirit unites men to himself by faith, and to one another in love. And by his blood sprinkled on the soul, he removes the guilt of sin, and plucks out the thorn; and by his sanctifying Spirit breaks the power of turbulent lusts, and so creates peace, Isa. 57:19.

(3.) He maintains the peace made; Isa. 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." He is the believer's resident at the count of Heaven, that takes up emergent differences, and hinders matters to come to a total rupture betwixt God and them any more. And it is by the efficacy of his blood and Spirit that peace within men, and love among men who are his, are continued.

(4.) He restores the peace, when at any time it is brangled; Isa. 57:18, "I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners." While believers are in this world, they are upon a sea; and in that sea they often meet

with storms. Sometimes the storm blows from above, sometimes from without, sometimes from within; sometimes fightings without, and fears within; yea sometimes all three blow together. But the Prince of peace again clears the sky above, Job 33:23, 24. He "stills the tumult of the people," Psalm 65:7, and quells all disturbance within, Isa. 57:19.

(5.) Lastly, He perfects the peace. It is begun now, but he will not leave it imperfect; Psalm 138:8, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." He began Israel's peace in bringing them out of Egypt, and perfected it in bringing them to Canaan; so he begins his people's peace in their conversion, and perfects it in glorification. Their peace now is liable to a great mixture of disturbance; but he will render it perfect at length, without the least trouble, Rev. 21:4.

3dly, He is the peaceful Prince, in the peaceful state of his kingdom, in the prosperity attending it. He is the true Solomon (peaceful); and no king of Israel had such a peaceable and prosperous reign as Solomon; that his kingdom might be a type of Christ's, the Prince of peace, as David's was a type of it in the wars thereof. And,

1. Every one of his subjects is, by his wise management, put in a state of peace; Micah 4:4, "They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid." He has procured them peace with God, among themselves, and within themselves; what then should discompose them? It is true, in the world they must have tribulation; but in their prince they have peace to balance that, John 16:33. Having a good God, communion with good people, and a good conscience; they may, in peace, bear through all the troubles of a present evil world.

2. The peace of his kingdom is the fruit of war, and victory in that war. What made Solomon's reign so peaceable, was David's wars and victories. Our Lord Christ was a man of war; he fought and overcame sin, death, and the devil; and the peace of his kingdom now, is the fruit of that. The wicked's peace is the fruit of a conquest, like that of

Issachar, who "saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute," Gen. 44:15; and like that of the strong man's keeping the house, in which case all things are at peace. So their peace is merely precarious; but God's people's peace is sure.

3. Hence in his kingdom is the greatest wealth and abundance. There is abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, which his subjects receive, Rom. 5:17; so that they are made a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2:9. The fruits of the victory over sin, death, and Satan are among them; they are enriched with the spoil of their enemies; free commerce is settled between heaven and them; and all that oppose their entrance into the heavenly Canaan, are overcome.

4. The good of his kingdom is advanced from all airts, and there is nothing but it is turned to the profit thereof, by the infinite wisdom of the Prince, Rom. 8:28. Go matters what way they will, his kingdom is advanced by them; his subjects reap benefit by them. Out of the eater is brought forth meat by our Lord Jesus; yea, peace, order, and prosperity, out of war, by the Prince of peace. Is not that a prosperous kingdom that prospers in all emergencies?

5. Lastly, In end the peace of his kingdom will be absolute. Solomon's reign was more peaceable in the beginning of it, than toward the end. But Christ's kingdom is contrariwise: though indeed it will never end. But at last all occasion of disturbance from without or from within, will be utterly cut off.

USE 1. Is Jesus Christ presented and given to us the peaceful Prince, peaceful in action and operation, the procurer, maker, maintainer, restorer, and perfecter of peace? Then,

1. Sinners in a state of enmity with God, ye may have peace with God through him. There is a mediator of peace provided for you, able and willing to make up the peace betwixt God and you. This is the good news the Gospel brings, Luke 2:14. If ye perish in a state of enmity

with God, it is not because ye could not, but because ye would not have peace. There is nothing on heaven's part to hinder the peace, but all is ready for it on that side, Matth. 22:4, Therefore,

2. Apply yourself to the business of making your peace with God through him, 2 Cor. 5:20. Be no more at peace with yourselves, till ye be at peace with God through Christ.

MOTIVE. 1. Ye are naturally in a state of enmity with God. So Adam left us all; and the breach is still made wider by actual sins, while unconverted. Ye have a real enmity against God, Rom. 8:7. If ye are not sensible of it, your works declare it, Col. 1:21. God bears a legal enmity against you, as rector of the world; even as a judge against a malefactor, whom in justice he must pursue and condemn, Psalm 7:11–13.

MOTIVE 2. While ye are at enmity with God, ye have not one fast friend in all the creation; so you are never safe. The very beasts, fowls, and creeping things, are your enemies, as enemies to their Creator, and are ready to dispatch you on the least signal from him, Hos. 2:18, Job. 5:22, 23. Frogs, lice, &c. were employed to plague Pharaoh and his people, and worms to devour the bloody Herod. The meat thou eatest, and the drink thou swallowest, may be a means to choke thee, and send thee to the pit. The friendship of the world, being enmity with God, can never continue.

MOTIVE 3. Ye are not able to make your part good against him. When the clay strives with the potter, it is easy to see who shall have the better. An angry God will be a party too strong for the stoutest sinner. And do ye not see how many, flushed with the world's smiles, forget God and themselves, and in a moment are dashed in pieces, and go out like the crackling of thorns under a pot? 1 Cor. 10:22. Infinite wisdom and power are what will be too hard a match for you; Job 9:4, "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered." It is wisdom,

then, to yield, and make peace with one with whom we are not able to war, Luke 14:31, 32.

MOTIVE 4. Consider what losers ye are, while not at peace with God.

(1.) Ye lose all the advantages of commerce with heaven. When war breaks out betwixt nations, there is no more trade or commerce between them, all access to that is blocked up. So you have no access to import your prayers, desires, &c. into heaven, nor to export pardons, grace, &c. therefrom.

(2) You lose the sap and foyson of all you have in the world. There is a blasting, withering curse on it, Prov. 3:33, Deut. 28:17. Hence it will do you no good, but evil, Prov. 1:32. The very thought, that ye are at enmity with God, is sufficient to blast all your enjoyments.

(3.) You lose true peace within your own breast. Conscience is not your friend, since ye are at enmity with God. Therefore that joy, 2 Cor. 1:12, is a joy ye cannot intermeddle with. A sleep of conscience, which will have a fearful awakening, ye may have; but peace of conscience ye cannot have; Isa. 57:21, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

(4.) Ye will lose your souls in the end. That will be the issue of the war with Heaven; and what can countervail that loss? 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?" That is to lose thyself; Luke 9:25, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" The soul is the man.

MOTIVE 5. The slighting of offered peace now, will make an eternal war against you, in the keenest manner. The peace is purchased by the blood of the Son of God; it is offered to you on free cost; if ye reject it, ye pour contempt on the blood of Christ, and the grace of God; and while God is God, he will pursue that quarrel, in a more fiery manner than if ye had never heard of peace; Matth. 11:23, 24,

"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." 2 Thess. 1:7-9, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Wherefore consider what ye do, for life and death are here set before you; Isa. 27:4, 5, "Fury is not in me; who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

QUESTION. How may we get peace with God? ANSWER. Through the mediation of Christ; as those of Tyre and Sidon, in another case, made the king's chamberlain their friend, so do ye. It is through faith in his blood, Rom. 3:25. That blood is held out to you as a covert to flee in under; and you will be wrapt up in that cover, by believing the efficacy of it to bring peace to sinners, and to you in particular, and wholly trusting on it for your peace with God. This implies a desire of peace with God, and a willingness to lay down your weapons of rebellion.

3. Saints, see here how you will get your peace maintained, restored, and perfected. You must be daily making use of Christ, his blood, intercession, and spirit, for maintaining it. What time it is broken, exercise faith anew, for restoring it; Psalm 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." And hang on him for perfecting it.

USE 2. Is he the peaceful Prince, peaceful of disposition? Then,

1. Whosoever desire to employ him for peace, saints or sinners, be not frightened away from him, but come to him with holy boldness, as one who is a peaceful prince, of easy access, and ready to help; Heb. 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." There is love and good-will to wretched sinners of mankind in his heart and in his face; and it is the work of faith to perceive it, by means of the glass of the word, John 1:14.

Satan and an unbelieving heart hold him out to the trembling sinner to be an austere man, Luke 19:21. And this is more rife in the world than we are aware of, it being the natural report of a guilty conscience concerning him. And hence men are ready to say, as Jer. 2:25, "There is no hope." But oppose to that report of him, the report of the word; according to which he is the Prince of Peace; 1 John 4:8, "God is love." Hang by this in all accusations of conscience, and believe it, Isa. 53:1.

2. Then resemble him in that disposition, as ever ye would prove yourselves his subjects; 1 John 2:6, "He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Is he the peaceful prince; be ye peaceful men? Heb. 12:14, "Follow peace with all men." He bids you learn it of him; Matth. 11:29, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Nay, if ye be not men of peace, ye are none of his, Isa. 11:6. The proud, fiery, mischievous spirit that some are possessed with, evidence them to be none of his, Tit. 3:3.

USE 3. Is he the peaceful Prince in the prosperous state of his kingdom? Then,

1. Let his enemies, and those of his church and people, know, that their attempts against the same shall be in vain, and shall return on their own heads, according to that promise, Zech. 12:3, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." There is a peace of his kingdom that they cannot reach to take away; John 14:27, Peace I



leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

2. Let his friends rejoice in his peace and prosperity, by faith, Rom. 15:13, particularly knowing that his kingdom shall prosper over the belly of opposition, yea, that it shall prosper by means that threaten to overthrow it, as in the case of Paul's sufferings, Phil. 1:12; that their particular trials shall promote their prosperity, John 15:2; and that in him they may have peace in the midst of trouble, John 16:33.

3. Lastly, Join yourselves to this prosperous and peaceful prince and kingdom. Great is the noise of wars and commotions through the nations, strong confederacies on all hands a-forming. Join ye the Prince of Peace in the covenant of Grace; and ye shall have peace, though all should be in red war, Psalm 46:1-4.

Thus Christ has been directly commended to you.

(1.) Do ye believe the report that has been made of Christ to you from the word, or not? that he is indeed the "Wonderful One, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace?" that he is presented, yea, given to you of the Father? If ye do, I am sure the vain world, and your lusts, will be sunk in their value with you. If they be not, it is an evidence it is not believed, Isa. 53:1.

(2.) Will ye take him or not, for and instead of all? If ye do, let these go away, Luke 14:26. He will be your "Wonderful One," your "Counsellor," &c. If ye will not, be it known to you, you refuse Heaven's present to you, you cast back its gift made to you, and ye must answer it.

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