

THE HUMBLER SINNER RESOLVED

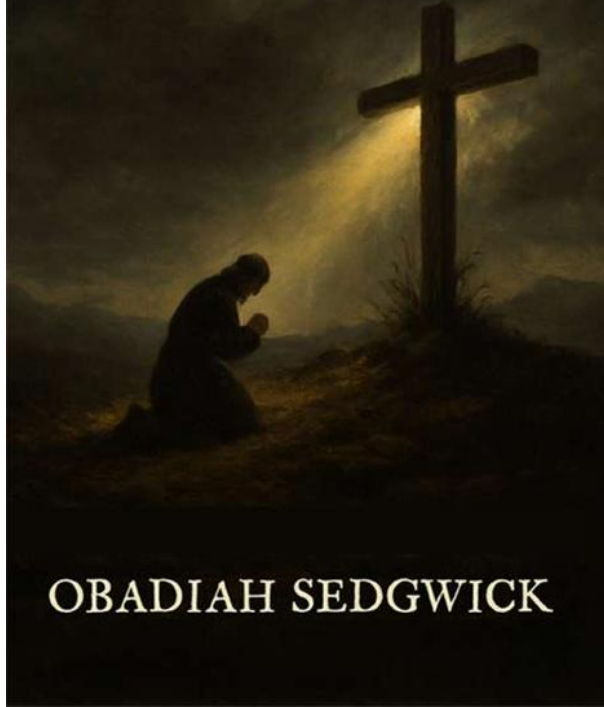
What He should Do to Be Saved



OBADIAH SEDGWICK

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The Humbled Sinner Resolved What He Should Do to Be Saved

Obadiah Sedgwick

Monergism Books

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The Humbled Sinner Resolved What He Should Do to Be Saved

OR, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Way of Salvation for Sensible Sinners

By OBADIAH SEDGWICK, B.D.,

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TO THE READER

C hristian Reader,

It is sufficient commendation to the ensuing Treatise to let you know that it was written and completed by Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick in the time of his health. It has now pleased God by death to take him from preaching, yet if the printing of what he had formerly preached may become further useful to the Church of Christ, as it will be much comfort to me, so I doubt not but it will be a matter of much rejoicing and great benefit to many others. These sermons handle the Doctrine of Justifying Faith, and if they shall prove instrumental either to work or increase faith in you, let God have all the glory.

Your Servant in the Work of Christ,

ED. CALAMY.

To the READER

Good Reader,

This Treatise commends itself to your acceptance upon a double account: one is the known worth of the author, the other is the great usefulness of the subject matter. The author was Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick, no novice in the things of God, but one who for a long time, both beyond the seas and at home, in city and in country, did maintain the vigor of a convincing ministry, which the Lord did abundantly prosper, to the converting of some and building up of others, and no doubt to the conviction of many more, who shall one day know that a prophet of the Lord has been amongst them. Besides, he was one of exemplary godliness and of long experience in the ways of God; of whose excellent spirit the world has had a sufficient taste in those choice treatises already published under his name. Certainly, from such an able head and holy heart, nothing can be expected that is cheap and mean.

It is a loss, a loss that cannot be enough bewailed, that so eminent and useful an instrument is now by death taken away from his public ministerial

labors. There is no murmuring against the hand of God, but the wasting of the old stock of our able ministers should be more laid to heart; alas! we that are to succeed in the Lord's work (I am sure I can accuse one) with what a weak and unequal pace do we follow their great examples? And being too early, by the removal of such choice instruments, put upon public services, no wonder if we faint under the burden.

It is some recompense for this loss that this worthy servant of God did (to honor his own ministry, which was most consolatory) single out such treatises as might be of most use to public benefit and edification.

The other reason is the usefulness of the subject matter. Of all graces, faith is the chiefest, with the most universal and constant influence on the spiritual life; we work by love, but we live by faith. In the chain of graces described in 2 Pet. 1:5-7, the first link is faith, as giving strength and efficacy to all the rest; what is the grace that yields the Lord the glory of his mercy, veracity, and power but faith? It honors God more than uniform, entire obedience to the whole moral law in innocence could possibly have done, and pleases him more than he was displeased with the sin of Adam. All graces keep time and pace with faith; if faith be weak, love cannot be strong, nor obedience carried on in an even tenor; the back of patience will soon be broken, and temperance exercise but a weak and feeble restraint on our lusts and passions until we learn to counterbalance present delights with future enjoyments. Faith is the eye of the soul to see things to come and the hand of the soul to receive Jesus Christ and all benefits in him. Faith—But I will not digress into commonplaces; certainly, no treatise of faith can be unwelcome to a gracious heart, especially such a one as this is, where matters are carried on with such evidence and demonstration of the Spirit,

and, as to the style, with a sweet elegance, yet tempered with gravity and judgment.

I could speak more, but to avoid suspicion of partiality and private affection to my worthy predecessor and father, I shall only add this: it would be a pity that such an excellent treatise should come forth in an age pestered with such a throng of needless writers, but that it is likely to be found out by its own luster and brightness, like a sparkling diamond among a heap of pebbles and common stones.

Reader, I am Thine in all Christian offices,

THO: MANTON.

Sirs! What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:30, 31

Chapter One

The Dependence of the Words

Paul and Silas (on their journey) make a step to Philippi, a chief city in Macedonia, verse 12. They had a special call for it, verse 9. Being there, the next Sabbath, they apply themselves to praying and preaching, verse 13, and each of these was crowned with a blessed effect.

By the former, Lydia is converted, verses 14, 15. By the latter, the Devil is dispossessed out of a damsel, verses 16, 18. The Word and prayer are the great power of God to change the heart and conquer Satan.

But if we trouble the Devil, the Devil will not cease to trouble us. It has been the lot of the best ministers to do most good and find most affliction. Look but in the 19th verse, and there you shall see Paul and Silas caught and drawn before the rulers.

Good God! That Paul should be questioned because he did cast out a Devil! But this is not the matter objected, nor the immediate ground of the trouble (Her master saw that the hope of their gains was gone.) How far will the love of the world thrust a man against God's servants? Even Paul himself is brought to the bar when he cuts off the gains which the Devil

brought. Covetous hearts and good ministers can never agree; they will rather sell the truth than lose their gain.

But being now before the magistrate, what is their accusation? What! That Paul and Silas did cast out the Devil? No; that they who were the masters of the damsel were impaired and disadvantaged by their preaching? No, though this was the ground, yet something else was the pretense. This would seem somewhat too base, and therefore they urge against them another allegation, which they knew would easily take, verse 20. These being Jews exceedingly trouble our city, and verse 21. Teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive nor to observe, being Romans.

As if they said, they are a couple of factious and schismatically fellows, men of a singular spirit, given to innovation, speak strange things of one Christ, and of believing, and of repenting, and we know not what.

They need say no more; presently there is an uproar, and without any more ado, right or wrong, they have justice. The magistrates rent their clothes and command to beat them, verse 22.

And this is not enough; besides the whip, they must go to prison and be kept safe and close, verse 23. Hatred of goodness does many times precipitate evil men to acts of injustice; and he who hates a good man will many times become a bad judge.

But in the prison and stocks they are, and the jailer is as strict to execute as they unjust to command, verse 24. He did thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks.

A strange providence is that of God; Paul and Silas are sent to prison to convert a jailer, to unloose him who bound them, to heal him who scourged them; God has some special ends in the times and places of his servants' sufferings. Well, at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God,

verse 25. No prison can bolt out our communion with God. Prayer will get up to Heaven in spite of all opposition, and even a suffering Christian may be very cheerful.

But now see the consequences of this: their prayers shook the Heaven, and the Heaven shook the Earth, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed, verse 26. I do not marvel that prayer can break the bonds of iron when I know it is able to break asunder the bonds of death itself.

The jailer awakes, sees the prison doors open, and for all he knew, an escape of all his prisoners, for whose lives, probably it is, that he must pay his own; and therefore in a passionate desperation, draws out his sword to kill himself. Paul sees him and cries out with a loud voice, "Hold, hold! Do yourself no harm, for we are all here, not a man of us has stirred."

Which when he had searched and found, O! what a strange alteration is in this jailer? Verse 29. He came in trembling. What! he who before made them bleed, does he now tremble? He who before cast them into the stocks, does he come trembling to them? What were they? Or what could they do? Shackled and scourged and imprisoned persons, that he trembled before them? But so he did. Scorners will become tremblers when God has once touched their hearts. Yet this is not all; he also falls down before them. He is upon his knees to ask them forgiveness for his cruel usage. And then he brings them forth.

Object. But what of all this? All this may arise from sparks of pity and humanity.

Sol. Nay, but there is a greater matter than all this: "Sirs," said he, "What shall I do to be saved?" (As if he had said) I am in a miserable condition, I have lived wickedly, and done wrong to many of the people of God, and in

particular to you; Good Lord! what shall become of me? You are the ministers of Christ, I beseech you have pity on me, and show unto me what I may do to save this poor soul of mine.

What do Paul and Silas answer him? They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And I beseech you mark it, how immediate their answer is to his question; they do not say, as the high priests to afflicted Judas, "Look thou to that"; they do not upbraid him with his hard and cruel usage; they take not that advantage and say, "Nay, now does thy conscience trouble thee for being so wicked and scourging us so sharply? Yea, and so let it; dost thou come for direction and comfort to us whom thou hast so shamefully abused?"

No, they forget the injuries and presently pour in the oil. They instantly direct him into the true way of life: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But more of this anon.

I have chosen this text on purpose that I may proceed to the next article of the Creed (I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord); you see it is expressed in the text.

But before I handle it, give me leave to analyze the words and to touch upon some singular conclusions, and then I will set down upon the article itself more fully.

Chapter Two

The opening of the words, with the several doctrines in the text

The words of the text contain two parts.

1. A case of conscience to be propounded by a troubled and trembling sinner: The case is not for another but for himself, what shall I do? And not about his riches or wealth or his body but about his soul: And that not for mere speculation but for practicals; it is a case about his salvation and about the means which he should take to attain it: "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?"

Secondly, the case is fully resolved: (Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.) As it is said, Christ is the only way to Heaven, and faith is the only way to Christ; God has given Jesus Christ to sinners, and salvation in him; and whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Now then, believe in him, and you shall be saved.

There are many conclusions emerging from these words; I will omit most of them and only insist on the latter.

1. Change of heart breeds change of estimation toward the ministers of the Gospel. The jailer a little before had a base and unworthy opinion of Paul

and Silas, but now, Lords, Sirs, what shall I do? As the heart is, so the judgment is, and newness of nature brings with it newness of light. We can now see the men, their authority, their office, their embassy, and the end of all their reproofs and instructions; therefore, the very feet of those who bring good tidings and publish peace and salvation are beautiful. It argues the heart to be base and sordid, which can slight and scorn the messengers of Christ; he has no grace who can condemn and vilify a minister of grace. But two things God ever works when he confers grace, (viz.) a love of the word of grace and an honoring of the messengers of peace.

2. Sensible sinners are ever inquisitive. Sirs, what shall I do? And so, they in Acts 2:37. When they were pricked in their hearts, they cry out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

There are two sorts of sinners.

First, some are hardened, insensible, wholly overgrown with sin, and are past feeling, Ephesians 4:18. Their sin is in them like the waters in the ocean; under all which, if a man does lie, yet he feels no weight nor burden because the elements in their proper places are not sensibly weighty: so where sin is in its center, men are insensible of the burden of it. They feel it not, nor their misery, and therefore neither complain nor inquire.

Secondly, others are made sensible not only by the ordinary light of a natural conscience but by the contrary principle of new and infused grace: It is with them as with a man recovering from a deep sickness; his health comes in and makes him now sensible of his weakness, complaining, and desiring help. So when God does by his blessed Spirit work the lively sense of sin in the heart of a person—the baseness of it, the danger and misery of it—oh he cannot now remain thus, live thus; he must have a guide; he goes to a messenger, one of a thousand, to instruct and direct him.

For first, conscience truly awakened cannot bear its own burden—its own divisions, fears, accusations, present condition—and therefore the person will inquire whether there is no balm in Gilead.

Secondly, again, sensibleness of sin is *Opus respectivum*; it is a work for further work. God does for this very end make us sensible of our sin and misery that we might inquire after the means of grace and safety.

Thirdly, once more, scarce one sensible sinner of many thousands is able to be his own counselor or comforter; we are not always able to apply those sweet directions, those proper and heavenly comforts, as God promises, to our own necessities, which yet we may distribute with a full and tender heart to others in their exigencies: for there is a great difference between the proposing of comfort and the applying of comfort. He who is to propose it has a medicine to deliver; he who is to apply it has a medicine to take. There are many contrary arguments and risings of an unbelieving and fearful nature in the person who is to apply the truth and goodness of God's promise to himself, so that he is not always able to see the reach and compass of them to himself; and therefore no marvel if he seeks out for direction in the midst of his own confusions, and for help to apply, in the midst of his own fears and distractions.

The main and choice thing which the troubled soul looks after is how to save itself. (Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?) There are diverse sorts of troubles, and according to their grounds and qualities, does every person lay out for help and remedy. Some are troubled with mere sickness; and health is the thing which they would have. Some with poverty; and riches are the things that they would have. Some with ignominy; and favor and good opinion are the things which they would have. Some with outward affliction and punishment; and exemption is the thing which they would have.

"Remove from me this plague only," said Pharaoh. Some are troubled with mere terrors of conscience; and quiet and ease are the things which they would have. Others are troubled in soul for their sins, by which God is dishonored, and their heart polluted; now how these may be saved, this is the thing which they would have.

Come to a soul sensibly groaning under the weight of sin, and say, why? Soul, be of good cheer, thou hast goods laid up for many years: O! says that soul, miserable comforters are they to me; Lord be merciful to me a sinner. Come again and say, you have many good and kind friends: Alas! says the soul, friends are physicians of no value to my troubled and perplexed soul; Lord be merciful to me a sinner. Come to that soul, and discourse to him of the defect of sin, of the richness of divine mercy, of the grace that God has promised to give, of that sorrow, of that repentance, of that faith, of that blood of Christ; Oh! now says that soul, say on, give not over, mercy is that which I would have, and grace, and Christ, and salvation, this is it which I would have, how I may be brought out of this miserable and damnable condition. Suppose a man were very sick, and one should come and tell him many merry tales to delude the sense of his sickness, this were nothing to a man sick indeed; for it is not a tale but wholesome physic which would help him; he had rather by much hear the physician discoursing and counseling, and applying: So it is with the truly troubled soul, yea that is it which he desires and would have, to be set in the right way how to save his soul. "Show us the Father," said Philip, "and that is sufficient;" so here, show me the way of salvation, and I desire no more.

And the reason for it is this: because there is nothing which suits with the troubled soul but the way of salvation: the helps and remedies of it are not to be found unless in these ways.

If a man has a burden on his back, take it off, and that is the way to ease him; if a man has a fever, cure him of that, and this is the way to help him; if a man's bone is out of joint, set it in its proper location, and this is the way to comfort him. In like manner is it here. The distresses of the soul are spiritual, and only spiritual ways relieve spiritual troubles; I now see God at difference with me, how may I be reconciled to Him? I see the dishonor against Him, how may I pacify Him? I feel the guilt of sin, who shall take that from me? I would be a changed and new person, who will work this in me? What course must I take to get God to look graciously on me, to get these sins pardoned, this heart to be sanctified?

I cannot pass over this point without a word of application. If salvation is the main inquiry of a truly troubled soul, then verily many people have not yet been truly troubled for their sin; why? Because they strive not how to save their souls. The Psalmist speaks of some, that God was not in their thoughts; and we may say of some, that salvation is not in their minds. He who has abundance, has this question, Who will show us any good? and he who is in want, has this question, What shall I do? But, what shall I do to be saved? Few think of this; it is a marvelous thing that so noble a creature as man, who carries in him the singular stamp of Heaven (a spiritual and immortal soul) should so infinitely forget both himself and his errand into this world. I am a miserable sinner (said Saint Jerome) and born only to repent. We are born transgressors from the womb, and with Hell at our heels; God is pleased to draw out the thread of our life, and to vouchsafe to give us this hint, that we are sinners, and must die, and if we change not our condition, we perish forever. And besides that, He has addressed the ways of salvation to our hands, so plainly, that he who runs may read. Yea, and there is something implanted in men, which secretly inclines them to be

affected with a general desire of salvation; nevertheless, to observe men how variously they fly off, how little they mind that which most of all concerns them; how infinitely one drudges for riches, how illimitably another pursues pleasures, so that when we come to die, we have hardly thought wherefore we were born. There is a salvation, and a way tending thereunto, but we forget that all our days, we have other employments: but let us soberly recall ourselves.

1 Is there anything better than salvation? 2 Is there a nearer thing than the soul? 3 Is there not a necessity to be working in the way if ever we would attain unto the end?

O then let this take us up, let Heaven take us up, let our souls take us up, but let not our sins, let not the world take us up.

Ubi pompa? ("Where is the pomp?" says Saint Augustine) ubi exquisita convivia? ("Where are the exquisite banquets?") ubi gentium ambitio? ("Where is the ambition of nations?") ubi argenti & auri pondus immensum? ("Where is the immense weight of silver and gold?")

Transient omnia ab oculis ejus ("All these things pass away from his eyes"), putatur requiescere corpus ejus ("his body is thought to rest"), et habitat in inferno anima ejus ("and his soul dwells in hell"), multiplicavit agros ("he enlarged his fields"), plantavit vineas ("he planted his vineyards"), implevit horrea ("he filled his barns"), yet, says he, Stulte hac nocte ("Fool, this night"). He enlarges his fields, plants his vines, fills his barns, and loses his soul.

The same says Saint Bernard:

Dic mihi ubi sunt amatores saeculi, qui jamdiu fuerunt? ("Tell me, where are the lovers of the world who lived long ago?")

Dic, quid eis profuit inanis gloria? ("Tell me, what did vain glory profit them?")

Brevis laetitia? ("What did brief joy profit them?")

Mundi potentia? ("What did the power of the world profit them?")

Quid carnis voluptas? ("What did the pleasure of the flesh profit them?")

Quid falsae divitiae? ("What did false riches profit them?")

Ubi risus? ubi jocus? ubi jactantia? ("Where is the laughter? where is the jesting? where is the boasting?")

Hic, caro eorum vermibus; illic, anima ignibus deputatur infernalibus. ("Here, their flesh is given to the worms; there, their soul is consigned to the fires of hell.")

I say no more but labor to save that which if it be lost, the world cannot procure it; and believe it, that the soul can never be saved by that which is not worth a soul.

4 Another conclusion from the words of the text may be this: That persons rightly sensible are as thoroughly resolved for the means and ways as for the end and scope. The jailer does not say, I desire salvation merely, but what must I do to be saved? As if he said, I desire salvation, and I do conjecture that it is an end, and therefore there are means leading to it: Now, whatever they are, point them out to me, that I may apply myself to the prosecution of the end.

There are two things which deceive a man's heart.

1 One is presumption, which is skipping over the lesson and taking forth before we have learned our part; my meaning is this, that it is an opinion of our happiness without any use of means: As if a man went to Heaven as the ship moves in the tide, whether the master wakes or sleeps. Another is hypocrisy, which is an inequality of the heart to all the ways of salvation:

No hypocrite will apply himself to everything which may indeed save him. But where the heart is rightly understanding and truly sensible, there is not only a consideration of means but an unlimited resolution for all the ways of salvation: whatever course God does by his Word reveal and prescribe, for that it is resolved and purposed, though they may be contrary to my proud reasoning and capacity, though they may be contrary to the bent of my affections, though they may require much time and employment, etc.

What the princes speak with a dissembling heart, that the sinner rightly sensible of his condition affirms with a plain spirit of true intention. The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us if we do not even according to all things for which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send thee, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.

He who will be saved must come to this: to deny his own will, to crucify his own affections, to captivate his own imaginations, to resign his own desires and pleasures, to afflict his heart for his sins, to give up himself to the rule and command of God's Word, to draw off his heart from the world, to settle all his confidence upon Jesus Christ, to watch over his own spirit, to love the Lord God with all his soul and with all his might. These and other things are required as the way to life, and unto them all does a sinner rightly sensible yield up himself with all readiness and gladness.

For as much as, though there may be some difficulty in these, yet there is salvation by them; yea, and there is a singular help for them, as well as a special reward. But the present and former condition and way of sin are engraved with much pain and sore horror and death and hell; but I pass on.

5 Another conclusion from the words is this: When God does thoroughly work upon men's consciences, personal injuries must be forgotten by those who are to deal with them. You see here that Paul and Silas speak not a word of this cruel usage towards them but instantly address themselves to the direction of his safety and comfort: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

We read of the Father of the Prodigal, that when his son came humbling and bewailing his past miscarriages of prodigality and luxury, he saw him afar off and ran to meet him, and kissed him, and put the raiment on him, and a gold ring. He did not scold and upbraid him; saying, "Nay, I will not look on thee, I will not accept thee, go now to thy harlots, amongst whom thou hast riotously wasted all that goodly portion which I put into thy hands." Oh no, he accuses not him whom he hears to accuse himself, and reviles not him whom he sees to condemn himself. It is enough that his son who was lost is now returned; and that he who was dead is now alive.

We must imitate our heavenly Father in this, who in the Covenant of Grace will forgive our iniquities and remember our sins no more. So in another place, if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all my statutes, etc., all his transgressions which he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him. Why? Brethren, if God forgives the man all the wrongs done against him, should not we forgive the smaller trespasses against us? And what have we to do to upbraid when God is pleased to forgive and convert? And what should we stand upon our respects when God has passed by all the indignities cast upon his honor and glory?

There are two sorts of sinners.

1. Stout and resolute, who know how to slight mercy, neglect command, and to fear at the threatenings; a severe denunciation of judgment and

wrath, a conviction and aggravation of their sins are the proper discoveries for them: For where has God spoken a word of peace, or comfort, or ease to such?

2. Bleeding and afflicted, who tremble at threatenings, gasp for mercy, faint for deliverance and change. Here now ministers must have eyes of pity, and tongues and hands of oil; they must not pour in scorpions, nor add terrors to the afflicted, but preach liberty to the captives. They must bind up the broken-hearted, and give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, Isa. 61:1-

3. In these cases we are not to look on ourselves, but on our office, not on our own indignities, but on the patients' necessities; that way which God looks and speaks, that must we speak also. Now God looks on the contrite to revive them and speaks comfort to troubled souls; and therefore we must be silent to upbraid and ready to direct and comfort poor afflicted souls.

Troubled souls must be directed to Christ: For this is what Paul and Silas advised the afflicted jailer: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, etc. They do not direct him to any man or angel, to any pilgrimage or saints; they set him not upon any self-standing project but believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But why to Christ?

1. Because none is appointed to relieve a troubled soul but Christ. Him has God the Father sealed, and he was anointed to preach glad tidings.

2. None is able to pacify and quiet a troubled soul but Christ; whatsoever is sinful or imperfect cannot be a stay to an afflicted conscience; but Christ has perfect righteousness, he has wrought full redemption, he is able to save to the utmost.

3. That which cannot satisfy God's justice can never pacify an afflicted heart; but if God might be fully satisfied, if he might be reconciled, then the conscience would be quiet; now Christ has done this, he has made peace, and become a curse, and is a propitiation, etc.

4. He will relieve the afflicted heart. He is called a merciful High Priest, and one who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and he will not break the bruised reed, and he calls the heavy laden to come to him to be eased.

5 There are three things which would marvelously ease and refresh a troubled soul. One, if he could get off the guilt of former sins. Another, if he could get such a righteousness, with which he might boldly stand before God. A third is, if he could get his heart and ways to be changed. Now Christ can yield all this; his blood removes the guilt of our sins, he is made sin for us, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him, and he can change our natures by his blessed Spirit: Therefore the Apostle says, that he is made redemption, righteousness, and sanctification unto us. But I pass over all these conclusions, and come to that upon which I must somewhat insist.

Chapter Three

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only way to Salvation

To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to Salvation. The text is clear for it. Parallel places are these,

Mark 16:15. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

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.

Acts 4:12. Neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is no other name under Heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved.

For the discovery of this assertion, we must open these particulars.

First, The meaning of each of these titles, (viz.) Jesus, and Christ, and Lord.

Secondly, What believing in the Lord Jesus Christ does import.

Thirdly, How it may appear to be the only way of Salvation.

Fourthly, The useful application of all this to ourselves.

1 What is the sense and sum of those three titles, Jesus Christ, Lord? I shall resolve them distinctly.

SECT. I Jesus signifies a Savior: as it was a name imposed from the pleasure of Heaven, by an Angel, Matt. 1:21. Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins. The first name that you read of imposed on Christ in the New Testament is this name of Jesus; for the best name that sinners could possibly desire to hear was this, that God has provided a Savior for them. The Prophet Isaiah, 9:6. says, that his name shall be called wonderful, and indeed Jesus is a wonderful name: It is a name which breeds just wonder and admiration to all the world, to men and Angels; it may make our hearts wonder at the hyperbole of God's love (as one of the Fathers speaks) that he should (notwithstanding our vile deserts) bestow a Savior upon us, who else had been lost forever.

The Apostle says, Phil. 2:9, 10. That it is a name above all names, no name like it, either for the authority which was conferred on him who bore that name; or for the comfort which that name bears in it for a sinner.

Therefore said the Angel to the Shepherds, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Savior, Luke 2:11. yea, that is good news indeed. A Savior for a sinner: no such news as that.

Now here observe diverse things. The Son of God is a singular Savior. No Savior in all the world like him. Joshua is called a Savior, and the Judges were called so, yet the Son of God is a Savior infinitely beyond them. For,

1 They could save bodies only, they could not save souls, not one of them, not all of them; to ransom, to rescue, to redeem a soul requires more than an arm of flesh: Flesh may save or protect flesh, but he must be more than flesh who can save a soul: Now Jesus Christ is a Savior of souls, 1 Pet. 1:9; Rev. 20:4. the price of our souls is in his blood, with it he bought them and redeemed them.

2 They could save from some outward misery, the tyranny and oppression of the enemy, they have oftentimes put back, but from inward servitude and thralldom they could never save; they could not deliver the persons from the tyranny of their sins, whom they have been able to deliver from the tyranny of sinful men. But the Son of God can save from inward and spiritual miseries, he can save from sin, Matt. 11:21. He shall save his people from their sins. Sin has guilt in it; he saves us from that, by shedding his blood, and procuring remission, Eph. 1:7. And sin has pollution in it; He saves us from that, by cleansing the heart, 1 John 1:9. And sin has dominion with it; but Christ has assured that he will make us free, John 8. And that no sin shall have dominion over us, Rom. 6. He can save from Satan, Heb. 2:14. He did through death destroy him who had the power of death (i.e.) the Devil, and verse 15 did deliver them, who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

He can save from the wrath of God, so he did, by becoming a curse for us, by suffering the sensible and marvelous impressions of his displeasure for our sins. Jesus (says the Apostle) 1 Thess. 1:10. delivered us from the wrath to come.³ They were such Saviors, as did need a Savior: Christ was the Savior of them, who were the saviors of others: Many they did save, but themselves they could not save.⁴ While they lived, they could save, but dying, they could not save any longer: but Christ Jesus saved us by his death, the losing of his own life caused ours; we are saved by his death, the Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many.

Secondly, He is a general Savior, John 4:24. The Savior of the world: The Savior of all men, 1 Tim. 4:10. Therefore Jude, verse 4 calls the salvation by Christ, the Common Salvation. Mistake me not when I say that Christ is a general Savior, as if every man in the world should be saved by Christ: He

is not a general Savior in respect of individual persons; but First, In respect of successions of persons. That is, there never was any age succeeding a former age, but in every age Christ was a Savior, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever, Heb. 13:8. He is the Savior in the days of old, and in our days, and in the times after us.

2 In respect of Nations. He is not the Savior of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also: He justifies Circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith, Rom. 3:30. The Jew cannot boast, nor the Gentile complain, but there is Salvation for them both in Jesus Christ.

3 In respect of conditions. He is not the Savior of the great and mighty only, nor of the poor and desperate only, but the one and the other shall be saved by Christ: The Salvation of the rich is not in his wealth, but in his Christ: Neither shall the poor person be excluded because of his poverty, but all sorts of persons, high and low, rich and poor, may find Christ to be a Savior.

4 In respect of relations. He is not the Savior of the Master only, but even of his lowest servant; not of the husband only, but of the wife; not of the father only, but of the child; not of the Prince only, but of the subject also. The Apostle has said enough, Gal. 3:28. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Thirdly, He is a mighty Savior; he is able to save to the utmost, Heb. 7:25. And this appears if you consider,

1 The greatness of his satisfaction. That he was able alone to stand before the justice of his Father, and to answer and fulfill it, even to appeasement and contentment, yea, so entirely did he answer it, that God is now pacified and become propitious.

2 The greatness of his passions. That he endured the unspeakable wrath of God; O what a thing was this! that the Lord Jesus could at once be able to bear all our sins upon him, and the mighty wrath of God for them, and expiate all of them. He did stand at the Bar, not to suffer and satisfy for one sin only, nor for all the sins of one man only, nor for some sins of most men only, nor for all the sins of all men in former ages, but for all the sins of all that shall be saved, from the first man that lived, to the last man that shall die. Yet though he had all their sins to answer for, though he had a severe Justice to deal withal, though he had a perfect Law to fulfill, though four mighty enemies to conquer, Sin, World, Death, and Hell, yet he went through all, satisfied, suffered, conquered.

4 He is a perfect Savior, the perfection of his saving consists in three things. First, in the aloneness of it; whatsoever was required meritoriously to save men, is in him alone, there is no other name beside his, nor with his, but he alone is a Savior, there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, said the Apostle, 1 Tim. 2:5. There is no concurrence of any Angel, nor of the Prayers of any Saints departed, and glorified, nor yet in the inherent sanctity in any man living, nor yet of any works before or after grace, which comes in with Christ as a meritorious cause of our salvation: But Jesus Christ alone is sufficient and effectual to save the sinner: as the government is upon his shoulder, so is our Salvation. Thou canst not come to an Angel, nor to a Saint, and say, such and such sins are the burden now upon my soul, do you by your righteousness ease me, such and such debts are upon my soul, do you satisfy for me. Thou canst not come to God, and say, truly Lord, I have sinned against thee, but here are so many floods of tears which I have shed, now for their sakes wash and pardon me; Here are so many prayers offered up unto thee, for their sakes

hear and hearken, and forgive; here are so many charitable works by which I have clothed the naked, fed the hungry, relieved the poor, for their sakes look upon me, and accept of me. It is very true that these things are required of Christians, and I shall hereafter show unto you the necessity, use, and efficacy of them; but if we speak of the meritorious cause of Salvation, None but Christ, Christ alone.

2 In the fullness of it: from whatsoever we need to be saved, from that he can save us, he is not a surety who undertakes such a number of our debts only, but he is an atonement for all sins: sins of nature, & sins of life, sins of ignorance, and sins of knowledge, sins before conversion, and sins after conversion, yea he will deliver us (at length) from all the concomitancy and presence of sin, and entirely from all temptations, and all sorrows, and all diseases, and all death: All these (in his time) will he put under our feet.

3 In the efficacy of it: Being God and man, he suffered and died, and thereby wrought the works of our Salvation at once; he does not die every day to make our peace, but having once offered himself, that was so complete and acceptable, that it serves forever. The repetition of things (in some cases) implies imperfection, for that which is still in doing is not perfectly done, as the Philosopher speaks of things in motion, that while they are in motion they are imperfect, but when they attain that end and form for which they move, then they rest; now Christ having once offered himself to save us, he rose again, and sat down at the right hand of his Father: he repeats his sufferings no more, Heb. 10:14. By once offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified, Heb. 9:28. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Thus, for the importance of the title Jesus, the next title is,

SECT. II

Christ. Messiah in the Old Testament, and Christ in the New, of the same signification, John 1:41. We have found the Messiah, which is by interpretation the Christ, and this is a sweet word unto us, that Jesus was Christ, that he, who was our Saviour, was anointed. The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings, Isaiah 61:1. And he was anointed with the Oil of gladness, Psal. 45:7. Will you give me leave to let you see much excellence in this short word? We do speak much of Jesus, and yet we are ignorant of the form of his saving; and we hear much of Christ, but perhaps we understand not what force, what comfort, what happiness is couched therein; therefore I will unfold unto you, 1 What this anointing of our Saviour does import, 2 Unto what he was anointed.

For the first, the anointing of him in whom we are to believe signifies,

1 His singular and assured ordination to be our Mediator and to perform the work of our redemption. When the Prophet had poured the Oil on the head of Jehu, they presently blew the trumpet and said, Jehu is King: so when Zadok the Priest took a horn of Oil out of the Tabernacle and anointed Solomon, they blew the trumpet and all the people said, God save King Solomon, 1 Kings 1:39. (as if he said) this is the very person whom God has appointed to rule over us. In like manner, because the Son of God is made a Christ because he is anointed, we may infallibly conclude that that person, who was God and man, was appointed and singularly designed to be our Saviour and Redeemer; so that we may with John point at him, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world. And therefore it is said that he was called, that he was sealed, that he was sent; it was the Act of the whole Trinity to set the Son apart to become our Saviour: So now for Christ to be our Redeemer is no fiction but a real thing; nor was it

undertaken presumptuously without a calling but by ordination and the institution of God.

2 An abundant qualification (that is) that person, the Son of God, being anointed or designed to be our Redeemer, was enabled with all the richness of Grace and fitness of gifts every way required to perform the work of our redemption; I have laid help (said the Prophet, Psal. 89:19.) on one that is Mighty; so is it here, our Salvation is to be wrought by one who is enabled to compass and perform it.

Therefore, we read of the pouring forth of the Spirit on him, and that without measure, in a most eminent fullness, even to an overflowing. There was no lack of holiness which the Law could require, either for nature or actions, and no word of power to suffer or conquer. Yea, he was so adorned and beautified with abilities to save, that he did not only at once go through the hard task of our Redemption, but he still distills virtue down by his Spirit, to save us more and more from our corruption, etc.

3 A sweet and pleasant acceptation both to God and man. Just as the anointing oil which in the Law was reserved and bestowed by God's appointment was compounded of the most fragrant and exquisite spices, to intimate the sweet composition of Gifts and Graces, so when it was poured forth, it cast abroad a most delightful savor. In like manner does the anointing of Christ imply a most marvelous and gracious acceptation.

1 With God: and so his Sacrifice was a sweet-smelling odor, it was the Golden Altar with Incense, Rev. 8:3, which went up to heaven with a sweet and delightful well-pleasingness.

2 With men: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, 1 Tim. 1. How much is the Church (in the Canticles) affected with the savor of this precious ointment!

O how much more precious than gold, more delightful than all the rivers of carnal pleasures, is that Oil of gladness wherewith the Son of God was anointed! Anointed to become the Savior of my sinful soul!

Solomon speaks of oil which did give a cheerful countenance: sure I am, if there be anything which can revive the heart of a drooping sinner, which can cheer or quicken his spirits, which can put life into him, it is this, that God hath appointed his Son to die for him, and to save him.

SECT. III

Now for the second question, (viz.) unto what was Christ anointed? For a satisfaction to this demand, we must know that those who were anointed by God's command were sequestered to singular and special offices thereby, and there were three sorts of persons who were to execute three sorts of offices who were anointed.

First, the Priest, as we read of Aaron and the rest of that order.

Secondly, the Prophet, as Elisha by Elijah, 1 Kings 19:16.

Thirdly, the King, as David by Samuel, and Solomon by Zadok.

Now Christ differs from all others who were anointed; we read that some were anointed to be Kings, but not to be Priests nor Prophets; others were anointed to be Priests, but neither to be Prophets nor Kings; others were anointed to be Prophets, but neither to be Kings nor Priests.

Again, we read of some who were Kings and Priests, as Melchizedek; others to be Prophets and Kings, as David; some to be Priests and Prophets, but not any one was anointed a King and a Priest and a Prophet conjunctively. Now here is the excellency and the eminence of Christ's anointing: He was anointed to all those three offices, not only to be a Priest but also a Prophet, not only to be a Prophet but also to be a King.

Had he been a Priest only, he might have offered sacrifice for our sinful guilt. But who should have then been the Prophet to have opened the eyes of the blind and to give the ignorant knowledge?

Had he been a Priest to suffer and a Prophet to instruct only, who should then have been a King to have abolished the confusions of the Heart and Life and to have subdued our sins and so to lead captivity captive?

Nay, that he might be a complete Savior and Mediator, He was anointed to be Priest, Prophet, and King. I will open something in every one of these.

He was anointed to be a Priest. Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, Psal. 110:4. So Heb. 3:1. Jesus Christ is called the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. v. 2. He was faithful to him that appointed him, see Heb. 4:10; 7:26. There are these things implied in his anointing to be our Priest.

1 That he was designed perfectly to fulfill the Law of God for us. He was a satisfactory Priest; there was the Ceremonial Law, which he fulfilled by abrogation, and there was the Moral Law, which he fulfilled by obedience. Whatever the law of God could require, either for the holiness of nature or of life, that was to be found in Christ: And such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, etc. Heb. 7:26. Hence is he often called the holy and just one, Acts 3:14 and chap. 4:27, 30, and is said to be without sin. He had no sin at all, of which he was personally guilty, but he was every way a righteous person and fulfilled all righteousness.

I say, fulfilled it not for himself only, but for us; so that if you would now look for a righteousness which can every way satisfy, and which is every way punctually exact and unblamable, you must look out of yourselves unto the righteousness of Christ, as Paul did, Phil. 3. and therefore he saith that

Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness unto everyone that believeth, Rom. 10:4.

To make expiation for sins: He was an expiatory Priest. There were in the Law sacrifices offered by the Priest, of which some were Gratulatory, wherein God was praised; and others were Expiatory, wherein God was appeased; as in the oblations of the Lamb, etc. Thus it stands with us. As we are creatures, we are bound to obey God; as rational and righteous creatures, we were bound to obey the Moral Law of God; and now as sinful creatures, we are bound to answer the transgressions of that Law by exposing our persons to the endurance of the great curse of that Law and the wrath of God: The Law is broken by us, God's Justice is wronged, his indignation moved, and our own guilt, like so many cords, holds us fast and delivers us bound hand and foot to the vengeance and punishment of God's pure and righteous justice.

Now suppose you saw a number of malefactors going to execution. The King's Son meets them; they are heavy, weeping, and sobbing because death is approaching. "Why," says the King's Son, "weep not. You have provoked my father and have deserved death, but fear not. I will take a course to preserve your lives." How so? Thus: I will lay down my own life for you; I will die for you to deliver you. It is even thus between Christ and us. We all have sinned, and by reason of sin are bound over to death and hell. How now shall we escape? Thus, God did give his own Son, and he did take our sins on him, and did die and shed his blood to expiate our guilt and procure our pardon. Hence he is called a sacrifice for sin, and he is said to be made sin for us, and to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and that our iniquities were laid on him, and that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and to be delivered to death for our sins, and that Christ our

Passover was sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. 5:7. And observe the phrase, Christ our Passover, etc. You know that the Passover had a lamb, and the lamb lost its life and blood, and that blood was sprinkled upon the doors of the Children of Israel, and the destroying angel did pass by the doors where it was sprinkled, and their lives were preserved. So it is here; we should have been destroyed, but Jesus Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us (i.e.) he did pour out his own blood, which did answer for our guilt, and so preserved our souls.

Now concerning his priestly expiation of our sins, observe:

First, the priest who did offer this expiatory sacrifice.

Secondly, the sacrifice itself.

Thirdly, the altar upon which it was offered.

Fourthly, the dignity and efficacy thereof.

1. The priest was Jesus Christ, as God and man, as our mediator, for that did belong to the priest who was to offer sacrifice, to be a middle person. Aaron was to bear upon him the sins of the people and to offer for them; so Jesus Christ, as God and man, was he who did offer up that sacrifice which did expiate our sins, Heb. 5:5. He that said unto him, "Thou art my Son; today have I begotten thee," verse 6. He saith also in another place, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

2. The sacrifice itself was Christ, as consisting of soul and body: by reason of our sins we had forfeited both our souls and bodies to the curse of the Law and to the wrath of God. The arrest and attachment were out against both, but now Jesus Christ became our priest and offered his soul and body to quit and release ours. Therefore it is said that he made his soul an offering for sins, Isa. 53:10. And that his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even to death, Matt. 26:38. In it he felt the bitter anguish and

wrath, which made him sweat even drops of blood; and as for his body, that was prepared for him to suffer for us; hence it is said that he bore our sins on his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. 2:24. It is very true that the Godhead formally was not the sacrifice; that could neither suffer nor be afflicted; only it did aid and assist the human nature which was offered up as a sacrifice.

3 The Altar on which this sacrifice was offered, which did expiate our sins, was Christ as God; as the suffering did properly belong to the human nature, so the efficacy of that suffering did pertain to the divine nature; had he been God only, he could not have suffered, had he been man only, he could not have merited: The Altar sanctifies the gift, not the gift the Altar: for here that which did make up the high efficacy of the sacrifice, was the divine nature of Christ. That Jesus Christ who was God and man, did offer up himself as a sacrifice for sins, was more than if all the holy Angels and holy men in the world had suffered; there is now, by reason of the divine nature, an infinite dignity to answer for all our sins, which else had stood uncanceled.

4 The efficacy of this sacrifice, which is this, that he took away our sins, blotted out the handwriting, nailed them to his cross, buried them in his grave. Heb. 9:28. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, 10:11. Every High Priest stands daily, ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifice, which can never take away sins. 12. But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.

He did by his sacrifice take away all the guilt of sin, and all the satisfactory punishment, for all this was charged upon him, as our Mediator, our Priest, and our surety, yea, and he made a perfect reconciliation between

his Father and us, and therefore as our Priest, he is our propitiation, 1 Joh. 2:1. and our reconciliator and peace, Eph. 2:14. and our atonement, Rom. 5:11.

So that to give the sum of all this, Jesus Christ was anointed, that is, designed by God the Father to be our Priest, (i.e.) to offer up himself, as a perfect satisfaction to divine Justice, for the remission of all our sins, and punishments, and this he did perfectly perform for us, & this was accepted of God for us.

I say, for us; he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; and who is made righteousness, redemption, and sanctification, and wisdom to us, and that of God; whatsoever he did or suffered from his Father, it was as our surety, in our stead, and so it is reputed.

A third part of his Priestly office is this, that he does make intercession, Isa. 53:12. He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors, so Rom. 8:34. It is Christ that died, or rather that is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. And therefore he is called our Advocate, 1 Joh. 2:1. and is said to appear for us, Heb. 9:24 He is as it were, the Deputy, or rather our Attorney, to negotiate for us with the Father.

There is a two-fold intercession one by way of duty, another by way of merit, one of charity, another of dignity. When I pray for any man in distress, I am said to be an intercessor, to deal for him with God, as a matter of my duty, and out of a charitable respect; But Christ he only intercedes meritoriously, and by way of dignity. His intercession as I conceive, intimates three things.

1 The exhibition of his person before the Father, as our Surety, our Redeemer, our Mediator, I am he, and I am here to answer.

2 The exhibition of his glorious merits: for he does not appear nakedly, who appears as an intercessor, but he must actively appear, and so does Christ. He went up to heaven with the price of his blood, with the ransom which he purchased with the righteousness and satisfaction made with the merits of his oblation and sacrifice, and there he presents them continually before his Father, as if Christ should still say, Father, I am he who died to obtain pardon, to obtain favor, to obtain grace, and to obtain such or such good things. This is the blood that I shed, the price that I paid, to satisfy your justice, to fulfill your Law, to remit these sins, to confer these graces, etc.

3 The ingratiating us with the Father: which he does by the continual application of his own merits; when sin rises to accuse our persons and our prayers, then Christ shows himself as our intercessor by putting aside the force of the bill of complaint and answers for our persons and for our services. True, O Father, this man has sinned thus against you, but I am his surety, to satisfy for these his sins, and I did shed my blood for them. Therefore now look not on him, but on me, and for my sake accept him and be propitious to him. So for infirmities, true O Father! His imperfections in duty are many, but I am to bear the iniquity of the holy offerings: and my righteousness is perfect, and that I present unto you for him; now notwithstanding his weaknesses, for my merits, accept his person, grant him his request, do him good. Thus Christ is the Angel who offered up the prayers of the Saints with incense, Rev. 8:3, 4. Nay, Father accept and incline your ears, I have deserved acceptance and audience, etc.

SECT. IV

Secondly Christ was anointed to be a Prophet, so Deut. 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, the which is expressly interpreted to be Christ, by Peter, in Act. 3:20, 22. Therefore Christ is called Counsellor, Isa. 9:6. one who doth advise, and direct his Church; and the Doctor or Teacher, Mat. 23:8. and the Apostle of our profession, Heb. 3:1. and the faithful witness, Rev. 1:5. and a witness to the people, Isa. 55:4. a Leader and a Commander, yea, hee is called the Light of his Church, Isa. 61:1. and the light of the world, Luke 2:32. (that is) it is he who did reveal to the world, the true Doctrine of eternal life, and the Angel of the Covenant, Mal. 3:1. and the Bishop of our souls, 1 Pet. 2:25. and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1:24. The anointing of Christ to be a Prophet, implies,¹ That he was to reveal the will of his Father, and the ways of life, Joh. 15:15. All things that I have heard of my Father, have I made known unto you, so Heb. 1:2. In these last days he hath spoken to us by his Son, Joh. 6:68. Master, to whom should we go, thou hast the words of eternal life? see Isa. 61:2; Mat. 11:27. There is no person, who must dare to prescribe any other doctrine, but such as Christ hath delivered. He may not coin new Articles of faith, nor of obedience; Christ is appointed to be the Prophet of his Church, (that is) to deliver unto them all such truths from his father, which shall and do concern their everlasting salvation.

2 That he is to make us know effectually the things which he doth reveal in his word. There is no Prophet able to convey his doctrine beyond the ear, though it be as true as truth it self; and as good as goodness itself; we cannot make men to understand it, nor to believe it, nor to yield unto it; but Christ is that Prophet, whose Chair is in heaven, and whose speaking can yet pierce into the hearts of men: He can make us to know wisdom, he can teach our reins, & truth in the inward parts, there can he write his Law in

our hearts; though the mind be as dark as darkness it self, yet he can make the light of knowledge to arise in the thickest darkness of the mind; though the judgement be corrupt, & full of errors, yet Christ can erect a throne of truth, and direct us into the paths of righteousness; though the heart be dull, yet his words are as fire to quicken that heart; though it be as hard as the rock, yet his word can be as the hammer to break that stony heart: His teaching can soften the most unflexible adamant, he is able to convince, and bend, and alter, and bow it; the very dead shall hear his voice, and live. So that if any person doth need any directions, any enablement for heaven, or the way thither, he must know that Christ is the Prophet anointed; whatsoever belongs to an heavenly instructing, and to an heavenly drawing, and obeying, that is to be found in Christ, and had from him who is anointed a Prophet, that is, designed to teach the Church, and furnishes with all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge, and ability, &c.

SECT. V

Lastly, Christ was anointed to be a King; therefore Psal. 2:2. he is called Gods anointed; and ver. 6. the King whom he did set upon his holy hill of Sion. The King of Kings, Rev. 19:16. He shall reign over the house of Jacob, Luk.1:33. so Mat. 28:18. All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. He hath the Scepter of Royalty, and the Rod of authority, and the sword of power, and the throne of judgement, and the Laws of his lips, and the keys of life and death. Now this regal office of his, to which he was anointed, imports many things. First, that he is to bear rule over all the Nations; and indeed his natural Kingdom reacheth over all the world, from the highest Angel to the lowest Devil. Secondly, that he is to Govern and rule the Church, which he hath purchased with his blood; The Government is upon his shoulders, Isa. 9:6. And therefore he is called the Law-giver,

Jam. 4:12. and all judgement is committed to his hand, Joh 5:22, 27. to this end, you have the rod of his Scepter, his holy and righteous Laws, and his mighty and blessed Spirit, to give force unto them, even into our hearts, and there to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Thirdly, that he is to maintain and uphold his Church, therefore he is said, to gird his sword upon his thigh, Psal. 45:3. and to ride upon a horse with his garment dipped in blood, and armed, as if he were ready to fight. He is the mighty redeemer of his servants against all who intrench upon their peace and safety; & he strikes down Paul to the earth for persecuting him. It belongs to the King to be the defence of his subjects: so here, God hath appointed all the Protections, and safeties, and deliverances of the Church, to be in Christ. Fourthly, he is to conquer all his and our enemies; God hath given Christ a Kingdom, but it is such as he must fight for; Not a Subject which he hath, which comes in unto him, but by conquest; It we be in our own hands, peccatum Hostis est quamdiu est, said Saint Augustin, and if we be in Satans hands, wee are in that enemies hands.

More plainly, there are these enemies of Christ and his Church, which he is to conquer for himself and them.

First hell, and we read that he hath spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, and triumphed over them Col. 2:15.

Secondly death, 1 Cor. 15:54. Death is swallowed up in victory, 55. O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory! &c. 56, 57. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly sin, and this is Christ also to conquer; he is to cast down all the strong holds of lusts, and all imaginations, and to captivate the whole man: He is to subdue our iniquities for us, and not to suffer sin to have dominion over us.

Fourthly, Wicked men; he will stick his arrows in the breasts of Princes, and in the hearts of the mighty, and terrible; he is to bruise the Nations with a rod of Iron, and to dash them in pieces like a potters vessel: He will execute judgement upon all of them, and cast them all to the dust, who rose up against his person, or Government, or people. He will set his people at rest from them that rise against them, and will make his enemies his foot-stool.

Chapter Four

What Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ Imports

Quest. 2. What does believing in the Lord Jesus Christ import?

Q Jesus Christ is like a ring, and faith is like the finger which wears it. He is like a treasury, and faith like the hand which draws out from it. As David spoke in another kind, "Come and I will tell you what the Lord has done for my soul!" Or as Philip said to Nathanael, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip says, "Come and see." The same is to be said of faith: God has done great matters for sinful man, says faith. "Why? But can any good be brought by any to us who are so bad?" Yes, says faith, come and see. Christ is very good; He is a Saviour for a poor sinner, but it is faith which finds Him so.

Mark the answer of the Apostles here in the text: "What shall I do to be saved?" says the jailer. They do not answer, "There is a Jesus Christ; take no more care; He did die for sinners, and you shall do well enough." No, this they answer: you may be saved by Christ, but you must believe in Christ. It is not a medicine that is the remedy, but a medicine applied. It is not the

man, but the man taken, who becomes the husband. So the taking of Christ, the believing in Him, is the way to heaven.

Because this is an excellent point (for our life lies in it), allow me to speak somewhat of faith:

First, in general, and there I will be brief.

Secondly, in particular, of justifying faith, or faith believing in Jesus Christ our Lord.

First, Generally.

For the general nature of believing, observe these propositions:

First, that believing is an assent to such matters as are known only by revelation from another. There are in the soul of man three qualities by which we come to find out or perceive things.

First, one quality is scientia, or knowledge, which is a firm assent to a thing that may be evidenced to the understanding by solid demonstration of infallible principles, or else by the undeniable evidence of sense and experience. As thus: that every natural body has power to move, or that the Moon will suffer an eclipse, or that fire is naturally apt to ascend, and water to moisten, etc.

These things have both a natural certainty and truth in themselves, and there is an undoubted evidence and certainty in the mind of the person truly knowing them; and so certain and full is the persuasion of the mind about them, that there is no scruple of doubt remaining to dispute whether the things are so or not.

Secondly, another is opinion, which is an inevident evident assent, if I may so phrase it. My meaning is: the understanding does assent and yield to the thing, but yet it sees some contrary reason to suspect and question whether the thing is so or not. For as much as, in opinion, the grounds are

not fully evident to the mind, but are only probable, therefore the assent by opinion is but conjectural.

As, take a man in a case of a scrupulous conscience — there is to that man some evidence of argument which seems to warrant his action or attempt, and yet that argument is not so entirely convincing of his judgement but that, on the other side, another argument arises which renders the practice probably sinful. Whereupon if you come to demand of him, "May you do such a thing?" he answers, "I do not certainly know" — that is, "I am not entirely and absolutely resolved of it, yet I think I may, I think it is lawful." This thinking (which is opinion) is always accompanied with some fear and suspicion, so that the mind is like a pair of scales, tilting and tottering to either side. Things are partly clear and partly obscure, partly evident and partly inevident; and therefore the assent of opinion is always doubtful.

Thirdly, another is belief, which is an assent unto things, not from any evidence of the things themselves, but only from the relation or testimony of another.

If I feel fire burning my hand, I do not call this believing, but a sensitive knowing. If Ahimaaz comes and tells David that his son Absalom is hanged and slain, though this be knowledge in him who saw it, yet it is belief in David, who hears and credits the tidings. So that (to be brief) belief differs from knowledge in this: that knowledge depends on the evidence of things themselves, but belief, though the things be certainly true to which it assents, assents unto them for the testimony or authority of the one who relates and reports them.

Though it be most true that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, and that He is the Messiah and Saviour, yet I believe it to be true because God has given testimony or report thereof in His Word unto me.

Again, belief differs from opinion in this: that opinion is an indifferent, probable, uncertain, and hazardously inclined assent, but in believing, the assent is firm, certain, and fixed, especially where the testimony and authority are sufficient.

Secondly, believing, as it is restrained to a theological and divine consideration — that is, in the general — is an assent of the soul to the truth and goodness of all divine revelations upon divine testimony. Here much might be said, as for instance:

First, that all divine revelations are the object of belief, as supernaturally inspired.

Secondly, that the ground of believing them is God's own testimony. Faith has sufficient reason to believe all things there to be true in their relation, because of His truth and authority who speaks — namely, God Himself.

Thirdly, the general nature of believing is an assent unto all spoken by God as most true and credible.

Secondly, Particularly, of Justifying Faith.

Faith (as you well know) has a double aspect: one is to the whole revealed Word of God; another is to God in Christ, or to Jesus Christ.

I am not now to speak of it as an eye which may see all colours, but as an eye fixing itself on some singular and special object — namely, on Jesus Christ — in respect of whom it is called justifying faith: the believing on whom may be thus described.

Chapter Five

Faith in Christ

Faith in Christ, what, described
It is a singular Grace of God, whereby the heart and will of a sensible sinner, doth take and embrace Jesus Christ in his person and offices, and doth wholly or only rest on him for pardon of sin, and eternal life.

There are many things to be opened in this description, forasmuch as all the force of true faith, cannot at once in a few short words be clearly expressed.

SECT. I

Consider therefore, the spring or fountain of this faith is at heaven: Gods eternal decree is the radical cause of it: so Acts 13:48. As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed; and the instrumental cause of it is the Word of God, Rom. 10:17. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, and the immediate and singular cause of it is the Spirit of God Gal. 5:22. there it is an express fruit. So Joh. 1:12. speaking particularly of believing on the Name of Christ, he adds, verse 13. men

come to this, not bring born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

That the will or heart of man should be brought off from it self, and to abhor its own condition and sufficiency, and to take Christ as God propounds him, to be the only rock upon which I must build my Salvation, to bee the only Lord, to whose Law and Will I must resign up my whole soul, and to cleave unto him in a conjugal union and affection; This I say arises, not from natural principles, nor from the wisdom of a mans free will, nor from any endeavor or action which can find footing in man himself.

It is observed that there are two sorts of habits.¹ Some which are acquired by the industry of the person, and through a right use of a sagacious & understanding mind, and such may be purchased by practice, and use; as the Scholar by writing, gets the habit of writing, and the Apprentice by his wise and honest observation, and industry, gets into the skill of his trade and calling, Now faith is no such quality, we can send forth no such singular acts or operations, which are able in time to ripen or beget so excellent a Grace in the soul.

2 Others are plainly and entirely infused. Faith is not water in the Earth, which a man may pump out but it is even in the fulness or littleness of it, in the allness of it, as the drops or showers of rain, which come from heaven: Though the subject of it be below, yet the cause of it is above; it is man who doth believe, but it is Gods Spirit alone who gives him that faith to believe; it is the will of man which doth take and receive Christ, but it is Gods Spirit who doth bestow that grace of faith, by which he doth take and receive.

That a man hath a will none can deny, who know that they are men; Nay, and that the will is able to send out its own actions, it is willingly confessed; but infinite is the difference 'twixt the natural actions of the will, and the

supernatural qualities and operation of Gods Spirit in the will: It is true, a dead carcase is able of it self to send forth a stinking smell, but it is not able to quicken and enliven it self. That the will can, will I grant, but that the will can (of it self) enliven it self, to that great part of life, I mean believing, it is not only a vehement injury and dishonour to the fountain and freeness of grace, but also a most foolish and senseless error; the will of man being naturally so opposite to believing, and believing being an act so every way unsuitable and disproportionable to the inclination and ability of the will. No verily, faith in God comes from God, and so faith in Christ from Christ; none ever could see Christ in a justifying and saving way, who had not that eye of faith put into him by the Spirit of Christ: no grace comes from any, but the God of Grace. Unto you it is given to believe, Phil. 1:29.

SECT. II

The subject of this Faith, is a sensible sinner; I do not as yet speak of the immediate subject of inhesion, which respects those parts of the soul, wherein this grace is seated; of this I shall speak anon: But of the subject of denomination, and this subject is a sensible sinner.

There are two sorts of sinners.

1 Some generally corrupted, both in their natures, and in their lives, and they are as insensible as they are sinful. They do not know in any powerful degree of true reflection and feeling, their own vileness, accursedness, and miserableness of persons being so, and remaining so in an unsensible condition of sinfulness. I dare confidently affirm, that though they may have most able and strong presumptions, yet they have not (as yet) the least degree of justifying & saving faith. How can any man by Faith look upon Jesus Christ as his Physician, who is whole in his own opinion? The insensible sinner, as he cannot close with Christ, so he will not care for

Christ; for what should now move such an heart? is it this holiness of Christs person? Good Lord! How ridiculous is that motive to a prophane and graceless heart! or is it the suitableness of Christs Office? Why, what is Salvation to him by another, who as yet sees no ground or reason of condemnation in himself?

2 Others sensibly experienced, who know thus much, that they in particular are sinful, and there is no salvation, no hope of it from themselves, but it is to be found only in Jesus Christ. I confess there are several degrees of this sensibleness; neither dare I to assign the height and latitude of it unto the terms of horror and terror, (that is) that a person must bee always and necessarily anguished with extremities of amazement and dejections, before he can believe in Christ: No, though these sharp throws are manifest in some, yet I dare not make them a rule for all: only this I say, that the heart believes not, it looks not towards Christ, till it feel it self to be sinful, and lost by reason of sin; and that there is no possibility of subsistence in it self: And now there is room for faith when I feel my self a sinner: now there is reason for me to look upon a Saviour, and when I am sensible of my own vileness, now is there reason to look upon another righteousness; and when I perceive my own lostness, now is there cause to look after that salvation which God hath put in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Me thinks that of Christ, he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, that he is sent to find that which is lost, that the whole need not a Physician, but the sick, that he is sent to preach liberty to the captives, do abundantly confirm this truth: Yea, and our own experiences give in a clear evidence, that not only in the beginning, but in the progress of our conversion, our eyes are then most upon Christ, to look after him, and to prize him, when

we are most sensibly acquainted with our own sinfulness, and miserableness of condition.

SECT. III

The Seat or habitation of Faith, is the heart or will: Scriptures are copious in this, Rom. 10:10. with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, Acts 8:37. And Philip said, if you believe with all thy heart, thou mayest, and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Rev. 22.v.11. whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

There bee who distinguish 'twixt three kinds of Faith.

First, *Credere Deum* which is an universal and large conception of a God, when the understanding is persuaded (beyond Atheism) to believe that there is a God.

Secondly, *Credere Deo*, and this is such a disposition of the understanding, by which it gives credit or belief to that God, speaking and revealing, as to one who is truth, and cannot lye.

Thirdly, *Credere in Deum*, which is not only a credence to God, as true in his Nature and Word; but a reliance on him with the will, and embracing of him and his truth and goodness with the affections.

Now justifying faith, or faith in Christ, is comprehended in this latter kind of believing. For the better apprehending of this, observe a few things (viz.) First, the things which God doth propound unto us, are of different ends and uses; Some are propounded merely to be known, of which sort some conjecture many best orical passages in the Word, and many predictions, and many Genealogies; Some are propounded; not only to be known, but also to be done, as the Divine Precepts, or Commandments; Some are propounded to be known, and to be avoided, or declined, as all the comminations and threatnings in the Word against sinners; Some are

propounded to be known, and to be embraced with the will and affections, of which sort are all the Promises of God, and Jesus Christ our Lord. All those parts of the Word which contain our good, and our good to be embraced they have a necessary and natural reference to the will of man, which is planted in us by God, to be conversant about all that which respects our good. Since then Jesus Christ is our good, both personally considered, and also virtually considered; Faith therefore as conversant about him, must naturally be planted in the will.

That there are two parts (as it were) of Faith.

One is imperfect and incomplete, yet is it a necessary ingredient unto Faith, and this respects the understanding, when we are supernaturally illightened, to see the Gospel and Jesus Christ in it revealed to be a Saviour; yea, and we do assent or acknowledge the same Gospel to be a word of truth, and that whatsoever yet it doth affirm of Jesus Christ, it is infallibly true, and divinely certain. The Gospel, as the Word of truth, is the object of this, and therefore the understanding is to apprehend and acknowledge it.

Another is perfect, (I speak of an essential perfection, not of that which is gradual and intensive,) which takes in the formal and vital nature of Faith, as justifying: Now this doth not rest in any operation of the mind, or understanding, but immediately in the will, for the Gospel contains both truth and goodness; It is the Word of truth, and the Gospel of Salvation. It doth not only make known a Saviour, and that it is most certain that he is God and man, and died for sinners, but it doth offer the goodness of this Saviour unto me, which to accept, appertains directly and immediately to the will: That of the Apostle me thinks gives some light to the matter in hand, 1 Tim, 1:15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

That Jesus Christ came to save sinners, is a truth not to be questioned, and therefore the understanding is to acknowledge the same; And that he came to save sinners, is not only a truth revealed, but a goodness offered, and therefore it is worthy of all acceptance; Now as credence of the truth of it, appertains to the understanding, so the acceptance of the goodness of it, doth appertain to the will: Yea, one word more: it is the proper work of faith to conjoin the soul with Christ, to contract and espouse it, (as it were) but the soul is not conjoined with Christ by the mere operation of the understanding, but by the consent of the will; Ergo Faith as justifying, is immediately and formally in the will, and not nakedly in the understanding.

SECT. IV

The proper and genuine act of Faith, as justifying, or as conversant about Jesus Christ, is acceptance, or receiving. This Doctrine Christ himself doth teach, and therefore it is true, and sure, Job. 1:12. To as many as received him, he gave power to be the Sons of God, even to as many as believed in his Name. There you see expresly that believing is the receiving of Christ. As if God came in these terms, I have appointed my Son to be made man, to be a Mediator and Redeemer, and he did live and dye for sinners, to procure their peace and salvation: Now I offer his person unto you, and with it all the merits and benefits purchased by him, take him in his person, in his offices, and in all his virtues. If the heart doth now accept of the Lord Jesus, This is a lively, and justifying, and saying believing. There are three acts of the soul which are conversant about Christ.

First, one is, I know assuredly, That Jesus Christ the Lord is the Saviour of sinners. The Papists generally make this the Royal Act of Faith, but this cannot be justifying Faith: because

First, this as so, is but a truth apprehended, and not a good received.

Secondly, unbelieving hearts may enjoy this historical assent merely as assent.² Another is, I take this Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Saviour; I know assuredly he is a Lord and Saviour, and he offers himself unto poor sinners, of whom I am chief, and I do accept of him to be my Lord and Saviour: I cast my soul on him, I rest my self on him, my will and heart doth embrace and accept of him, only to be Lord and Saviour; him I do, and none but him I do accept,

3 A third is, I know assuredly that Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Saviour. Many of the Lutherans (and some of our own) bend this way, that the essential and proper act of Faith as justifying, is assurance, and so they do define it, that it is an assurance, a full assurance, a full persuasion, whence it follows,

That no man believes, until he can truly say, I know that Christ is mine, I know that he died for me, I know that my sins are pardoned.

It is not meet to take Arms, and strike our own brethren; who I think in this, rather aimed to give us Faith in its perfection, than in its proper and substantial nature.

These things must needs be confessed.

1 That the assurance of Faith may be possibly attained unto. God hath exhorted Christians to strive after assurance, yea, full assurance, yea, the riches of full assurance, and no doubt, that not only Paul, but many a good Christian can say (sometime or other) I am verily persuaded, that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.

2 That the assurance of faith is a most heavenly and comfortable condition. O the heavenly sweetness, and divine solace, contentment, affection! When I do not only possess Christ, but I know that I do possess him; when I do not only take him to be mine, but see him to be mine, when

he faith to me, Be of good cheer, it is I, or, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Thirdly, that believers should strive after this assurance, they should not rest in the mere acceptance, but should contend in prayer, for the evidence and reflection of this Faith, that Christ is theirs, & they know him assuredly to be theirs. For though the estate of meer believing is sure, yet that of assurance is comfortable. That is a true day, when the Sun is rising, but when it comes to the highest, the day is now glorious. Yet this I deny, that assurance, (I mean, that reflexive persuasion, that Christ is mine) is the essential or proper act of Faith, that Faith is not Faith unless it be assurance.

There are two acts of Faith.

One without which Faith cannot be justifying Faith, and this is the acceptance or embracing of Christ, or that which some call reliance and recumbency.

Another, which in time Faith may produce; and so assurance is an act of Faith, not the necessary act, but the circumstantial act, as it were, not the vital act, but the eminent act; assurance of Faith, is fire blazing, the acceptance of Faith, is fire truly burning, though not highly flaming; the more high faith doth rise at any time, the less doubtings there are, and the more assurance. And yet faith may be in truth, though it hath no reflexive assurance, but many doubtings: Why didst thou doubt (said Christ) O thou of little Faith? Faith, though little faith, and faith, though doubting, as fire, though much smoke; and yet no doubting, if Faith were essentially assurance.

O how many souls are there who prize none in the world like Christ, who love him with all their hearts, who honour him with the highest regards of a Lord, who hate the enemies of his Scepter with a perfect hatred, who would

not willingly offend, and grieve him in the least measure, who cleave unto him as the only rock of their salvation, who would not relinquish their interest in him for millions of worlds; And yet they weep with Mary, (because) they cannot see their Lord; they conflict day and night with fears and doubts, they have not this reflexive evidence and assurance, that Christ is their Christ, that Jesus is their Jesus, that this Lord is their Lord; yet ask them, are you willing to accept of him? O none in the world rather, or more: are you willing that he should be your Saviour? he only is salvation: can you submit to have him to be your Lord Christ? O blessed Saviour (saith the soul) none to rule me but thou; none to save me but thou, thy blood is precious, and thy Laws are righteous, and I could bestow a thousand hearts, and a thousand lives if I had them, on thee, to be changed, guided, ruled, ordered by thee.

And thus the soul, though it cannot see him, yet it believes on him; it believes on him, though as yet it cannot say, that my beloved is mine, and I am his.

Chapter Six

The Object of Justifying Faith

Now I come to the object of justifying Faith, and that is two-fold. First, Immediate, which is Jesus Christ our Lord. Secondly, Concomitant or Consequent, which is Remission, and Righteousness, and Salvation: for faith first takes Christ himself, and then these, in and for Christ.

SECT. I The immediate object of Faith, as justifying, is Jesus Christ himself; as it is in Marriage, marriage is an action between person and person, not between person and estate, that is a resulting thing, so is it in the nature of faith and Christ. Faith does not match the soul to the portion, to the benefits, but to the person of Christ.

You hear that God has put salvation into Christ's hand, he has put remission of sins into his blood; there is eternal life to be had by him. Now if a person says, I will have this salvation by Christ, which he has purchased, but I will not have his person, I will have the remission of sins by his blood, but I care not for his person, I will have his righteousness, by which I may stand before God, but I care not for his person; this now is no

faith, it is no justifying faith. For faith justifies us when we take the person of Christ. It is true, that we may, and should have an eye to the purchase and benefit by Christ, but Christ himself is that which faith looks upon.

But wherein is the person of Christ the object of justifying faith? For the resolution of this, I will open two things. First, that whole Christ is the proper object of faith. Secondly, how faith does exercise itself about whole Christ.

SECT. II

Whole Christ is the adequate and proper object. Christ, you know (in respect of his person), is God and man, and he may be considered as a Priest, or as a Prophet, or as a King; we usually say, as a Saviour, and as a Lord. Now he offers himself in all these to sinners: says Christ, there is no Name under heaven by which you can be saved, but by me, no Jesus but myself, and I have been the Priest, who has offered my heart's blood to procure the pardon of your sins and salvation: I have satisfied my Father to the utmost and have fulfilled all righteousness. Now I am willing to bestow myself on you, as one who can and will assuredly save you. But if you would have me to be your Priest, to save you, you must also be willing to have me to be your Prophet, to instruct you, and direct you; and to be your King and Lord, to command you, you must resign yourself to my Scepter and Government; for I am a Lord as well as a Saviour, and I will be taken in both, or else you shall have part in neither.

There are three things which lie hard on us. One is the guilt of sin, which exposes the soul to hell and wrath, for which Christ is a Saviour and a Priest. He became a curse for us and bore our sins, (that is) stood in our stead, and underwent that indignation which else should have lighted on us. Another is the corruption or pollution of sin, which breeds inconformity to

God's Will and depraves the whole nature, for which Christ is a Saviour and a Prophet, (that is) he is appointed to inform the mind and reform the heart. A third is the rebellion of sin; rising sinful notions, and sordid delights and ways, for which Christ is a Saviour and a King, (that is) he is to subdue those iniquities, to give them the bill of divorce, to captivate all imaginations, and to bring the whole man into subjection to himself; but then he will be Jesus and Lord too; thou mayest not think that Christ must save thee, and sin shall rule thee; thou must not think that he will pay thy debts if thou wilt give thy heart and service to sin and the world. How ridiculous is it to conceive that God should raise up Christ, as the Pope raises up his indulgences, only to keep or fetch souls out of Purgatory? As if Christ were given only to pay our scores, and not to rule our hearts, for no other end but to keep us out of prison, that we might do nothing but sin against God because Christ can take away the guilt of sin.

Nay, whole Christ is eyed by faith, taken and received by faith. Do I feel my sinful guilt? I now by faith take Jesus Christ, whom the Father has appointed and offered to be my Priest, to be my surety, to bear my sins, to stand between God and me. Do I feel my sinful nature & motions? I now take Jesus Christ whom the Father has appointed to be my Prophet and King; He has undertaken to be the teacher of hearts and conqueror of sin; as so I do take him to be my Lord.

SECT. III

Therefore consider in the second place how faith does exercise itself about whole Christ: if you please I will discover it in the particulars.

For Christ, as a Savior and Priest: Thus faith looks on him, not only that he is so, but to be so to me; he was God and man, and died, and satisfied, and took away sin; God proclaims this much, and offers him to me, here is

the Savior of the world, this is my well-beloved Son, here is the blood of atonement and peace. What does faith now? O faith takes hold of him, I acknowledge him, I receive him, O Lord, to be my Savior and Priest; not I, O Lord, not I could have ever sustained thy wrath or satisfied thy justice, I could never have made my own peace, I could never have blotted out the handwriting, I could never have paid my debts, but thou hast set forth Christ to be the propitiation for sin. O Lord, I embrace him, my life is in his death, my healing in his sufferings, my satisfaction in his obedience; in none but him; I rest on none but him, on him I do believe, he has satisfied to the utmost, and I trust in him that he has done it for me.

Brethren, the case stands thus: a man is born in sin, and he goes on in much sin (for a long time); at length God awakens his conscience, makes him to realise the iniquities of his past—of his birth, of his youth, of his age, of his life—and perhaps surrounds the soul with a palpable dread of His infinite displeasure.

Now the man does not know what to do: “Good Lord,” says he, “what a miserable creature am I! Here's sin committed over and over, the Law broken, God provoked, conscience raging, hell gaping. ‘I am violated,’ says the Law; ‘wronged,’ says Justice; ‘you have sinned,’ says Conscience; ‘I will be satisfied,’ says the Lord.”

Says the poor soul, “What shall become of me? What have I to quiet God? I can find nothing. What shall I do to pacify Him? I cannot imagine it. If I say that I have not sinned, my conscience tells me I lie. If I say I will not sin hereafter—why, how will this satisfy for former guilt?”

I tell you, brethren, that a heart brought to this sensible experience is marvellously oppressed; the very heart cracks, and the sins of that soul break asunder under the sense of manifold guilt and God's displeasure.

But then God comes in the Gospel and calls out to the poor and distressed sinner: “Come here,” says God, “I will show you a way of salvation.” O how the soul listens to such a message! “But how, Lord, can this be? What am I? Or what can I do?”

“Nothing,” says God, “for you are an enemy, and you are without strength. But I have laid salvation upon one who is mighty.”

“Who is that, Lord?”

“It is My own Son, whom I have, out of My love, sent into the world to be made man, and to die, and to satisfy for sinners—to bear their iniquities, to answer for all their transgressions. He has become a surety and a priest and has sacrificed His own soul to be an offering for sin; and I offer Him to you to be your surety, to be your priest, to take away your sins. Now take Him,” says God to the soul, “and with Him the discharge of your sins.”

Hereupon the soul, being persuaded of the truth of this good testimony and with many tears admiring the riches of divine love and mercy, now by faith closes in with Christ, puts itself upon Him, embraces Him with all the heart as a sufficient and perfect Saviour.

As if the soul, now fastening itself by faith on Christ in this respect, should thus address the Lord.

O Lord, you are pleased justly to charge my sins upon my conscience. I confess and am ashamed that I have thus sinned against you, yea, and I acknowledge that I am never able to answer you for those sins. But you have appointed your own Son to be my Savior and Priest, whose office it was to bear the sins of the people; these sins therefore which conscience now charges upon me, I do by faith charge upon your own Son, for he was made sin for us. You ordained him to be a surety, and therefore I beseech you, Lord, look for satisfaction of my debts in his precious blood, and take

away your curse from my soul, for he was made a curse for us. He did sustain your wrath in our stead to deliver from wrath. Now therefore, O Lord, I put my soul only upon your only Son, whom I take to be my sacrifice; him I offer up unto you as my propitiation. I have sinned, but your Son has died for my sins; I have provoked you, but your Son has pacified you; I have wronged you, but your Son has satisfied you. He did not die for his own sins, but for my sins; he was not made a curse for himself, but for me. I lay hold on his blood to be my peace, and satisfaction, and salvation. As if a man were likely to be carried to prison for debt, and hunting up and down for a friend to stand for him, at length he finds one only man, and him he brings to the creditor and says, here's a man who will pay you and ransom me; so faith for a troubled and obliged sinner to God finds out Christ, and says, Lo Lord, here is your Son, who is my surety; he will discharge; he is my ransom.

SECT. IV

For Christ as a Savior, and King, and Prophet, and Lord, what is the exercise of faith there? I tell you what I think of it. It is a work of a believing heart, whereby it does accept of Christ to be the sole teacher and ruler of heart and life, and resign up himself wholly to him, to be fashioned as it were, and guided by him. A man never comes to the truth of believing, but he shall find this: that faith will change his Master. For faith changes the heart, and the heart being once changed will quickly change its Lord. So that to believe in Christ as a King, as a Lord, as a Prophet is to admit him, to give him up the whole man into his hands to his holy and spiritual government. As if the heart should say thus much: you are a Holy Christ, and you are he who is to reign; now I take you to be my Holy Lord, and I resign myself; I pass over myself unto you; I will have no Lord but you, and

I do with all my heart accept of you to make me holy as you are holy, and to subdue this vile heart of mine, and to rule in me by your blessed and mighty Spirit.

SECT. V

Thus briefly of the immediate object of faith on which faith immediately looks (viz.) the person of Jesus Christ: to take and receive Christ as Lord and Savior. This is true faith; yet by the way note a few things. First, that this taking in with all the heart is not a pretended taking, a dissembled work; there is a taking of Christ with the tongue, and a taking of him with the heart: O no, when true faith takes Christ, it brings in the very strength of the soul: O Lord Jesus, I do embrace you, accept of you with all my soul, with all my might, and with all my affections.

Secondly, this taking of Christ is of all Christ, of Lord as well as Jesus: when the heart is made sensible of sin and Satan, and the world, and Christ, and now falls off from them, saying, I will have no more to do with you, I will serve you no longer, Christ only shall be my Savior, and he only shall be my Lord, I will put my soul under his Scepter and Government.

Thirdly, this taking of Christ is only of Christ. For it is a conjugal taking, which consists of unity: one (they say in the Metaphysics) is undivided in itself, and divided from all besides itself; so is it in faith's taking of Christ, One Faith, One Lord, said the Apostle, Eph. 4. It takes Christ so as none with Christ, or besides Christ. The Patriarchs had most of them a wife, and a concubine, it is not so here: Faith does match with an absolute exclusion of all other matches. It is not the soul, and Christ, and sin: nor the soul, and Christ, and the world: nor the soul, and Christ, and the Devil: it is not the soul, and Christ in chief, and sin in service as a deputy, or a rival, a secondary thing, etc.

Fourthly, this taking is freed from mistaking. Faith knows what it does, it sees its way, it understands: 1 Who that is whom it takes, 2 Upon what terms he will be taken, 3 Its grounds of taking.

First, who it is, (viz.) the Son of God, God and man, a most holy person, a mighty Redeemer, and Savior.

Secondly, upon what terms, (viz.) He will not come in by the by, he will not be taken as a vassal, as a captive, as a drudge: he will not be taken for base and changeable reasons, merely to stop a gap in the conscience, or only in fair weather, but he will be taken as Lord and King, to command all the heart, to dispose all the ways, to rule our very thoughts, he will be taken for his own sake, out of a judicious love and estimation of his person, he will be taken with all the estates and conditions that befall, on the cross crucified, as well as in the way to Jerusalem magnified, as one persecuted and distressed on earth as well as one raised and glorified in Heaven; and thus true Faith takes Christ.

Thirdly, upon what grounds, viz. upon God's offer of Christ, and promise, that whosoever believes on him, etc. and on his commandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son; whereupon faith brings in the soul to Christ, it believes that God says true, that he does not call upon men, he does not command men, he does not promise men, and all this to delude men; so that if you should ask faith what warrant had you to bring in such a soul to Christ? Why says faith, God revealed and offered his Son, and commanded me to believe, and promised not to cast off any that come, etc.

Fifthly, this taking is resolved against untaking. All takings are not of the same force and power. If I take a servant, I take him in such a way that, upon good reasons and occasions, I can put him off again. But if I take a

wife, there can be no untaking on my part—unless God takes her—I must never forsake her.

Faith takes Christ in this way: to be a Saviour forever, to be a Head, a Husband, a Lord forever. I observe that there are two kinds of taking Christ to be a Lord.

One is compulsory and violent, as when an enemy is made to rule. A man in sickness, in a terror of conscience, in a day of wrath, in the expectation of death—he will take Christ to be his Lord. He will say, “Oh! Sin is vile, I abhor it, I will become a new man. I will have none but the Lord Christ, and He only shall be my Lord.” And upon this, the man sets about the work of showing that Christ is his Lord: he will command his servants to pray, to hear, to read, to keep the Sabbath, etc.

Yet this man, as soon as God’s hand is off, as soon as ever he is freed from his bonds, will—like a lewd apprentice—break loose from his Lord and Master. He will serve Christ no longer; he will return to his sins again, to the world again, to his base company again, etc. Why? Because this accepting was only violent, and no actions are steadfast or constant whose causes are compelling and violent.

Another is ingenious of faith, and this taking of Christ is grounded only in Christ, in its excellencies, beauties, perfections, which are not like the light of a candle, this hour very clear, and the next none at all, but like light in the Sun, still abiding and remaining; and therefore when a man does by faith take Christ, he takes him forever: for faith can never change for the better, and it sees steadfast reason in Christ to cleave to Christ.

Now I come to the consequent object of faith, and that is remission of sins and righteousness, and whatsoever good comes from Christ. For thus it is, faith does order its motions or actions according to the word; now the word

reveals and offers Christ first, and then the benefits next. It is not whosoever believes eternal life shall have Christ the Son of God, but whosoever believes on the Son of God shall have eternal life; nor is it whosoever believes the remission of sins shall have Christ, but whosoever believes in Christ shall have the remission of sins.

Yet when faith has made the soul take Christ, it goes then from the person to the portion, from Christ to the good in Christ and by him; for if Christ be ours, all is ours, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. 2.

SECT. VI

I will therefore speak a word of faith as conversant about: First, Remission of sins; Secondly, Righteousness.

For the first of these, viz. the pardon or remission of sins, consider that remission of sins is an action of God acquitting the guilt and the punishment so that he will never reckon with the soul any more in a judicial way for those sins which are pardoned. As when the King thoroughly pardons a malefactor, he discharges him and takes off the guilt (we speak of it in respect of redundancy) that it shall not now prejudice the person any longer; so does God when he pardons sin: though he does not in this annihilate the sin (that is) make that to be no sin which was sin, yet he does prejudice sin (that is) he takes off the guilt that it shall never redound to the damnation of the sinner nor to his damage.

Jesus Christ has procured the remission of pardon of sin for us, hence, Ephesians 1:7: In whom you have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of your sins. His blood was shed for many, for the remission of sins, Matthew 26. (That is) he did die, and by his death has merited and procured our pardon and discharge: God offering Christ, offers with him the purchase of Christ, namely, the pardon of sins; If you will take my Son, I

will pardon your sins. Now faith inclines the soul, which is sensible of its sinful guilt, to put itself on Jesus Christ for the discharge of them: As the wife looks for none, and goes to none but to her husband to discharge her debts, so faith goes to none to procure remission of sins, but only to Christ, and on him does it rest. O Lord Christ, says faith, thou didst take these my sinful debts upon thee, and thou didst undertake to satisfy for them, and to get them to be blotted out, yea, and I know that thou didst make a full satisfaction. Now I renounce all hope of pardon from anything in me, and do rest my soul on thy precious blood, trusting that it was shed for the remission of my sins; I have taken thee to be my Christ, and therefore I commit the answering of my sinful debt to thy full satisfaction and sufferings. Put the case to a believing heart, you have many sinful debts to answer for, sins before conversion, and sins after conversion; sins of ignorance, and sins of knowledge; these sins have that in them which binds you over to wrath and curse; now to whom does it belong to pardon these sins? Your soul answers, to God, who can forgive sins but God only? And I, even I am he that blots out thy sins, etc. Yea, but for whose sake will God pardon them? The soul answers, only for Christ Jesus' sake, for he did shed his blood for their remission, and therefore faith goes with the soul to Christ, and says, O blessed Saviour, thy blood was shed for the remission of sins, and thou hast invited all that are heavy laden to come unto thee, and thou wilt ease them: Thou sayest, if any man sin, he has an advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for sins. Now I am thus and thus sinful, and these guilts lie upon my conscience, I am never able to get them to be pardoned for anything in me, but I do put my soul upon thee, and do trust to thee to get off these sins, I put them on

thy account, yea, all of them, and do believe that in thy blood they shall be pardoned, etc.

SECT. VII

Now for the second thing which faith looks on in Christ, and that is Righteousness. Beloved, this know, that God does never justify a man, nor will ever save a man who has not a perfect Righteousness; for he is a Righteous God and will not pronounce the sinner guiltless; his Law and Justice must be satisfied in all points, or else the sinner shall never come to heaven.

Now the soul of a person is marvelously distressed when it seriously thinks of this: How shall I stand before the great and holy God another day, being by nature so wholly sinful, and at the best being but defectively and imperfectly good? But faith in this case brings the soul to Christ, and in him it finds a most perfect and absolute righteousness: For whom, says the scrupulous soul? For you, says Faith; what for me? Yes, for you, for the Scripture says that Christ was made the righteousness of God for us, and that he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. So that if you would have such a righteousness as may answer the Law, and satisfy God, and which God will accept for justification, you must by faith get out of yourself and lay hold on that righteousness which is in Christ. As Paul says, I count all things but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Phil. 3:8, 9.

There is a two-fold righteousness. One inherent, which is in us, and this is imperfect; it can never justify us in the sight of God. Another is imputed, which is not in us, yet it is for us; and this is the righteousness of Jesus

Christ, both in his nature and in his obedience; active and passive; which God reckons unto him who believes in Christ, of which the Apostle speaks abundantly in Rom. 4:12, c. 5. And on this does faith rest only in the matter of justification. Though inherent righteousness is absolutely required for salvation, yet no righteousness but that only which is Christ's and is imputed to believers is the matter of our justification. When a sinner comes to account with God, he can never say, Lord, lo here I am, see if there be any sin in my person or defect in my holiness; I will expostulate with you upon bare terms; I have not offended you, or if I have, here's grace enough to answer for me; my heart is wholly clean, my duties at all times in every respect, for matter and manner, have been performed just as you require in your holy Law; enter into judgment with me if you please; I will be tried by my own holiness, by my own goodness. Oh no, there can be no such thing; no sinner can be pronounced just this way; even the Saints must cast their crowns to the ground and give glory to the Lamb, who only is worthy. For when we come to the point of justification before God, we must renounce our own righteousness as filthy rags; we must cry out, enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight shall no flesh living be justified.

But as they who were in danger fled to the horns of the Altar for their lives, so must we, if we would be justified, fly by faith to the Altar of Christ's perfect righteousness; and so does faith when it would present the person of a sinner perfect and unblamable before God. It does bring him unto Christ and says before God, I believe in him to be the Lord my righteousness.

Chapter Seven

How it may appear that to Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved

Before I give you the arguments or reasons to evince this, I must premise some particulars, viz.

First, that believing or faith may be considered four ways; either,

1. Absolutely, as a simple habit or quality of grace, apt to change the unbelief of the heart, and to send forth the acts of trusting and acceptance. Thus, faith is not the only way of salvation, partly because other habits are required as well as faith, and partly because there is not in faith (absolutely considered) any meritorious dignity (of itself) to challenge salvation. We say that a ring is worth a hundred pounds, not absolutely considered, not that the gold which makes the ring amounts to that value, but in respect of the diamond set in that ring. So faith is a grace of wonderful price (much more precious than gold), not so much in respect of itself, as if it did by its own natural dignity cause our justification and salvation, but in respect of Christ, whose person it takes, and on whose righteousness it does rely. So though this be true, we are justified by faith, yet this is as true, we are not justified for faith, but for Christ, on whom faith does trust.

2. Actually, (that is) for the very act of believing: Arminius, and Bertius, and some of that persuasion, do say that not the righteousness of Christ is that which justifies, but the act of believing on it is that which is imputed in our justification. A righteousness of Christ, they do grant, but it is the act of our believing on this which (by divine acceptation or favor) is imputed for righteousness; but this is a flawed opinion.

Because, first, it makes void the righteousness of Christ: by his blood we are justified, Rom. 5:9. By his obedience are we made righteous, verse 19. If this does justify us, then faith as an act does not, unless we will be doubly justified.

Secondly, no works of ours before or after grace do justify us: but the act of faith is one of these. Ergo,

3. Correlatively, (that is) with relation to Christ and his righteousness, and in this respect faith is the only way: one says well, faith does not justify as an action, but as a passion; his meaning is this: not faith apprehending, but the thing apprehended by faith does justify. It is true, I must by faith apprehend Christ if I will be saved; but it is not the apprehension which saves, but he who is apprehended is the cause of my salvation. If I were likely to be drowned in the water, I must put forth my hand to him who stands and reaches out his hand unto me; yet it is not the mere putting forth of my hand which saves me from drowning, but his hand which is laid hold on by mine, which draws me forth, and so I am preserved; both must meet, but the cause is in him.

4 Instrumentally, or in respect of office; you know well how to distinguish between actions a man does as a man, and actions which a man does as an officer: If a man is condemned and ready for execution, and one comes from the King with the message of pardon, the delivering of this message is

an act of his employment and office, not of his absolute nature, as a man only. Thus it is with faith, it sends out some actions as an absolute grace, and it performs others as a grace in office, as an instrument designed and deputed; It justifies us in this latter respect; not that it is the matter or cause which clears all for us with God, but because it is the instrument, laying hold on him who does this for us: As the hand is said to clothe the body, not that the hand is any clothing (for a man does not wear his hand) but because it is the instrument to put on our clothing: or as the cup is said to quench our thirst, not that the metal of the cup can go down and satisfy that natural appetite, but because it holds that wine or liquor which does quench; so does faith justify a sinner, not as the object, not as the cause, but as the instrument (that is) as the hand of the soul, laying hold on the Robes of Christ's righteousness, putting on that garment of his, and as an instrument, receiving, and holding, and bringing to the soul that precious blood of Christ, which only can (immediately) satisfy God, and appease a thirsty conscience.

2 Again, we must distinguish the manner and peculiar habits or respect of things unto salvation; some things have a reference to salvation by way of proper causality, which have in them a meritorious reason, for the proper dignity of which a person is justified and saved; And in this respect we say that believing in Jesus Christ is the only method and way of salvation. Not that faith can (from its own worth) dispute and challenge from God, but because Jesus Christ (who is the object of faith) has as a cause merited our pardon, justification, and salvation.

Other things have a reference by way of order; As suppose a man were to be knighted by the King, to obtain this Knighthood, he must come to the Court, and stoop down on his knee, and so receive that honour; This access

to the Court, and humbling on his knee, is not a matter of merit or cause, but only of order and condition: In this latter respect, we do not deny that good works look towards salvation and are required thereto, Not as any cause (Christ only is the cause) but as conditions, and orderly steps, and ways, which we must tread if we will be saved; *via ad regnum, non causa regnandi*.

When we say that believing in Christ Jesus is the only way to be saved, you must not understand it as if no other grace were required from a man but faith only, but thus: There is no other grace which lays hold on Christ (who is the cause of salvation) but faith only. As it was with the Father of the Prodigal, when he met his son falling down on his knees, he immediately forgave him; but before he brought him into his house, he clothed him with other garments. So does God our Father, upon our humbling and believing, freely confer on us remission of sins for his Christ's sake; yet before he brings us to heaven, he invests our souls with the singular graces of his Holy Spirit. Yes, though justification be not sanctification, yet where God does the one, he ever bestows and works the other. Therefore, I pray you remember to distinguish between these two: justification and sanctification, the person justified and to be saved. Though this is most true, that there is no other meritorious cause of our justification and salvation but only Christ, and there is no other instrument to lay hold on this but faith, yet this is as true: that the person justified and to be saved has more graces in him besides his faith. Though there be not a co-operation of faith and other graces to justify, yet there is a co-existence of faith and other graces in the person justified. You must have a good heart as well as a good Christ, and a holy life as well as a precious faith, or else you shall never come to heaven. You know that in the body of man, there are eyes to see,

ears to hear, hands to take, and feet to go; of all these which are in the body, yet no members are deputed to see but the eyes. Nevertheless, the eye must not say to the ears, I have no need of you, nor the hand to the foot, I have no need of you: it is granted that no member sees but the eye, eats but the mouth, walks but the feet, lays hold on but the hands. Their offices are singular, yet their con-corporation is necessary. So no grace but faith pitches on Christ, lays hold on him as the cause of salvation, yet there is need of other graces in the person to be saved. There must be love, repentance, godly sorrow, true fear, lively hope, patience, zeal, etc. The estate is changed only by the blood of Christ, but if we will be saved, the person must also be changed by the Spirit of Christ.

SECT. I

These things being thus premised, I shall now give you some arguments by which the truth of the assertion shall appear. First, there is no other way to be saved but this (viz.) to believe in Jesus Christ. Ergo it is the only way. Three things I take as granted hypotheses.

First, that there is salvation for a sinner.

Secondly, that there is a way tending thereto as a meritorious cause of it.

Thirdly, that every man is a sinner, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:22).

Now then know that there are but two ways of life according to which there is a double covenant. First, one Legal; secondly, the other Evangelical. The Legal Covenant is "do this and live"; the Evangelical Covenant is "believe and live." The Legal Covenant grounds salvation in our own persons, and the Evangelical in the righteousness of another person. And these covenants are opposite; one cannot consist with the other. For (and mark this) though the Law and the Gospel may and do and shall consist as

the Law is a word of rule for obedience, yet they cannot possibly consist in the Covenant of Justification and salvation: (that is) whosoever will stand to the Covenant of works to be justified by it rejects the Covenant of grace and so vice versa.

Well then, this being true, that our life is to be had by the Covenant of Works or of Grace, I will briefly show unto you that we sinners can never be justified and saved by the Legal Covenant, which if I clear, then it will be evident that our salvation is only by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus then, all the possibility to be justified and saved by the Legal Covenant arises from one of these grounds, viz. either because:

That there is a fullness and exactness in inherent holiness; That there is a dignity and efficacy in actual obedience, which they call good works; That there is a latitude, or sufficiency of duty, to fulfill the Law, which may be conceived to be in a regenerate person; but none of these can justify and save; Ergo,

For the first, viz. inherent holiness, this holiness is that which is wrought in our whole soul by the Spirit of God, whereby of wicked, he makes us good; and of unholy, he makes us holy; and according to the several degrees of it is the person less or more holy. Now this we say, that though the justified person hath this infused inherent holiness, yet this is not that which can justify him before God, (that is) for the dignity of which he can stand so before the judgment of God as to be pronounced just and righteous, and so acquitted, which I prove thus.

1 That can never be the cause of our justification, which is defective and imperfect, and leaves yet the person in some measure sinful; I cannot in the Court of Justice be pronounced perfectly just for that righteousness which is imperfectly just, no more than he can in a strict court be reputed to make

full satisfaction who hath not half paid his debt, or to be thoroughly well who is scarcely able to walk three turns in the Chamber: But that holiness which is in us, inherent holiness, is very imperfect, (I speak of that which is in us here on earth) it is not adequate or parallel to the whole will of God, which requires perfection of degrees as well as of parts.

That it is imperfect is as clear as day.

First, it is at combat with sin; Ergo it is not perfect: the argument is good, for while one contrary is mixed with the other, there is still imperfection; Sin and Grace are contrary, and conflict shows imperfection, as victory notes perfection.

Secondly, that which may be increased is not perfect: but our inherent holiness may receive more increase; Hence those many exhortations to perfect holiness, 2 Cor. 7:1. and to labor after perfection, 2 Cor. 1:3.

Thirdly, all the parts of holiness are imperfect. Faith is not so clear an eye, nor Hope so fixed an Anchor, nor Love so pure a stream, but that each of them needs additions of degrees, of strength, of help. The Moon when it draws into nearest conjunction with the Sun and is filled with the longest beams of communicated light, it has yet her spots, which like so many reproaches stick in the heart of her; so is it with the holiest person on earth, with the largest measures of inherent graces, he has yet great measures of sin, which like so many spots do blemish and disable the soul to stand perfectly pure and just before the eyes of God.

2 That righteousness by which we are justified is manifested without the Law. See Rom. 3:21. and what that righteousness is, he expresses in ver. 22. even unto the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: But inherent righteousness is not manifested without the Law. Why? because the Law commands this

inherent righteousness, (viz.) To love the Lord our God with all our hearts, &c.

That cannot be the cause of our justification and salvation, upon which the conscience dares not to rest in the secret agonies of conflict, or in the imminent hours of death: when the soul is to enter conflict with the wrath of God, being wounded with the sense of sin, and cited as it were before the tribunal of God's holy and strict justice, dares it then to put itself seriously and in good earnest upon its own holiness, to make its peace, to be its propitiation, to satisfy the trials and demands of God's Justice? One well observes of the Papists, that when they are to dispute with men, they will plead for inherent holiness, but when they are to contend with God, they will fly only to Christ: tutissimum est, said Bellarmine. It was no ill meditation, that of Anselm, *Conscientia mea meruit damnationem, & Pœnitentia mea non sufficit ad satisfactionem, sed certum est, quod misericordia tua superat omnem offensionem* (that is) O Lord, my Conscience tells me, I have deserved damnation, all the repentance that I have or can perform, comes short of satisfaction, but thy mercy (even thy mercy only) can pardon, and so exceed all my transgressions.

4 The most holy persons do every day sin, and need daily pardon, and daily mercy; how then can we be justified or saved, for the merit or dignity of any holiness in ourselves? How ridiculous were it, that he should think himself to stand in great favor & acceptation before his Prince, for the singularity of his continued virtues and performances, who every day breaks out into such acts, which need the King's gracious mercy and pardon?

2 There is no dignity or meritorious efficacy in actual holiness, or in good works, reason whereof we can be justified and saved.

I know this field is very large, I will not expatiate, but speak in a word of it, with a proper respect to the thing in hand, I prove the thing thus.

1 No man (since Adam's fall) can perform works in that perfection which the Law of God requires, under the pain of eternal damnation. The perfection of good works (according to the strict exigence of the Law) consists especially in two things.

1 One is, that a man be able to perform them with all of his heart, and with a plenary love, without the intervening or slipping in of any evil inclination, or motion which abates that due and required intention, or in any measure sprinkles or taints them with any defilement.

2 Another point is that a man is to perform good works in a manner that is perpetual and constant throughout his life. These two are the ingredients of perfection, as shown by Christ's command, "Thou shalt love the Lord," etc., and Paul's statement, "He is cursed that does not continue in all that is written," etc. (Galatians 3:10). These are the conditions of works that are legally good and which must justify a man if he will be justified according to the Legal Covenant. But who can perform such perfect and good works? Adam might have done them, and Christ did; but what sinner can? Who can say, "My heart is clean," and that we do not offend in many things? Paul cries out, "I am carnal, but the Law is spiritual." The good that he would do, he could not do, and the evil which he would not do, that he did. Good Lord! How often are we at a loss in our most private meditations, and how our hearts lie flat on earth when our eyes look towards heaven in prayer? For one good work that we do, how many bad ones do we commit that we should not? Like boys, for one fair line, there are twenty with blots and blurs; or like archers, whereas they hit the mark once, they miss it a hundred times. Let us cast the accounts of our ill works with the good, and

we shall find with shame and sorrow that our good works are not equal with our bad in number, nor so strong in dignity to wipe out the bad. The bad, as they are more in number, have a cry of guilt more meritorious to cast both our persons and all our works before the judgment seat of God than the good to ingratiate or merit for us.

2 What proportion exists between our works and our pardon and salvation? If Jacob is less than the least of outward benefits, Good God! How much more unworthy are we of the spiritual, yea of the Eternal? When we have done all, we have not done more than duty, and that can never be merit, which is but duty; nay, when we have done all we can, we have not done our duty; we are but unprofitable servants, and that which fails of duty comes short of dignity or merit.

It is true that God commands, accepts, delights in, and will graciously reward good works; what, for their own sake? No, for His mercy's sake, He will save the man whose heart is holy and whose life is fruitful. What, for the works' sake? No, but for Christ's sake.

It cannot be denied that there is some relation between good works and salvation, as between the means and the end; but there is not that relation as between an efficient cause and an effect; for the efficient cause of our salvation is only God's grace and favor. Nor is it as between a meritorious cause and the reward, for the meritorious cause of our salvation is only the obedience of Jesus Christ. Nor is it as between an apprehensive cause (may I use such an improper term), for that only is faith, the instrument of our salvation, etc.

3 There is not in regenerate men such an adequation or full answerableness of duty as to keep and fulfill the Law as it is the Covenant of life and salvation.

There are various arguments to clarify this; I will touch on one or two.

1 Imperfect actions do not fulfill a perfect rule, no more than a short line matches a long copy, or a line partly crooked matches one that is straight. But the duties which regenerate men perform are imperfect actions, as they flow from an imperfect agent, namely, from the soul of a Christian, which is partly spiritual and partly carnal, not wholly spiritual nor wholly carnal. Even from this does the Apostle conclude the impossibility (for us) to fulfill the Law, Rom. 8:3, namely, from the weakness or infirmity of the flesh, that is, of the old man not yet fully purged and changed.

2 If any man could perfectly fulfill the Law, then some man would have no need of Christ, either to be his Redeemer or to be his Intercessor; for a Redeemer and Intercessor is needed in case of transgression and failing, and so Christ would be to a regenerate person at least an idle and fruitless intercessor, as it pertains to his intercession to pacify, reconcile, and ingratiate. But what use is this where all things and services are just already, as they should be, without any animadversion of the Law against them? But Christ is an Intercessor even for the Saints. He makes intercession for us, says Paul, Rom. 8, and Saint John implies that an Advocate is for a sinner, only for him, 1 John 2:1. If any man sins, we have an Advocate, etc. If for a sinner only, then for a transgressor of the Law, and if for a transgressor of the Law, then not for one who does perfectly fulfill it.

3 If the just must live by faith, then he cannot perfectly fulfill the Law, for then he might live by his works; but the just shall live by faith, Gal. 3:11. That no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith. Mark the place (shall live by faith). If it comes to the matter of life and death, then farewell works. Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all that is written to do them. If he will save his life, he must

get himself faith to fly to mercy and Christ. Yea, and mark of whom he speaks this. It is not of a person unconverted, but it is of the just; even the just must live by his faith, that is, by Christ, on which faith does rest, not by his own merits, works, obedience.

Now put all this together: there are but two ways to save a man, either by faith in Christ or else by the observance of the Law. But none can observe the Law so as to be justified by it because 1) His holiness is short, 2) His works ineffectual, 3) His performances unanswerable; therefore to believe in Christ is the only way.

Every mouth is stopped (by the Law) and all the world is to become guilty before God; therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin, Rom. 3:19-20. Suppose a man had many great debts and several poor friends, and he seeks to one of them: "Good sir, be bound for me." Alas says he, "All my estate will not reach or extend to satisfy half of what you owe." Then he goes to another: "Sir, be you pleased to engage yourself." Alas says he, "I am so poor that the creditor will not take my word." Even thus it is when a man will run to something in himself to justify him before God. Alas says holiness, "I am not able enough," and says good works, "God may find reason enough to discard us." Therefore says Faith: "To Christ, To Christ, None but Christ."

Secondly, all that can justify and save a man is only to be found in Christ, as in the meritorious cause; therefore, the only way to be saved is to believe in Jesus Christ. Hence, Christ is called, Heb. 2:10, the Captain of our salvation, Heb. 5:9, the Author of eternal salvation.

There are two things which, if a man had, he should be saved. One is the forgiveness of his sins. Therefore, says David in Ps. 32:1, "Blessed is the

man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," ver. 2, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

Another is the possession of a most complete righteousness, by which he might stand and appear perfectly just before the judgment seat of God; so that if divine justice should look on it with the exactest eye, yet it were every way unspotted and full. Now these two are to be found only in Christ, and by him.

First, remission of sins. It is the purchase of his blood only, and therefore often in Scripture assigned thereto. Thou canst not with all thy tears wipe off (meritoriously) the least of thy sins, nor with all thy grace buy out the pardon of thy present failings. All remission is by blood, by the only blood of Christ.

Secondly, the righteousness which justifies and saves us is only in Christ; He is made righteousness to us, 1 Cor. 1:30 and Rom. 5:19. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous; see ver. 21. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

I know that this point of imputed righteousness is the great quarrel 'twixt us and the Church of Rome; I shall therefore reserve the handling of it to the uses, where I may more fitly clear our doctrine.

Now put things together: whatsoever will save us is in Christ, and faith is the only grace to conjoin us with Christ, and therefore, to believe in Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved.

SECT. III

Thirdly, salvation is by grace only, Eph. 2:5; Rom. 11:6. And it is a free gift, Rom. 5:15. The free gift, the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many, and v. 16, the free

gift is of many offenses to justification, and v. 18, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. Now if it be so, then here's room for believing; for faith brings nothing of its own but receives all as a gift from God. It is the receiving grace: Lord give me thy Son, Lord give me the pardon of my sins, Lord give me a righteousness, Lord give me eternal life; all these things are gifts, and faith only receives these gifts.

SECT. IV

Fourthly, salvation is only conferred in such a way whereby God only may have the glory of it. Though God doth bestow great matters on us for our good, yet all the end of them is for his own glory. To commend the riches of his grace and mercy, Eph. 2:7-8; so v. 9, not of works, lest any man should boast; (that is) he should vaunt and say, I have got heaven by my own merits, I have my wages for my labor, and my happiness for my penny.

Now the way of believing is the only way of acknowledging a God and of emptying our proud imaginations; whatsoever faith hath, it hath taken the same out of a gracious hand; all is alms which comes to faith, and it will confess, I have nothing and am nothing but what I have received; and what I expect, I expect it for his sake who promises it, not for my sake who receives it; and thus faith puts all the glory on God.

SECT. V

Fifthly, neither would our salvation be sure nor our comfort sure if we were to be saved any other way than by believing in Jesus Christ.

1 Salvation would not be sure, because, first, our happiness would be no more secure, now being in our own hands, out of Christ's, than was Adam's, left to himself. Secondly, we could never be sure of salvation by anything against which God might take just exception.

2 No sure comfort, because conscience troubled with the sense of sin could never be pacified with imperfections and sins. That which will not satisfy God can never pacify conscience. But says the Apostle, Rom. 5:1, being justified by faith, we have peace with God: Faith finds one who was delivered for our offenses, who pacified God to the utmost, who was without spot, whose righteousness is full, imputed to us, accepted for us, and so hereupon does graciously quiet and still the heart.

We must distinguish between the root and fountain, and ground of our comfort, and between the testimonies of our interest in the root of our comfort; only Jesus Christ is the ground of a Christian's comfort, and therefore says Paul, God forbid that I should rejoice in anything but in the cross of Christ. If at any time we behold holiness, or any part of it in our hearts, we take comfort in it, not as the ground, but as in the testimony, because it does manifest our interest in him, who is our comfort, our peace, our joy, our salvation, our all in all.

Thus much for the explication and confirmation of this great assertion, viz. That to believe in Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. Now I descend to the useful application of all to ourselves.

Chapter Eight

The preaching and hearing of the Gospel of singular use

The first use shall be for information, which consists of many profitable consequences or inferences that will flow from this truth. If believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved, then first, it will follow that the preaching of the Gospel is worthwhile; it is of necessary and singular consequence. Consider that place, Rom. 1:16: I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, verse 17, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith. The Apostle presents two arguments for his honorable estimation and confident preaching of the Gospel.

1. One is that it is the power of God to salvation (that is) it is the instrument which God uses, and into which He does imprint a power to save men: It is called the power of God to salvation, not only in respect of revelation, because it does manifest and declare the sole means of reconciliation between God and man, but also in respect of operation and

efficacy, because it does communicate and produce that faith in Jesus Christ by which we are saved.

2. Another is that it comprehends the righteousness of God, which faith only does take: By the righteousness of God, he understands that righteousness whereby a man is justified in the sight of God, and it is called the righteousness of God because God is the author and giver of it; it is wrought and given by God in Jesus Christ; and also because it is approved and of force with God at His tribunal and judgment seat. See another place, Ephes. 1:13: In whom you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; He in the preceding verses enumerates many singular and heavenly blessings, among which Christ was one, and he does in this verse express the order and manner how they come to be interested in Him, namely by trusting or believing, and they come to that trusting and believing by the Gospel, which he styles a word of truth and a message of salvation.

Tell me seriously, is not salvation the great scope and aim of your most choice and sober thoughts? And can any attain that but by Christ? And can you have Christ without faith?

How precious, then, unto you should the Ministry of the Gospel be, which is the instrument of God to produce that faith which lays hold on that Christ, by whom only we are saved! Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, so says the Apostle, Rom. 10:17, and John 6:45: Every man that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh to me.

He is an enemy to his own salvation who slights the preaching of the Gospel; and he is an enemy to the salvation of others who labors to oppress and extinguish it: for if salvation be by faith in Christ, and that faith depends on the Gospel, then,

For our parts, let us bless God for his Gospel. Let us forever honor and respect the message of the Gospel; yea, let us heartily embrace the Doctrine and power of the Gospel: Let the feet of them which bring the glad tidings of salvation be acceptable unto us, for as much as salvation, and Christ, and faith are all of them annexed unto the Gospel.

2 Then hence it will follow that a mere hearing of Christ and his doctrine will not save if believing be the only way.

There are diverse sorts of hearing.

One with Incogitance, when perhaps the ear is open, but the mind is asleep and heeds not that precious object revealed.

Another with Reluctance, when the ear is open and the mind attentive, but the heart striving against the truth and goodness of the word.

Another with Conformity, when the ear hears, and the understanding yields, and the heart embraces. Now it is this latter kind of hearing which brings to salvation. That hearing which consists only in the delivery of the message, which brings something from God to us, this will not save; but such a hearing as brings back something from us to God, which is accompanied with believing, which turns home the soul to the acceptance and embracing of Jesus Christ, this is the only hearing to save our souls. A motion made and tendered does not conclude a match, but a motion consented unto and embraced.

3 If believing in Jesus Christ be the only way of life, then Jesus Christ should be the main scope and mark of all our preaching and studying, 1 Cor. 2:2: I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. It was the main theme and subject upon which that blessed Apostle did spend himself. Look as it is with a Physician, that though he does sometimes lance, and sometimes make very sick, and

sometimes restrain to strictness of diet, and sometimes bind and trouble the patient, and sometimes relieve him with precious cordials; though these actions are different among themselves, yet they do concentrate in one end, which is health and life: So whether Ministers preach the knowledge of sin, or whether they strive to make men sensible of sin, or whether they let fly the arrows of God's threatenings upon the conscience of sinners, or whether they touch on the mercy-seat; all the end and scope is, or should be, to bring men to Christ, to make Christ more glorious in the eyes of sinners, and to incline their hearts to accept and embrace him.

Christ may be preached two ways.

Either Explicitly, when he in his person, or offices, or benefits, is the only matter which is handled and published.

Or virtually, when he is the end of that matter which is delivered. In one of these ways, Christ is still to be preached; Do I meet with a broken and afflicted spirit, groaning under the load of sinful nature and life, panting after the Prince of life and peace, willing to yield up itself to all the conditions of God in Christ? Here now I am to lift up Christ on his cross, to spread his arms, to show unto that broken spirit the very heart blood of Jesus Christ poured out for the remission of sins, to be a propitiatory sacrifice for his soul. Do I meet with an obstinate and proud spirit, which dares to defy justice and presumptuously to arraign mercy? Here I open the indignation of God against sin, with the purpose to awaken the conscience, to cast down the high and lofty imaginations, and for no other end but this: That such a person, being now come to the sense of his misery, may fitly be directed and seasonably encouraged to the sight and fruition of his remedy in Christ.

Chapter Nine

Justification only in Jesus Christ

Fourthly, if believing in Jesus Christ be the only way to be saved, then this informs us where to find our justification, viz. only in Jesus Christ; for there only is the righteousness which can satisfy justice, and in his blood only is remission of sins. Now, because this is a fundamental point between us and the Papists, and it is the great bottom of comfort to a believing soul; give me therefore leave to improve the remainder of the time in a brief and distinct explication of it: Where

First, of the word and title (Justification.)

Secondly, of the nature and definition of it: together with some arguments to evince that it is only by and for Christ; and some answers to the choicest objections.

SECT. I For the word (justification) it has a double acceptance amongst writers.

1. One intrinsic, and so it signifies to make a man just by an act of infusion (that is) by the implantation of sanctified or holy qualities.

2. Another extrinsic, and so it signifies to repute or pronounce a man just by an act of jurisdiction (that is) a judiciary sentence to pronounce him righteous, and free from guilt and condemnation.

And thus is it (for all I can learn) altogether used and sensed in the Scriptures, which speak of our justification before God, (viz.) for such an action of God, whereby after the manner of a judge he absolves and acquits an accused person, Rom. 8:33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies, verse 34. Who is he that condemns? where you have a manifest antithesis, or opposition between justification and condemnation; now as condemnation is an action of the judge, a sentence of his pronouncing the person guilty and obnoxious, so justification (being contrary to it) must import an action or sentence acquitting and absolving. Yea, and again, as condemnation most improperly and abusively must be interpreted if we expound it to be a making of a man so, and so sinful by infusion; so is justification wrongly conceived when men make it to be a making of a person just by infusion of holiness.

It is observed that in this kind of justification, viz. which is judicial; there are four persons as it were.

First, the agent. One who begins the suit, accuses, lays such and such things to the charge of another, the Apostle said it, Rom. 8:33. Who shall lay anything to the charge? &c.

Secondly, the patient, the person accused and charged with default, offense, and guilt.

Thirdly, the advocate, who endeavors to vindicate the party so charged from the accusation, either by declaring the innocence of the person or pleading satisfaction.

Fourthly, the Judge, who in justification of that person, gives sentence for the person accused, according to the valid plea of the Advocate, and so absolves him. It is thus in the point of our justification: there is Satan accusing, and something else. There is man accused of sin and guilt; there is Christ interposing and pleading as an Advocate, by his blood and righteousness; and there is God as a Judge, for Christ's sake acquitting, absolving, pronouncing righteous, and accepting to everlasting life. So then, the proper and punctual acceptance of the word justification is not according to infusion, but according to absolution and pronouncement: It is not physical, as when a man is made whole, but it is judicial, as when a man is cleared at the bar.

He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, they are both an abomination to the Lord, Prov. 17:15. There is the word again. Not, I trust, to be expounded by way of infusion (that is) he who makes a wicked man a good man by impression of righteousness is an abomination to God, but it is to be expounded by way of judiciary sentence (that is) he who pronounces of a wicked man in the Court of Justice as if he were just, and reposes him as so, and accepts him as so, this man is an abomination to the Lord. Now, take one distinction, and then I will go to the nature of Justification.

There is a two-fold Justification.

One of the cause, and this is a particular kind of acquittance, touching such and such things which are laid to a person, perhaps sometimes very unjustly.

Secondly, another of the person, when he is thoroughly purged and absolved; now in this respect we speak of justification, which I think for the nature of it may be thus defined.

SECT. II

Justification of a sinner is a gracious and just action of God, whereby he imputes the righteousness of Christ to a believing sinner, absolves or acquits him from his sins, and accepts him as righteous in Christ, and as an heir of eternal life.

There are diverse things considerable in this description.

First, Justification (immediately) belongs to God; it is his action. It is God that justifies, says the Apostle, Rom. 8:33. And who can forgive sins but God only? Luke 5:21. We well distinguish 'twixt officia and beneficia, 'twixt duties and 'twixt blessings: duties belong to us, but blessings belong to God: It is God who is offended, and therefore condemnation and absolution belong to him, to the Judge, not to any other; hence says the Apostle, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. 5:19. not imputing their sin. You do well to distinguish the causes of our Justification. There is first the prime cause, the Author, and this is God the Father, who gave his only begotten Son for us and set him forth to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood, that all who do believe in him should be justified, Rom. 3:25. And who is the Judge absolving all that believe and pronouncing them just in Christ.

Secondly, The meritorious cause: so the Son of God our Mediator is said to justify us both as our surety, in paying our debt and laying down the full price of our redemption, Isa. 53:11. thereby affording unto us the matter and merit of our justification; and as our Intercessor and Advocate, pleading effectually for us that his merits may be imputed to us. Hence it is said in Isa. 53:11: My righteous servant shall justify many. God the Father justifies as a Judge by way of prime authority, and God the Son justifies as a Mediator. The Son justifies as a surety, paying our debt and giving

satisfaction to the Father for us to the utmost, and the Father justifies us as a Creditor fully accepting that price and satisfaction.

Thirdly, the applying cause, and thus the Holy Ghost may be said to justify, inasmuch as he joins Christ and the soul (by faith) together, whence arises a participation of the righteousness of Christ and the pardon of sin by him. Once more, distinguish justification; it may be taken two ways, either actively, as a judiciary sentence, absolving, acquitting, etc., and so we say, God justifies; or passively, as a thing apprehended and rested on, and so we say that faith justifies; not as if faith did acquit, but as it takes and receives the acquittance; not as if faith did impute righteousness, but because it receives and rests on the righteousness of Christ, by God imputed to us. Now when we say that justification is an action of God, it is meet for you to understand somewhat of the kind of this action; for the actions of God are of different sorts.

Some are produced within us and make a real alteration and change in the soul of man; thus sanctification is an action of God, (that is) such an action of God as is altering the inward frame and qualities of the soul, of unholy, making them holy; of unbelieving, making them believing; of hard, making them soft; of earthly, making them heavenly, etc.

Others are wrought for us, but not in us; and though they import a change of the condition and state of the person, yet properly and formally, they imprint no change in the inward disposition. And thus justification is an action of God, not an action changing the inward frame of the heart, but an action changing the great estimation of the person; as when one who is a bondman is made free, this alters the state but not the nature of the person; when a guilty person is pardoned by his prince, this alters not his nature, but it does alter his condition; he is now in the state of life, who before was in

the state of death. So it is in justification; it is such an action that alters the state, (that is) the man who is in the state of wrath and condemnation, being justified, is now acquitted and so passed into the state of life and salvation.

A man who before was guilty of sin and damnation, the same man (remaining a sinner in himself and in himself worthy of damnation) is in his justification absolved from the guilt of sin and accepted as righteous in Christ and is passed into the state of salvation. We deny not but that the blood and the water go together, (that is) whom God justifies by the blood of Christ, him also he sanctifies and washes by the Spirit of Christ, but the action of the blood is one thing, and the action of the water is another thing. The light and heat in the fire go together, yet the action of light is not the action of heat: so here, the action of the blood is a justifying action, and this is without us, yet for us and of us; the action of the water is a sanctifying action, and this is for us and in us too.

SECT. III

The person justified is a believing sinner: the Apostle is clear, Rom. 4:5. To him that believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. There is great dispute over which is first, faith or justification; to me now it seems a fruitless trouble to molest ourselves with priorities in this kind. I conceive we may distinguish 'twixt the purchase of our justification, which was long ago in the blood of Christ. He was a Lamb slain long since to merit the remission of sins; neither does he now begin his merit, who has heretofore performed it.

Secondly, 'twixt the imputation of that purchase. It is true, while I am an unbelieving person, my justification is already as a purchase, but until I believe, God imputes it not unto me. My meaning is this: there is a righteousness of Christ, which has deserved pardon of sin before I ever

believe, nay, before I was ever born, but God imputes this over to me when I believe. As soon as I take Christ by faith, God imputes the righteousness of Christ unto me and will not impute my sins unto me. And Scripture is open enough for this, we read so constantly in the New Testament for men to come in and believe that they may have remission of sins in the blood of Christ, and through him also eternal life.

I only propose this question: whether faith is to deal with the person of Christ first, or with his benefits first. Surely we say with his person, and then with his portion; well then, if faith deals with the person of Christ immediately, then it appears that a man must believe and so be justified, for as much as justification is an action of God imputing the righteousness of Christ and not imputing sin, which are the general benefits (as I may speak so) of Christ. It is not fitting to conceive that God should first pardon me, and then I believe, or that I should have the righteousness of Christ before I have Christ himself, which must be if there is a priority of justification before faith. For my part, I conjecture that they are simultaneous things (that is) they go both together. If yet any men will be acute, let them be so: The peril is little on either side, so that I have faith and then am justified, or so that I am justified and then have faith, or so that I have faith to be justified, will in the substance and event redound all to one.

SECT. IV

Remission of sins belongs to justification (that is) when God justifies the person, he does absolve or forgive him his sins.

There are in sin two things.

One is the stain, pollution, defilement of it, and corrupt inclination; with this justification deals not, but sanctification.

Another is the guilt and punishment; and with this does justification deal. Suppose you saw a sick thief; there are two sorts of persons to deal with him: a physician, because he is sick, and a judge because he is a thief. If the judge acquits or pardons him, this clears him as a thief and guilty person; if the physician heals and cures him, this respects him as a sick and diseased person; the case is our own. Now I say that God in justification remits or absolves the sinner. Two things are here considerable: First, quid; secondly, quousque.

First, quid, what this remission is; I answer, it is an exempting of the sinner from guilt redounding to punishment: If any man sins, guilt cleaves universally to the sin, but then in justification it shall not be imputed; it shall be taken away in respect of efficacy and redundancy. Suppose a person arraigned and cast for murder, and the King graciously steps in and pardons him; though this pardon makes not the murder formally to be no murder, and though it makes not the murder now meritoriously deadly, yet it does hold off the efficacy of that guilt, that now it shall not prove death to this person because he pardons him. So in justification, where God pardons the sinner, he does not make sin to be no sin or that there should not be any natural condemnability in sin, but that it shall not effectually redound to the death and damnation and hell of the person whom he has acquitted for Christ.

Secondly quousque, How far remission of sins extends in justification. There is a two-fold remission.

One particular, which is circumscribed to some particular facts and is ordinary in the courts of human princes who limit and restrain their discharges of offenders.

Another universal, which reaches to the whole state of guilt; now this I take as sure, that whomever God justifies, He will forgive all their sins. All their sins before conversion, and all their sins after conversion: But whether this forgiving of all is once for all, simul & semel, as they speak, I am not able to express my thoughts fully.

It is true, I confess, and embrace that opinion, that justification is not a divided act, it is not repeated over and over, but it is one act only; but whether it is one transient act, (as if all were erased with a pen) or whether it is one continued act, is very disputable. The Scripture leans much to this latter, and therefore describes God as a God forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sins, implying a course of pardoning, and not a momentary act.

Again, it is hard to express how God forgives a sinner before they have sinned, which must be the case if pardon for all sins is a momentary act. Yet I would rather captivate my judgment than occasion dispute; only remember two things.

First, no doubt but the justified person shall have every sin pardoned; not some only, but all.

Secondly, justification does not admit degrees; though it may admit a continuance: The righteousness and merit of Christ which is our justification, is not more or less, but is at all times one and most perfect.

SECT. V

The righteousness of Jesus Christ is that by which only we are justified.

The righteousness of Christ is the matter of our justification; not the essential righteousness of His Godhead, but the righteousness of Christ as Mediator both God and man, which was either,

The habitual holiness of His person, in the absence of all sin, and in the rich and plentiful presence of all holy and requisite qualities.

Or the actual holiness of His life and death by obedience; the one perfectly fulfilling the commands, and by the passive obedience of the other, voluntarily suffering the penalty and commination of the Law for transgressions. Now all this righteousness is imputed to us in justification. For

First, no other righteousness can justify.

Secondly, as Christ was made sin for us, so we are made righteous by Him, viz. only by imputation.

The Papists call upon us for a righteousness in Justification; they will bring one forth of their hearts and good works, Menstruous clothes, says the Scripture, but we produce a righteousness most full, perfect, every way exact, not in us, but in Christ, yet imputed to us by God.

How clear is the Scripture for us? 2 Cor. 5:21. He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, Jer. 23:6. The Lord our righteousness, 1 Cor. 1:30. Christ Jesus is made unto us of God, &c. righteousness. How often does the Apostle peculiarly interest imputed righteousness when handling the doctrine of Justification? Rom. 4. But the Apostle clears all, Rom. 5:19. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. *Adæ peccatum imputabitur mihi, & Christi justitia non pertinebit ad me?* said Bernard.

Object. But Christ's righteousness is His, and how can it present us as righteous before God? It is none of ours.

Sol. First, it is His in respect of Inhesion, but it is ours in respect of Imputation; His personally, ours meritoriously.

Secondly, we may be considered two ways: either absolutely and alone or else as conjoined with Christ: and thus being by faith made one with Christ, He makes over His righteousness unto us, upon which God looks as ours in the matter of justification.

Ob. But if Christ's righteousness becomes ours so by imputation that we may truly be accounted and accepted as righteous, then by the same reason, because redemption is made ours, we may likewise be reputed true Redeemers and Saviors.

Sol. This is one of the arrows which Bellarmine draws out of his quiver against the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but it is of no force.

For he is to be termed a Redeemer and Saviour, not who does receive and take the redemption and salvation procured by another, but who brings redemption and salvation; we are by the Redemption of Christ truly said to be redeemed, though not our Redeemers, and so by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, are we truly accounted righteous persons.

Objection: Again, if the righteousness of Christ be so imputed to us in Justification, that for it we are accounted perfectly righteous, as if it were our own most perfect and intrinsic; then why may not we be accounted as righteous as Christ? Yes, and having Christ's righteousness, why may we not be the Saviours of men? Since that is the righteousness which does save all that are saved.

Solution: I answer,

To compare the same righteousness with the same is illogical and gross, for it is one and the same righteousness which is inherent in Christ, and imputed to the believing soul. Secondly, the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to any particular believer, according to the whole latitude of its efficacy, but according to the particular exigence of the person; It is not

imputed to Paul as the general price of redemption for all, but as the price by which his soul in particular is redeemed.

These things being dispatched, there is a difference amongst some Divines about that righteousness which is imputed, some holding the passive only, others the active and passive.

Solution: The latter seems most solid; Reasons these,

First, there is no Justification without fulfilling the whole Law, but now to the fulfilling of the Law, (since the fall of Adam) two things are required: one is perfect and personal conformity to the Law, in answering that active condition of it, Do this and live. Another is a plenary satisfaction to the sentence of the Law, by bearing the penalty therein denounced in regard of sins already committed.

Secondly, Again, faith does not abrogate the Law, but establish it, but if it should teach justification without Christ's fulfilling of the Law, it should abrogate the Law.

SECTION VI

The last thing which I should have inserted before is this: That the justification of a sinner is a gracious and just action. It is a gracious action, (that is) the gracious love and favor of God was the cause of it; It was his own free grace and favor that gave Christ his Son to be our righteousness, and it is his free grace to give us faith to believe on his Son, and when we do believe, it is his Grace which imputes unto us the righteousness of Christ.

Secondly, it is a just and righteous action, Rom. 3:25, 26. That he might be just, and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. God's justice is such that he will forgive no man his sins for which he is not perfectly satisfied, neither will he accept of any as righteous who has not a personal

righteousness, but having received a perfect satisfaction, he will acquit the sinner believing, for he is just and righteous, and his Justice will not make a second demand: yet here is the graciousness of God which will admit of the satisfaction and of the righteousness of another for us.

Chapter Ten

The difficulty of believing in Jesus Christ

A Second Use from this great assertion shall be to put ourselves to a Trial and Examination. If to believe in Jesus Christ our Lord be the only way to be saved, then it does much concern us to search ourselves whether we do believe indeed in Jesus Christ.

There are three things which I will premise as so many grounds why we should put ourselves upon this inquiry, and then I will give unto you the discoveries themselves. The premises are these.

First, the difficulty of believing in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the facility of error and mistake about believing.

Thirdly, the bitter danger and sure misery of not believing in Jesus Christ.

1 The difficulty of believing is increased by the singularity of such strange and wonderful goodness. It is so great and so unparalleled that a man can hardly believe it to be true. To have an estate in Christ, in God, freely, all at once; how can this be? The depth of guilt. I am an enemy, God is just; I have run into such high forfeitures, so unnecessarily lost myself, provoked

God so often, and the threatenings are planted against sinners, there is no hope, no probability, (if a small debt, etc.)

But for the difficulty of it, that it is not so easy a thing to believe in Christ Jesus, this shall appear in various particulars.

First, there is no natural principle of justifying faith now in man. An act, or motion, or quality, which has a rise and bottom within the subject, may spring forth with some ease: A stone having a natural propensity and impetus to descend, if you do but release it from your hand, it will fall; but now to make a mighty stone to mount the hill, to get up into the air, there being no natural aptness to this, it is a hard and difficult attempt.

Objection: It's true that a man has an understanding and will, but the Mystery of Jesus Christ is a riddle to the natural understanding.

Solution: The faculties naturally considered have no elevation to this object unless the Lord by his Almighty power begets and works faith in the soul. The soul thinks not on him, neither can it draw itself to him. Like the needle, until it is touched, it will not start up towards the pole; so unless the Lord touches our hearts by his blessed Spirit, we shall never close with Christ.

So then, this is one thing to show the difficulty of believing: the habit of it is out of our power, out of our sphere; it cannot be produced by any strength of nature but by the sole arm of God. Hence that of the Prophet, Isa. 53:1: unto whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? who has believed our report? The testimony of the Gospel concerning Christ will not be believed unless the Lord reveals his own Arm, (that is) until he puts forth his own Almighty strength.

There is a natural principle of infidelity and unbelief in every man's heart. If the paper were fair, if there were no precedent blurs and blots, then it

would not be so hard to imprint some legible characters. Or if the wax were soft, and the iron heated, now it would be easy to engrave what kind of arms the artificer pleases. But when the wax and the iron are hard and cold, now the impression is difficult because the resistance is strong. If there were in our hearts any obedient principles, which could beforehand temper the mind and frame the will, then when God offers Christ, little ado would serve the turn. But our hearts naturally bend the other way; there is in us a natural unfitness, nay, an enmity to believe. Enmity to the habit and nature of faith, blindness, error, pride, stubbornness, disobedience in our hearts. We have such slow and untoward hearts, so armed with all sorts of corrupt reasonings, so consulting with sense and rational evidences, so ready on every evidence to mistrust, doubt, question, gainsay, that all arguments will not persuade us that God will give us Christ and pardon our sins. You know that when the Lord Jesus was personally on earth and did preach himself, and in that manner, that none spoke with that authority as he, and confirmed the truth of his divinity and mediatorship by Scripture and miracles, yet very few believed (historically) that he was the Christ, that he was the Son of God. Take now a person who is sensible of his sinful guilts; tell him of the need he has of a Savior, he will grant it; represent unto him the sufferings, the excellency, the tenderness of the Lord Jesus, that he is the mediator, the propitiation for sins, that remission of sins is in his blood, both intensively for the great degrees and aggravations of sin, and extensively for the several kinds of sin. Tell him that the Lord Jesus came to seek such a lost person as he, that he came to loose such a captive as he, that he came to bind up such a broken spirit as he is, that he came to ease and refresh such a burdened and laden soul; yea, and answer objection after objection, doubt after doubt, fear after fear, that the person cannot put by

the arguments why he should believe, nor urge and reinforce his reasons why he should hold off from closing with Christ and putting his soul on him. Yet this we find: he cannot (when all is said) he cannot believe. Unbelief does throw up so many mists and so many fears and is (many times) so unreasonable that yet it will hold off the heart. Neither the goodness of God, nor the truths of God, nor the mercies of God, nor the freeness of them, nor the person of Christ, nor the merits of Christ, nor the tenderness of Christ, nor the gracious offer, invitation, command, threatening of Christ will make the heart come in unto him. There is a natural opposition in the heart against Christ, and therefore it is hard to believe in him. The opposition is manifold.

First, regarding his Person; the Lord Jesus Christ is a holy Person, and none can truly accept him without acknowledging his holiness. He is the holy one of God, and he is called the holy Child Jesus, and a holy, undefiled High Priest, separated from sinners. Now the heart (naturally) is in love with sin, and Christ tells us that this very thing is a cause why men do not believe: See John 3:19. This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. Christ comes thus to a man, saying, I am he who will save your soul if you will accept me; but then know, that I am a holy person; if you will have me, you must let go of your sins. Now this breaks off the match, hinders the bargain, this goes to the heart: A man naturally will as soon part with his life as with the sin he loves.

Secondly, regarding his condition: There is a double condition of Christ, one is Triumphant, another is Militant; Gloria in excelsis, that is, the triumphant condition; Tribulationes in Terris, that is, the militant condition; the Crown of Glory, that is the triumphant condition; the Crown of Thorns,

that is the militant condition. Now the heart naturally is unsuffering: It is a terror to it to speak of afflictions, sorrows, reproaches, losses; We are willing to enjoy the world, to taste pleasures, to handle profits, to rest in ease, to walk at liberty, to rejoice with our friends, to be spread abroad with high estimations. The young man, when Christ bade him sell all that he had and give it to the poor (It was *præceptum experimentale*), he goes away sorrowful.

Thirdly, regarding the Scepter and Government of Christ. We will not have this man to reign over us, they say; and you read in Psalm 2 how they consulted to break his bands asunder. The Scepter of Christ is Heavenly, and his Laws are Spiritual and his Ways are Righteous and straight; they lay injunctions on the inward man as well as on the outward conversation and bind the thoughts, intentions, and affections. Now what do you mean to pin up a Spirit which would have elbow room? What, would you have a licentious heart and a turning and winding conscience to be precise, narrowed, and restrained, and so every way straightened? You must give it leave to break the Sabbath, to improve its gains dishonestly, to swear now and then, and to comply, etc.

Fourthly, regarding the Righteousness of Christ. Oh what a struggle had that blessed Apostle with the Romans, with the Galatians, with others, to break them off from Justification by Works; And to fasten upon their hearts the Justification by Faith? We are apt to stand upon ourselves and to look for the matter of our acceptance and acquittance in ourselves or man; He thinks that his good meaning shall make him succeed; Another thinks that doing no harm will let him into Heaven, or else God help us; Another stands on his devout Sacrifices; Another on his charitable bounties; Yea, and those who should know better in the Doctrine of Justification, how extremely do

they cling to their inherent Graces? Much ado before they can be made to cast their Crowns to the earth and give the glory only to Christ who is worthy. What pains is God forced to take to break us off from ourselves? We are so proud and so unwilling to be beholden to God's free grace and Christ that God is forced to break our heart to pieces and split our ship into shivers so that we might only cleave to Christ. He must imprint the holy and mighty vigor of the Law on our consciences to show us our utter impotence and sensibly acquaint us with our marvelous imperfections in graces and interruptions in duties and excursions of daily sinning—all to fetch us entirely to cast our safeties only on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Eleven

The facility of error and mistake about believing

Secondly, as it is hard to believe, so it is easy to mistake and delude ourselves in the matter of believing: Four things make it so.

1. One is the various kinds of faith.
2. Another is the similarity of one of the extremes of faith.
3. The easiness of both. And,
4. The aptness in our hearts to be satisfied with these.

First, there are diverse kinds of faith: As the Apostle spoke of bodies, all bodies are not the same bodies, but there are celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; so I say of Faith, all faith (I speak of habitual faith) is not the same kind of faith. We read of a Faith which the Devils have, and we read of a Faith which the Hypocrites have, and we read of a Faith which even Christ's enemies (whom he did not dare to trust) had, and we read of a Precious Faith, a Faith of God's Elect, a justifying and saving Faith. Divines ordinarily distinguish faith.

There is a Historical faith, which is a crediting the word relating, but not an embracing of it promising; it is like passing through a Garden,

observing, and smelling, but not gathering a flower; so in Historical faith, the eye of the understanding goes over the Word of God, and has some apprehensions, and general grants, and intellectual submissions, that God does not lie, but what he says is true. Nevertheless, there is not that quality of Justifying faith in this, which makes the heart close with the goodness of truth and embrace Christ.

2. There is a wonderful faith, a faith of miracles, to remove mountains, to raise the dead, which had some special and immediate promise, and yet it was a gift bestowed on those who had no faith to save themselves: Many who have cast out devils may at the last day be cast among the devils: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils? And yet Christ bid them depart, *Non novi vos*.

3. There is a temporary faith: which has in it some great apprehensions of the truths of God, yea, and reverent assents; yea, and some delightful contentment in the same; yea, and some fruitful expressions; and with all these, a singular degree of profession, even to a zealous forwardness and notoriety; so that a man may be in the eye of others like a tall Ship, and yet there is a Leak in the bottom, which suddenly sinks all.

This temporary faith, though in many respects it handles the same object with saving faith, is tampering much about Christ and the promises, yet it is intrinsically and extremely different from it. It does not differ from it in respect of eminency or degrees, nor in respect of existence or duration only (for the one is a living Spring, and the other is a decaying Flood), but in respect of formal nature also: The temporary faith does not indeed bring all the heart and settle it on Christ.

4. There is this justifying and saving faith which bestows the whole heart on Christ and takes Christ unfeignedly to be Lord and Saviour. Now where

there are so many sorts, it is not a great difficulty nor an impossibility to mistake; error is manifold (said the Philosopher), but the truth is single, and there is but one line to hit the mark, but many to miss it.

Nay, secondly, there is a great similarity between one of the extremes of faith and faith itself, namely, credulity. It is strange (yet common) that a man should make a heaven of his own, and a God of his own, and a Christ of his own, and a faith of his own, and a way to heaven of his own. Presumption is much the work of an idle fancy and a graceless heart; like a thief, very apt to handle the King's coin, but without a warrant. But to the point: Is there knowledge in faith? Why, presumption pretends to that: Is there confidence in faith? What is bolder than presumption? Is there any sweet assurance in faith? Why, presumption never doubted but could believe ever since a man was born: Is there any joy in faith? Why, presumption is as jocund and careless as if there were no heaven to be gained, no sin to be bewailed, nor course to be reformed.

Lastly, these are easy, and we are apt to content ourselves with these instead of truly believing in Jesus Christ. To gain a little seeming knowledge, to carry religion upon the lip, and Christ on the tongue, to be bold upon God's mercy and Christ's death, and with all those, to have a heart glued to the world, folded up in the love of sin, resolved against all hazards, to shift off all profession rather than to endure any storm, what is this so great a task? But to have a mind taught of God, and to have an understanding bowed with the strength of Divine light, and inward change to the obedience of truth, and to have a will sweetly renewed, and with holy trembling, humbly receiving Christ in his person and offices, and bestowing the whole soul and body on him again; here the work sticks.

Chapter Twelve

The sure and dangerous misery of unbelief

The last thing which may stir us to try ourselves is the consideration of that amazing danger and unspeakable misery to which the soul is assuredly exposed in case of unbelief.

Obj. Why, will you say, What danger if we believe not?

I answer, there are three special dangers.

First, all your sins stand upon record against you, like so many sad debts which you have run yourself into from your conception to this very day. They are all written with the pen of a diamond: there is no blotting out of a man's sins but by the blood of Christ, and the unbeliever has no portion in that blood, and therefore all your sins remain uncanceled—your sins of nature and all your sins of life; such a sin, and such a sin, then and there, and again committed, etc. O how great is the volume of them; the number of them cannot be numbered, and the guilt of them cannot be conceived; if one sin binds you over to hell, Good God! To what flames of vengeance and horrible degrees and intensities of misery and wrath do all your sins oblige you?

Yes, and as Solomon said in another case, Prov. 9:12, "If you scorn, you alone shall bear it." So I say here, if you remain an unbeliever, you alone must answer for all your sins. Whatever the wrathful displeasure of God is; whatever the horrors of conscience are; whatever the gnawings of that worm are; whatever the heat of hell flames are; whatever the doleful separation from God is; whatever curse the Law implies for sin, that you may expect, who will not believe in Christ. Oh! if that wrath was so hot when it (obliquely as it were) fell on Christ (where it had no unholy and self-guilty quality to mix with itself) that he sweat drops of blood and cried out, "My God," etc. How will you with any patience, ease, possible quietness, sustain the extreme wrath of the Almighty Judge, who are vile and filthy, and have a conscience with all your torments, to gall and vex you with the stings of misery, guilt, and self-accusations? Tell me how are you able, what can you say, how can you bear up before the Lord if he should arise, if he should terribly arise to judge the nations? He is the Holy God and Just, and is True and Great in power. What satisfaction can you bring, where are your oblations, or with what will you reconcile yourself unto the Lord? How can you either make your former sins to be no sins or persuade the Lord to be propitious to you without Christ?

Nay, verily, he will judge you as an unrighteous person, for if you have not Christ, what righteousness have you? There is no hope for you to be acquitted, nay, not hope to be saved, nay, you are sure to be damned.

Mark 16:15: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." 16: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned."

John 3:18: "He that believes not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." 36: "He that

believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Rev. 2:8: "The fearful and unbelieving are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone."

Objection: But you will say, Why? This is strange! Why such extreme misery for not believing? What sin is it?

Solution: It is one of the greatest sins of the world not to believe (that is) not to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Because,

It is a sin against the greatest love to the world, John 3:16: "God so loved the world that he gave," etc. Romans 5:8: "But God commends his love towards us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

God showed the greatness of his love by bestowing his Son, and Christ showed the greatness of his love by dying for us. Greater love (said Christ) can no man show than to lay down his life, etc. Now for the Lord to find out a way of Salvation, and in love to our souls to offer this Son of his unto us, and to beseech us to be reconciled, and then for us (like them who were invited to the supper) we cannot come, we will not come. Oh this, etc.

It is a sin for which there can be no remedy because it is a sin against the only remedy of a sinful soul. The sentence of the Law may be repealed by the Gospel, but not vice versa. There is no plaster for the soul but the blood of Christ, which yet unbelief will not take and receive.

3 It is a sin which (as much as in it lies) makes void and vain all the Covenant of Grace, turning all the goodness of it into nothing, and all the truths of it into lies, and makes the blood of Christ to be shed in vain. He that believes not makes God a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son, 1 John 5:10.4 It is a sin which directly murders the

soul: because it does willfully hold it off from Christ, who would upon believing, pardon, justify, and save.

All these things being premised, let us now descend towards the trial or evidences of true faith in Christ, where I beseech you observe,

Chapter Thirteen

Rules for the discovery of faith

First, some Rules of Direction, for the manner of evidence and testifying of faith, that you may neither be deceived by presumption, nor perplexed by error and doubting.

Secondly, some lively instances of true faith, as the word of God does clearly represent them.

The Rules of discovery and finding out faith, which are these.

SECT. I

There are some things without which faith cannot be in the heart, and yet they do not necessarily and infallibly conclude that a man has faith.

They do well distinguish in the Schools 'twixt an Antecedent, and a Cause; a Cause is such a thing as is before the effect, and which being put, the effect also is put, one will not go without the other; But an Antecedent is that which must go before another thing; yet it is not necessary that if it be, that the other things should follow. The rising of the Sun is a cause of day, and therefore this will always hold, If the Sun be up, it is Day; But this now, Learning, is (or should be) an Antecedent to preferment, it should go before

it, yet it is not an infallible truth, that everyone who gains learning should enjoy preferment: Thus is it in the nature of faith, There are some Antecedents, there are some things which must of necessity go before faith, yet they alone do not formally and assuredly conclude that a man has faith; as for instance.

A man cannot believe in Christ, he cannot receive Jesus Christ with all his heart unless he has some historical evidence of Christ; he must have some knowledge of Christ, what he is, and what he has done, or else he cannot take him to be his Lord and Savior; yet this knowledge does not infallibly conclude justifying and saving faith; for as much as the Devils and Hypocrites may see much of Christ, they may have a high degree of intellectual apprehension.

Again, a man cannot by faith take Christ to be his Lord and Savior unless he has some awareness of his sinful condition. Our heart will not look towards Christ; it cannot conceive of his excellencies, nor of its own necessity, until we feel our sinfulness, lostness, and vileness. The whole neither need nor look for a Physician, yet a person may be aware of his sinful condition; he may not only by the light of natural conscience apprehend some broader and stirring enormities, but he may by a smart and quick light, let in by the Ministry of the Word, discern heaps of wickedness in his life and heart, for which his conscience may sting him with wonderfully bitter accusations; and yet such a person (possibly) may not rise from trouble to faith, as is evident in Cain and Judas. So then remember this, that in the searchings and trials for faith, you do not conclude the presence of the habit from the common antecedents of faith, for as much as faith is but a contingent consequent of them; sometimes it does follow, sometimes it does not. As in marriage, sometimes it does follow the motion

which is made, and sometimes it does not; so the espousing of our souls to Christ by faith, sometimes it does follow knowledge, sometimes it does not; sometimes it does follow the preaching of the Word, and yet sometimes it does not; for all have heard, yet who has believed? said the Apostle, Rom. 10. Sometimes it does follow the motions and inward excitations of the Spirit, and sometimes it does not.

There are some things which faith only does produce, yet because it does not produce them always, a man therefore must not negatively conclude from the absence of them the absence of faith. You know that holy and spiritual joy is the sole fruit of faith; therefore says the Apostle, 1 Pet. 1:8: Believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious. There is nothing which can present to the heart of a Christian such full cause of joy as faith: such a God, such a Christ, such a love, such a blood, such a mercy, such happiness, such unmixed and proper and suitable good. There is a carnal joy which sparkles from the cup of pleasure; and there is a glistening joy which the rays of gold may produce; and there is a beastly joy which the fulfilling of sinful lusts may send forth; and there is a flashing and transient joy which the pride of hypocrites may dart out; but sound and weighty and holy and pure and spiritual joy, which is a well-grounded and not to be repented affecting of the heart, that comes only from faith. Yet it comes from faith as a separable effect; look as trouble and sorrow are contingent antecedents, so even in actu imperato, true joy is a separable fruit of faith. Though the branches and green leaves do sprout out of the living root only, yet this color does not appear at all times; though the blade comes only from the grains cast into the earth, yet you cannot always observe the blade. Though the flesh and natural complexion flow only from health, yet there may be sad occasions which though they do not extinguish health, may yet soil and

blubber the complexion. So even the believing person may sometimes have a tear in his eye, a handkerchief in his hand, a sigh in his breast, and yet have faith in his heart. He may sit down in ashes and feed on tears, as David did, and for all this he may be a true believer: He is not always able to see the causes of his joy nor to break through the contrarities to his faith nor to remove the quashings of his comforts. Therefore when you are to try yourselves about your faith, do not make a negative inference from separable evidences.

There are some things which faith only does produce, not as essential properties but as magnificent testimonies.

The moral philosophers distinguish between the effects and acts of liberality, as it is absolutely considered, and as it is eminently considered, being raised to magnificence. To give a farthing according to the rules and circumstances of morality, even this is an act of liberality; but to build a college, this is now an act of liberality grown into the greatness of magnificence. So it is in the matter of faith; there are some fruits of faith which come from it, absolutely considered according to its vital constitution: And there are other fruits which come from it eminently considered; faith has come to a height, to a strength, when it sends them forth. Though a child cannot bear a burden of a hundred-pound weight, yet he can desire the breast and suck; the bearing of such a burden belongs to strength, and yet the very sucking shows that he has life. Though a Christian may not be able in all respects, at all times, with all moderation and silence, to pass presently through every heavy occurrence, which shows strength of faith, yet his heart may most affectionately cling to Christ, which shows the truth of faith.

Assurance is a fruit of an eminent faith, and so is a more habitual steadfastness of quiet submission and confidence in all estates and conditions, and so is that maintenance of the heart upon God's promises in times of strong contrarities. Now as divines should warily open their lips, so should you wisely distinguish the evidences of true faith, some being (if I may so term them) essential, and others being eminent. Some there are which discover the truth, others which testify to the strength of faith: It is one thing to show you the properties of a man, another thing to show you the properties of a strong man. Many a poor Christian has been deeply troubled by others, and extremely afflicted by his own spirit for want of this distinction of the properties of faith. Because he reads and has heard what admirable and singular fruits and effects faith has sent out, such as assurance and full assurance, and with these some glorious acts of self-denial, as in Abraham and his unwavering embracing of a promise, against which both reason and sense and nature might have disputed and urged. Oh say they, we have no faith; Abraham's faith wrought full assurance, removed all wavering; our hearts are still doubting, we can hardly be persuaded, we reel and stagger like the waves, now on the shore, and then instantly off; now we believe, then we let go our hold and doubt: And hence they uncomfortably conclude against their own souls, the utter absence of faith from the defect of some particular and eminent expressions of faith, not absolutely as faith, but of faith as strong and exceedingly ripened: we must not conclude negatively from the degrees to the habit.

As if one should conclude that he has no silver in his purse because another has a bank of many thousands; or that he has no legs to go because he is not as swift as Asahel; or that the sparrow flies not because he cannot

mount up to the sun with the eagle; or that a child is no man because he cannot express the acts of a strong man.

4 There are and will be many inward contradictions to the intrinsic acts and fruits of faith, notwithstanding faith is truly in the soul and works there. Faith, though it has the preeminence over other graces in respect of its office, being the only ambassador (as it were) of the soul to Christ, yet it has no privilege above them in respect of the subject, (that is) in respect of the act and workings of it there; but just as every other grace has some particular corruption opposite to its particular nature and its particular actings, so even faith itself has infidelity and unbelief opposing it, both in the quality and in the several exercises or actings of it. There may be a flame with smoke, a hand with shaking, a tree trembling, and a faith with doubting.

Indeed, if any grace has the hardness of a more general and strong opposition, then faith is it, being a grace of general help and use to bring in more grace and more strength against all sin. Now in our trials for faith, it will be with us as with the artisan in his search for the little rays of gold; it is true, he shall find much dross here and there, and yet if he can find a very little piece of gold (though amidst a heap of dross), he will say, this is gold, and will preciousy esteem it and lay it up. So when we are searching our hearts by the light of God's Word for true faith, without all doubt we shall meet with many doubts, much unbelief; yet if we can find any one degree of true faith (which is more precious than gold), we may not cast it away because it is found amongst its contraries, but we must cherish and embrace it because the touchstone of the Word has approved it to be a precious faith. For (and mark this) we are not able to give you any evidences of faith or any other grace by way of abstraction, but by way of existence, (that is) not

what may discover faith in a notional and the most singularly conceivable profession of it; but such testimonies you have to discover faith as faith is now abiding in sinful persons, who though they may have true faith, yet as long as they live on earth, will have many things in them contrary to faith.

There is a double contrariety to faith. One is natural, and this more or less will be in the soul of any believing person until you can utterly raise the heart and eject sin by the alteration of glory: As long as we have flesh and spirit, there will be a conflict between faith and unbelief. As there was a mixture of joy and sorrow at the erecting of the Temple.

Another is approved when a man neither does nor will believe; he neither accepts Christ nor will he have Christ to reign over him, and he likes his unbelieving condition. This is a fearful state: But though the contraries to faith do arise, yet if they are not approved, yet if they are resisted, we must not conclude that we have no faith because of the opposition, but rather assure ourselves that we have it because of the resistance of that opposition. We must not conclude against faith because of opposition inward or outward.

This inequality of acts does not conclude an absence of the habit of faith. Distinguish between,¹ Radical habits.² Actual exercises, which are sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes clear, sometimes interrupted; sometimes the soul is free, sometimes oppressed and violently carried by temptation to misjudge the condition.

The censure of our faith must not be allowed as is given in the time of our temptation and passion, etc. I said in my haste, Psal. 116.

Obj. But you will say, we grant all this; But how may a man know that his faith in Jesus Christ is a true and lively faith?

Sol. I answer.

SECT. II

First, a true love of Christ is an infallible and essential evidence of a true faith in Christ. There are four things that will clarify this as a lively testimony of true faith if we can prove:

First, that love is not separated from faith. Secondly, that there is no believer in any degree of faith who does not have a love for Christ. Thirdly, that there is no time or circumstance into which the believing soul is cast, but still, he loves Christ. Fourthly, that no unbelieving heart can and does love Christ. I say, if we can prove these four conclusions, then it will be most evident and certain that the love of Christ is an infallible argument or testimony of a true faith in Christ. Thus then:

1. Love is not separated from faith; if you peruse the Scripture, you shall find them go hand in hand. Galatians 5:6: For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works by love. (That is) Christ is not mine because I am a Jew; nor is he mine because I am a Gentile; but he is mine because I am a believer; and if my faith in him is true, it will express itself by love. 1 Thessalonians 1:3: Your work of faith and labor of love in our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith and love are like a warm hand; faith is the hand, and love is the warmth in it; faith cannot be the hand to take Christ, but love will be the warmth to heat our affections unto Christ. 1 Timothy 1:14: The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Faith and love are like the husband and the wife, and faith and love are like the mother and the daughter. See 2 Timothy 1:13 and Philemon 5. And indeed it stands with unanswerable reason that faith and love cannot be divided; for as much as faith in Christ,

First, represents the absolute and effectual cause of love to Christ. It does see such a measure of goodness and mercy from God through Christ, and such a height, depth, and breadth of love to us in Christ, and such an excellency of holy perfection and amiableness in Christ, which draws the soul with strong affections of love to Christ again.

Secondly, if faith might be without love, then a person in Christ might be Anathema-maranatha, for as much as he who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ is accursed. But it is a monstrous wickedness to conceive that a believer in Christ should be so.

Secondly, there is no believer in any degree of faith who does not have a love for Christ. The weak Christian as well as the strong, the plant as well as the cedar. The father of the child who cried out, I believe, help my unbelief; as well as Abraham the father of the faithful. Though one Christian may produce some testimonies which another cannot; though everyone cannot say with Paul, I am fully persuaded, yet everyone can say with Peter when Christ demanded of him, Simon son of Jonas, do you love me? He said unto him, Lord you know all things, you know that I love you.

Yea, thirdly, whatever straits the believing soul is cast into, when it is in death, in flames for Christ, yet it can love Christ; when it is under the crowd of temptations, when it is in the bitter days of desertion. When the skirmish of reasonings prevails upon the soul so highly and strongly that the heart is ready to conclude against itself that God looks not on it, Christ will not be mine; yet even then however, I love the Lord Jesus Christ. I love him though I can see no sensible testimony of love from him; my heart is still towards him; he is my center and lodestone.

Fourthly, no merely unbelieving person can love the Lord Jesus Christ. For, what is love? Love, you know, is the settling and transplanting of the

heart: it is such an affection as knits the soul to Christ, but it is impossible that this should be while the heart has no faith. So then, love of Christ is an infallible testimony of faith in Christ.

Obj. But you will say, this is strange, that love of Christ should be so lively and so distinguishing a testimony of true faith. Why does not many a man, yea, every man profess that he loves Christ?

Sol. Beloved, what men profess is one thing, and what they affect and love may be another thing; the semblance of love is a thing distinct from the sincere affection of love. If your love is true and sincere, never question the matter any further; assuredly your faith is right.

Obj. But this is the doubt, this is what we question as much as the former, whether we truly love Christ or not?

Sol. A word to it, and so an end of that trial. If the love is true which is to Christ, then:

1. It will bestow our hearts on Christ only: nothing is too good for him whom we heartily love; in true love, the heart is in him who is loved, and not in him who loves. *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat*, and which way the heart goes, all shall go that way.

2. It pitches on the person of Christ: love is base if it be 'twixt person and estate, but pure love is 'twixt person and person. I confess that a wicked man, an unbelieving person may have a desire for the portion of Christ; he may marvelously desire the merits of Christ, pardon of sin, exemption from hell, but faith is what draws out such a love as makes the soul admire it and cleave unto the person of Christ.

3. It is sincere and conjugal: it is not an adulterous love, which is divided among several paramours; oh no; true love of Christ knows no husband but Christ, and no Lord but Christ; he is the covering of our eyes.

SECT. III

A second trial of our true faith in Christ Jesus is this: inward change and sanctity of the heart are an infallible testimony of a living faith. Divines distinguish between a common faith and a special faith, and according to their nature so are their effects; a common faith may elevate the mind to singular apprehensions, notable expressions, outward conformities in matters either not difficult or dangerous; but special faith has a distinguishing operation; it works that which no false or pretensive faith can. What's that? This is it: it changes the heart and is ever a companion with inward holiness.

There are three things which I will show you about this.

First, that true faith does produce a change; there is a twofold change: one of the condition, which is when a man once in the state of death is now passed over to the state of life, once in the terms of condemnation is now translated to the state of absolution, and this change faith finds for us in Jesus Christ; the imputation of whole righteousness in justification changes the state so that our guilty debts are taken off and we are reconciled.

Secondly, which is of the person, and this change is the alteration of a man's nature, for faith is not only a justifying grace, but it is also a sanctifying grace: Hence these phrases, Acts 15:9, purifying their hearts by faith, Acts 26:18, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. As the blood of Christ is a pure blood as well as a precious blood, and as it is a cleansing blood as well as an expiating blood; so faith is a grace, not only to acquit, but also to purge and renew; It is not only an entitling grace, (that is) that grace which does interest us into Christ and his benefits, but it is also a conforming grace, (that is) such a grace as works into us the virtues and

holy qualities of Christ. And therefore you read that it does engraft us into the similitude of his death, Rom. 8, and into the fellowship of his sufferings and resurrection, Phil. 3:10.

Secondly, observe, that every believer has a changed and a holy heart, 2 Cor. 5:17. If any man be in Christ (and you know that it is faith which unites to Christ, and plants us into him) he is a new creature, (that is) that man is altered in his inward frame, in his faculties, in his inclinations, all over.

1 There is a change, either in the cessation of some particular actions, which an unbeliever may attain; and there is a change in the newness of nature, when the soul is turned, and biased, and inclined quite another way. I confess, the Apostle does not say, if any man be in Christ he is a strong creature, yet he says, he is a new creature; for though every believer has not that maturity, and ripeness, and strength, yet he has a newness in his nature, a holy change wrought in him throughout. Look as the first Adam derived guilt and corruption to his posterity, so the second Adam derives pardon and holiness, therefore he is called a quickening spirit, 1 Cor. 15. It is not 'twixt Christ and believers, as 'twixt a root and a dead limb, which hangs on but has no life nor sap: Christ has really no such members in his body; he is not like Nebuchadnezzar's image, whose head is of gold and the feet of clay; for a man to boast much of his head, of Christ, of gold, and yet he to remain a piece of clay, he to have a nature utterly heterogeneous unto Christ, this man deceives himself. For every plant, every graft that is inserted into Christ, has the alikeness of his nature. Hence those who in John 1:12 are styled Believers, they are said in the next ver. 13 to be born of the Will of God; Now as in the natural birth there is a new form, so in the heavenly there is a supernatural and holy frame of grace ingenerated.

Thirdly, no man has a changed nature but a Believer. Why? Because no man has grace but from Christ, and none have Christ but Believers: Again, it is impossible for a man to be lovely in the eyes of God without faith, but if any man might have a changed and sanctified heart, and yet want faith, then one might be lovely in God's eyes wanting faith, for as much as God loves and delights in a holy heart. So then this is most evident, that if faith goes not without a change, and if every Believer has a change, and no unbeliever has it, I say, this will follow: Therefore if a man can find a change of his heart, he then has the truth of faith.

Now then inquire; is there virtue gone from Christ to make your dark mind seeing, your stubborn judgment yielding and prizing, your proud heart humbling, your filthy heart cleansing, your hard heart relenting and mourning, your carnal affections to be heavenly, your sinful soul to be holy; be confident of this that it is sound faith? Though there be yet remainders of corruption, yet if the inclination of the soul be changed by grace, doubt it not, you have faith: But for such as talk of a faith which stands in opposition to holiness, and please themselves in a graceless faith, in such a faith as has no society or company of graces in the soul; O far be such a faith from any one of us. An unholy believer is as proper a phrase as a holy Devil. Presumption is a most confident work, but it is a very loose quality, 1 Cor. 6:9. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Ver. 10. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God. Ver. 11. And such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Do not abuse your soul with a

conceit of faith and justification if you have no change of heart by sanctification.

SECT. IV

Thirdly, a third trial of true faith in Christ Jesus is this: It will stoop to Christ, as well as rise to him; It enters the soul into a new service, it takes Christ and him only to be its Lord. You read that there was a Marriage feast, to which some did come, and there was the King's son sent out to rule and reign, but few yielded unto him. Many men will come to Christ to find a feast, but few come to Christ to bear his Scepter; they would come under the safeguard of his blood, who fly the Authority and dominion of his sword; they like Christ the Priest, but not Christ the Lord.

I will briefly show you two things to clear this trial.

First, no unbeliever will accept of Christ to be his Lord only; because,

1 His heart has another Lord; It has set up some sin or other, or some part of the world or other, to which it gives service as to his Lord. He is our Lord to whom we give service, and his servants we are whom we do obey; Now the unbelieving heart either serves the world or obeys sin in the lusts thereof. Let the commands of sin and Christ come into an ordinary and usual competition; let the commands of profit or pleasure and Christ come into competition: Now you shall see that the unbelieving heart will go after its Lord, it will not hearken to Christ, it prefers sin before him, it will easily adventure Christ's displeasure to fulfill its own lusts.

2 Again, his heart cannot choose Christ, it cannot like him for a Lord. Why? Because the dominion of Christ is holy and heavenly and directly opposite to the sordid principles and affections and ways of an unbelieving heart: It is a burden, yea, a very vexation to such a heart, to hear but the

report of the holy Laws of Christ and of their power and authority to oblige the inward man and the outward conversation.

Psal. 3:2. They take counsel against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, ver. 3. Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.

'Tis true, whether wicked men will stoop or no, Christ is a Lord in respect of designation, but he is not their Lord in respect of approbation; They will not have this man to rule over them.

Secondly, Every believer admits of Christ to be his Lord; as Thomas said, My Lord and My God, John 20:28. see, &c. and so

1 Faith sets up the Scepter of Christ and sweetly frames the soul to a willing subjection.

2 Again, faith takes the whole Christ, and therefore Christ is the only King and Lord to faith. 3 Again, faith knows that the whole person is Christ's purchase; his blood has bought us, and so passed us into the entire dominion of Christ; you are bought with a price, you are not your own, said the Apostle, 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. Now then, try yourselves in this: who is your Lord? Why, brethren? Thus it is, faith gives the propriety, title, and disposition of our hearts and ways to Christ. Obj. 'Tis true, before we were called to faith in Christ, we were disobedient, we served diverse lusts, we set up our sins and the world. Sol. But now being made partakers of rich mercy and grace in Christ, we shall surely rebel against other Lords but Christ, (that is) against all other Lords whose commands are contrary to Jesus Christ; our hearts are his, and our affections his, and our strength his, and our service and submission his. Obj. I deny not but sin will be stirring, even in a believing heart; it will be assaulting, it will now and then usurp upon the soul, and vex and captivate it. Sol. But the rebellion of a sinful

nature is one thing, and the dominion of it is another thing: Sin will stir as an enemy where Christ does reign as a Lord: But it is one thing for you to be a combatant with sin, another thing for you to be a servant of sin. Not who assaults me, but whom I love and serve; he is my Lord. When the heart goes off from Christ to the approbation, love, and habitual obedience of sin; now sin is your Lord: But if by faith you have sworn fealty to Christ, then though all temptations besiege you, though the insolence of corrupt nature break in upon you to captivate or to alienate your heart from service to Christ, yet amidst all oppressions, yea, under all the knocks and buffetings and interruptions by sin, the heart cries out, I acknowledge no Lord but Christ; him I would obey, him I honor, I love; his I am, and I yet hate those sins which I cannot conquer.

SECT. V Fourthly, a fourth trial of true faith is this: It makes the heart humble and lowly. Every unbelieving heart is proud and has high imaginations and stands upon its own bottom; it has no sound experience either of God or of itself. But true faith casts a man quite out of himself; it sees no ground of confidence and excellency from anything in ourselves. Faith has a double aspect: 1 One is upon us, 2 Another is upon God and Christ: When faith looks down upon us, alas it finds no matter of boasting in the world, for either it finds sins which should abase our hearts or else imperfections which should curb our pride or wants which should show unto us our indigence and dependence. The evil which it finds may confound us, and the good which it finds may make us ashamed; not only because it is so short and defective in what we ought to have but also because we have not answered the giving of that good with just thanks or we have not improved that good to the advantage as we might have done.

When faith looks upward to God and Christ, there it sees all the causes of all our mercy and of all our happiness. Do we have pardon of sins? Why, says faith, the cause of this is in God's love. Do we have righteousness? Why, says faith, the cause of this is in Christ's merits. Do we have any gifts, any acceptance, any remembrance from heaven? Why, says faith, the cause of this is only in Christ's blood.

All that I have is given to me, and the cause of all that giving is utterly outside of myself; so that the soul sits down now and says, O Lord, in myself I am nothing—nay, of myself worse than nothing—but what I am, I am that by thy grace. All I have is thine: my bread, my health, my life, my body, my soul—all thine.

If any love, if any mercy, if any Christ, if any grace, if any comfort, if any strength, if any steadfastness, if any performances, if a good work, if a good word, if a good affection, if a good thought—why, all is thine; thou only art the cause. I am less than the least of thy mercies, and what is thy servant that thou shouldest look on such a one as I am?

Thou madest me, and thou boughtest me, and thou calledst me, and thou justifiest me, and thou savest me. Though faith makes thy condition high, yet it makes thy person low: Thou shouldest by faith be not high-minded but fear (Romans 11:20). Why not high-minded? Because standing by faith: Because this standing of faith is not of ourselves but in God, but in Christ. Faith is the foot of the soul, but heaven—the grace of heaven, the strength of heaven—is the ground upon which the foot does stand.

SECT. VI

Fifthly, true faith is fruitful (James 2:18): “I will show you my faith by my works.” (v. 21) “Was not our father Abraham justified by works?” (v. 22)

“Do you see how faith worked with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?”

The Apostle in that chapter speaks of a double faith.

One was a counterfeit faith, a shadow as it were, which had the appearance but not the substance. It was a dead faith, which had the limbs but not the soul and life. But how did it appear that this faith was dead? Did it not speak many good words? Yes, says Saint James. It gave good words and pretereanihil—nothing beyond that; no good works. It could say to the poor, “Be clothed and be warm,” but gave nothing to clothe or to feed. Why? Says he, this man's faith is vain—that is, he has not the true quality of faith, and it will stand him in no stead.

Another was a lively and justifying faith. It had in it the true nature and property of faith. But how did that appear? The Apostle answers: by works. You know that there is a great difference between these two—namely, the justifying of a man's person before God, and the justifying of a man's faith before the world. That which justifies my person before God is only faith in Jesus Christ. And that which justifies—particularly—my faith before men (to prove it not to be a dead but a living faith) is the doing of good works.

Hence that of Paul (Titus 3:8): “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men.”

Right is the speech of Saint Augustine: *sequuntur justificatum*, though *non præcedunt justificandum* — “they follow the one justified,” though “they do not precede the one to be justified.” As in a clock, the finger does not make the clock go, but the clock moves it; and yet the motion of the finger on the outside shows whether the clock is working within.

So although works do not cause or infuse justifying faith nor yet cause our Justification, yet they do clearly manifest whether we have such a faith as does indeed justify or not.

Object. You will say, the work of faith is to look up, and to come and to deal with God only; and therefore to breathe out good works which respect men seems not to be any testimony of Faith. Sol. I answer.

1 The Apostle there expressly distinguishes the lively and the dead faith by works (as if he had said) it is so.

2 There is (if you will let me distinguish so) as it were a double act of faith. One is proper and personal, and this is circumscribed to that Heavenly employment of receiving or presenting in and through Christ. Another is Grateful, and this is extended to the sending forth of good works. Not as if it were a work of supererogation; for faith finds the doing of good works under many commands, and also the rewards of them under many promises; but because faith sees also a sweet and reasonable equity, that if God be good to me in Christ, I should be good to some for Christ's sake. And verily, as the workless person does not now own Christ by faith, so hereafter Christ will not own him by mercy, depart from me.

Obj. But yet you will reply, good works cannot be a sure testimony of faith, because many evil men may perform them, and some believers have not wherewithal to do them. Sol. I answer.

1 Good works may be so styled, either, First, materially because they are such things as may do good. Secondly, formally, being sealed with all the circumstances which are required to make them good, both for Spiritual composition and Divine acceptance. Now though wicked men may perform works good materially, yet formally they do not, for to make a work formally good, there must be the concurrence of all circumstances, the

person must have a good heart, and a good ground, and a good end, and a good Christ, &c.

2 Though every believer cannot actually do every good work, yet some good works or other he can do: though he cannot give money, yet he can give prayer, &c. Now think on this you who have riches and wealth, and profess faith in Christ, and yet scarce a person, a poor distressed person can bless God for your fruitful faith; nay, the very doing of a small good work sometimes does even try all the faith in the soul; a man does many times believe he shall surely want and impoverish his estate if he should be rich in good works.

SECT. VII

Sixthly, true faith does desire and endeavour after increase: “Help my unbelief,” said the unbelieving father; “O Lord, increase our faith,” said the disciples.

I pray you observe a few things:

That true faith begins in weakness. Like a child at first, very tender; or like the light, at first very broken. Presumption, being a work of fancy and born with its strength and perfection, is fully assured and utterly confident at first. But Jacob's ladder has many steps.

That though it has weakness, yet it has life: as the spark of fire, though it be little, yet it is hot; and though the child be weak, yet it can suck. Even the weakest faith in Christ will be much about Christ — it will be weeping at His grave, or washing His feet, or looking upon His person.

There are yet many degrees wanting to faith — either you cannot be persuaded, or not fully persuaded, or not constantly persuaded.

If the faith be true and living, it will bend toward a rising; and that:

First, in respect of its acts — of receiving, trusting, persuading.

Secondly, in respect of its object — it would yet apprehend more and feel more of the communion and virtues of Christ.

All the preaching in the world does not increase a false and presumptuous faith, nor does the administration of the sacraments add to it. But the living, they grow; and he must have more faith who has any. Paul would apprehend even as he is apprehended. The soul which has true faith would have yet more victorious yieldings, more steadfast embracings, more confident restings, etc., like the child which sucks and thrives.

SECT. VIII

Seventhly, true faith in Christ and a mournful heart for sin go together, Zechariah 12:10. They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him as one mourns for his only son.

There are two things which faith will bring up in the soul: one is love for Christ, another is sorrow for sin. There may be terror without faith; the conscience may be cracked and wounded, but until faith comes, there is no sorrow; the soul is not altered nor melted. That which melts the soul is kindness and mercy, and that which sees them is faith; you cast an eye of faith on Christ, that eye will have some tears for forced sinning against Christ. You shall find in Scripture that true believers are characterized by this: that they are mourners in Zion, and they return with weepings and supplications, and they pour out waters before the Lord. Unbelieving persons are described by hearts of adamant, of rocks, of stone; by hardened, by insensible, by unrelenting hearts. The text says that when Christ looked on Peter, he went out and wept bitterly; there is a piercing virtue in a gracious look from Christ. The soul which has been long humbling itself and much in seeking for mercy and a good look from heaven is (when any gracious manifestation of favor darts down) even resolved into tears: never

did the child weep more soberly upon his reconciliation to his loving father than the believing Christian does mourn in sober sadness when his faith gets to see God reconciled to him in Christ; he reads his pardon with tears of joy.

There are two parts of sorrow.

One is essential, which consists in a strong displeasure of the will against the soul for sinning against a good God.

Another is contingent, which consists in those dreary tears flowing into the eyes; now this is contingent; for when the heart is many times filled with tears, like David's bottle, yet it may so fall out that the eyes may be silent in such expressions, etc.

Chapter Fourteen

Singular comfort for all true Believers

If to believe in Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved, then here is singular comfort to all true believers. What Solomon spoke of wisdom, that I say of faith, her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is everyone that retains her. If this is a happy thing to have the Lord to be our God, (and David judged it to be a superlative happiness) If this is a blessed thing not to be offended at Christ; O how sweetly and greatly blessed is the condition of a believing soul, which has God to be its God, Christ to be its husband, and heaven, to be its portion? Faith and Christ, why? they are the ring and the diamond; they are the way and the life; the soul cannot have such a prize as Christ, nor such a hand as faith; such a match as Christ, nor such a grace to contract it as faith. Now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation, said Simeon: He may cheerfully lay down his body in the dust, who has by faith given up his soul to Christ.

But to descend to some distinct particulars of comfort to the soul which believes truly in the Lord Jesus Christ, observe.

SECT. I

First, this is one comfort in the Text, that they are in the way to heaven. Naturally we are out of our way as soon as we enter into the world, as soon as they are born they go aside, said David, and, the way of peace they have not known; and nothing sets us in the right way but faith, for Christ is the way, and it is faith which finds a Christ: It was not Philip's natural eye, but his spiritual faith, which spied the Messiah: Christ is the way to heaven, and faith is the way to Christ. Salvation, it is the great object of the greatest desire, and indeed I know no more excellently desirable thing than God, in a glorious union, with whom is the perfection of our salvation. Now if thou be a true believer, thou art in the way to salvation.

1 Not in a byway, in a false way, but in a true and direct way: If God knows the way to heaven, if he has laid out to sinners the right way, then believing is it, Eph. 2:8. By grace you are saved through faith, Heb. 10:39. We are not of them who draw back into perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

2 Not in an uncertain, but firm way; It's an infallible way of salvation: Heaven is the assured mansion for thy soul, if thy heart be the true lodging of faith, 1 Pet. 1:4. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.

Obj. True, that may not fade away, but we may fall away; that may remain, but we may be lost.

Sol. No, says the Apostle, but as that is reserved for you, so you shall be preserved unto that; as mercy and truth will keep your portion sure, so truth and power shall keep your persons sure. Ver. 5. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, therefore he adds a word more, ver. 9. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Now, is

not this a comfort to a man, that he is in the true and sure way to heaven? Every man is on a journey, in a way; wicked men have their ways, but the end of them is bitterness, and hell after all their jollities and pleasures, yet their ways are the paths of death. But the believing soul is in the way of life, and therefore he is said already to have eternal life, and to be saved. O what is this? I am going to my God, to my Father, to my inheritance.

SECT. II

Secondly, here is another comfort to true believers, there is a real and blessed exchange between them and Christ. As upon the conjugal knot, there is a mutual resultancy of communion: The wife partakes of the estate of her husband, and the husband (interchangeably) of the estate of his wife: for the personal union draws with it the real union; If thou be mine, thine estate is mine: So is it in the spiritual espousing of the soul and Christ by faith, Christ partakes of our estate, and we shall partake of his estate. He is ours, and all his are ours, we are his, and therefore ours are his.

This exchange consists in these things.

1 Christ does take our sins and debts upon himself. Look as the man who marries the woman, if he takes her person, he must take her debts, and satisfaction too: So does Christ, when he takes us to be his, he takes our sins also to be his; How to be his? not by way of infusion and infection, as if our sinful qualities were transmitted from our persons into his nature (O no, he never takes upon him our sins to make his nature sinful,) but by way of imputation, and of satisfaction. The guilt of our sins is imputed unto him as to a willing surety, who does present himself in our stead, to make payment and satisfaction. As Paul said to Philemon concerning his servant Onesimus, If he has wronged thee, or owes thee anything, put that upon my account. So says Christ to the penitent and believing soul, if thou hast any

guilt and debt to be answered for unto God, put them all upon my account, if thou hast wronged my Father, I will make the satisfaction to the utmost, for I was made sin for thee, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20. I poured out my soul for thy transgression; It cost me my heart's blood to reconcile thee to my Father, and to slay enmity. And as Rebekah said to Jacob in another case, upon me, my son, be the curse, so says Christ to the believing soul, Why? thy sins did expose thee unto the curse of the Law; but I was made a curse for thee, I did bear that burden myself upon the cross, and upon my shoulders were all thy griefs and sorrows borne; I was wounded for thy transgressions, and I was bruised for thy iniquities: And therefore we are said to have redemption and remission of sins in his blood, Eph. 1:7.

Now what a comfort is this to a believer, that Christ has eased him of his great debts, that he has laid down the price for him, he is his surety, and has discharged and has canceled the Law of Ordinances, and has blotted out the handwriting? God was in Christ (says the Apostle) reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their sin unto them, mark it, not imputing their trespasses unto them; what is the not imputing of sin? but the not charging of it, the not reckoning for it: And what is it which he says (unto them) trespasses were not imputed unto them, as if God should say, let them go, I have nothing to say unto them, my Son has satisfied my justice fully for them. Now, says Paul (out of David) Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin. Yea, he is blessed indeed; for if the Lord should single out the most able transgressor for the least moiety and scruple of guilt, and arraign his conscience with a judicial and strict severity; O how the sinews of the soul would fly asunder, and eternal despair of ever satisfying so great, and pure, and infinite a justice, would swallow up the thought and imaginations? Till a man knows where to lay down his sinful

burden, his soul will be miserably afflicted; but now, if a man believes in Jesus Christ, Christ will take off his burdens; I will answer for thee says Christ, I will satisfy for thee. As David spoke in another case, when Goliath presented himself against the Host of Israel, Let no man's heart fail because of him, thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. So says Christ to the believing soul, be not dejected, do not despair, though thy sins be many and great, yet I have overcome them, I have discharged them, my Sacrifice was presented, it was sufficient, it was effectual, it was accepted for thee. Secondly, Christ does bestow his righteousness upon us. This is a great comfort to a sensible and understanding soul, that there is a righteousness for it, which it may safely and confidently present unto God's justice. These things are most true. First, that we are by nature all of us wretched sinners, the whole world is guilty before God. Secondly, Divine Justice has a quarrel against every guilty soul, and will have complete, and full, and perfect satisfaction.

Thirdly, no, not our best graces and performances are commensurate and square payment in the eyes of pure justice: all of them, as inherent in us and acted by us, are but imperfect excellencies. No man has as much holiness as is required, nor does he do as much as he is obliged. Every particular grace, though it is of a heavenly and divine origin, yet is like the stars twinkling, though placed in the heavens; and every duty, though it is a motion, yet is like that of Jacob's thigh, which was touched and halted to his dying day. So that if God should enter into judgment with the righteous person, even the righteousness that is in him would not be safety and defense unto him. As a man who has a precious cargo dares not to venture it in any cracked and broken vessel, so no Christian may or can dare to venture the safety of his soul upon the leaking vessels and bottoms of his own holiness or services.

This very smoke of doubtings which still mounts up with our flames of faith, and the gross affections which cling to the root of our most heavenly love, and part of that rock of hardness, is seated and implanted with the freshest spring of softness and mournings, and those infinite and frequent intermissions, both of our prayers, and hearings, and readings, and any kind of dutiful doings, that we are so shuffled away from our devotions by the invasions and entertainment of strange thoughts in the times of our devotion: I say, those and infinite maculations or spots do so adhere and cling about, and defile ourselves, and that which comes from us, that (in proceeding of pure justice) we may cast down ourselves on the ground and beg for mercy, much rather than to stand at the bar and plead for reward. But now here is the great stay of a believing soul (which has truly received Christ) that Christ will find a full, exact, complete, most acceptable righteousness for it, in which the soul shall stand boldly before the Judgment Seat. Rom. 3:19. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, 2 Cor. 5:21. We are made the righteousness of God in him, 1 Cor. 1:30. You are of him in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, &c. Jer. 23:6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name whereby they shall call him, The Lord our righteousness.

The righteousness of Christ is therefore called the righteousness of God, Rom. 8:17. because it is what God has designed, and which God does accept for us in our justification; and for, and in which he does acquit and pronounce us righteous. Now in this lies our comfort thus, viz.

1 That though our inherent holiness is imperfect, yet Christ's righteousness is absolute.² That as it is a full righteousness, and every way answerable, so it was designed by God to be that which should justify the

believing sinner.³ That God accepts that righteousness and will clear anyone who has it.⁴ That if by faith we have taken Christ, Christ does assuredly bestow his righteousness on us, not by putting it into our persons but by improving it to our good; It is, though not infused into us, yet imputed unto us, and God will through it pronounce us clear.

SECT. III

Thirdly, a third comfort to a believer in Jesus Christ is this: That he is in singular Covenant with God: for the Covenant is with faith in Jesus Christ; it was to Abraham and to his seed (that is) to all the faithful.

Observe a few things here.

1 The Covenant of grace (in the offer and revelation of it) is the treaty of eternal happiness between God and sinners; whatsoever good a soul can desire to exempt it from misery and to make it truly happy, there it is.

2 The Covenant of Grace, in respect of our entrance and admission into it, is a most gracious, spiritual, and firm engagement of God to be our God, and to perform all the good which He has there undertaken. I will be a God unto you, I will show mercy unto you, you shall have loving-kindness, I will give you grace in all kinds, I will not fail to assist, guide, lead, and uphold you, I will be a father to you, a rock to you, a sanctuary, an all-sufficiency, an exceedingly great reward. So that if you need anything, come to me, I have it for you, and do not fear to come, for I will assuredly do you good, I am willing to do it, for I have promised it, and be confident to possess it, for I have obliged myself by Covenant to perform.

3 He that believes in Jesus Christ is assuredly in the Covenant: for Christ (on whom he believes) is the Messenger of the Covenant, and His blood is the blood of the Covenant, and in Him all the promises of the Covenant are Yea, and Amen. If thou hast given thy consent to Christ, if thou hast

bestowed thy heart on Him, if thou hast truly received Him to be thy Lord and Savior, undoubtedly God has become thy God, and all those ample, rich, congruous, and blessed undertakings in His Covenant are all for thee. Thou art the man to whom God says, I will surely have mercy on him, and to whom He says, Sin shall not have dominion over him, for he is under grace, and to whom He says, I will hear him, heal him; guide him, and keep him. Thou mayest go to all those Treasures of Divine promises as to thy own garden and take of any flower, lay hold on any promise respecting thy particular exigence, and say, this is mine. When thou lookest down into thyself, thou mayest read many wants with wet and sad eyes, but then if thou look up to the Covenant, thou mayest by faith espy all thy supplies with a glad heart. Why? God did put thy good into the Covenant, and there thou shalt assuredly find it: Dost thou read of any altering grace, pardoning grace, enlarging grace, preventing grace, assisting grace, preserving and upholding grace, recovering and raising grace, pacifying and comforting grace? Why all this is for thee, and all that God has there undertaken is thine.

SECT. IV

Fourthly, if you do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may then with boldness approach the throne of grace.

Ephesians 2:18. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Hebrews 10:21. Having a High Priest over the House of God, Verse 22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. 1 John 5:13. These things I write unto you that believe in the Name of the Son of God. Verse 14. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Obj. You shall find in your heart many sinful modesties; you are afraid to be so bold with God, and whether God will do such great matters for you; yea, and there are many unbelieving fears; our broken services shall never be accepted, and who are we that the Lord should regard our prayers?

Sol. But if a man does truly believe in Jesus Christ,

1 His way is open to Heaven.

2 He has a friend and not an enemy to deal with: It is thy Father to whom thou art bending the knee.

3 He has a mighty Intercessor; just as Jesus Christ is the mighty Redeemer for the persons of men, so He is the mighty intercessor for the services of men, and He ever lives to make intercession. If your wants are ever so great, yet your God is able to supply them; and if your infirmities are ever so many, yet your Intercessor is able to cover and expiate them. Your services (as yours) carry with them a prejudice; there was iniquity in the holy offerings, but then Aaron did bear the iniquity of them: so your Priest, your Christ, your Intercessor, He does take off by the application of His merits, whatsoever is amiss and offensive, and He does ingratiate your requests, and procures audience and acceptance for you. Therefore now, if you are a believer, then in your prayers come confidently to God; if you can find a promise, and a Christ, and a faith, you may cheerfully put up your petitions to Heaven. What should hinder us from being confident? Is God unwilling? No, He has engaged Himself unto you. Is God unable? Why, He is able to do abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think. Do you fear your own distance? Why, but you come to a Father, and you come by the blood of a gracious, of a beloved, of a powerful Mediator and Intercessor. Hebrews 4. Having such a High Priest, we may come boldly to

the throne of grace. See Heb. 10. Do you fear because of enmity? Christ has slain that; or because of infirmity? Christ will cure that.

Chapter Fifteen

The agreement and difference of strong and weak faith

Obj. But now some may reply, These are sweet comforts to believers, but as the Eunuch to Philip, of whom speaks the Prophet this, of himself, or of some other? So here, why? To whom are these comforts, to all, or to some choice believers? Are they common comforts to every believer, or peculiar to the eminent and strong only?

Sol. This scruple has made way for a singular point; I will satisfy it by opening four particulars.

1 The common unity of all true faith, in respect of the habit, yet the intensive diversity, in respect of acts and degrees.

2 The proofs of a strong faith, with the instances of a weak faith in truth.

3 The concordance of faith in all fundamental comforts.

4 The inequality of strong and weak faith in many true, yet not essential consequences and consolations.

Concerning the first, which respects the common unity of faith in respect of the habit, and the diversity of it, in respect of the acts and degrees.

Observe these things for the unity of faith.

SECT. I First, that all true faith, though in a comparison of faith with faith in several subjects, it may admit of several diversities and differences, yet they consent and agree in these things, viz.

First, in the immediate and special cause: weak faith, as faith, comes not from one cause, and strong faith from another cause, but both the one and the other from one and the same cause, viz. the blessed Spirit of God. Not only the flames but the sparks of fire are kindled by that Spirit which blows where it lists. As in the orchard, the tree which stands strong, and the tender plant which stands trembling, both of them were at first set by one and the same hand, so the faith which is now well grown, and that faith which is as yet tender and full of doubtings, both of them are the peculiar fruits of God's sanctifying Spirit.

Though this child in the cradle cannot run and move as well as that in the field at work, yet the father begat the one as well as the other, and owns them both by virtue of one equal relation. The day of small things is not despised by God, who sees weakness in the strongest faith, and truth in the weakest, and is the Parent both of this and that.

2 In the remote and singular cause. You know that God's free grace and love is the first wheel of all singular good unto men; out of it came that great gift of Christ, and that great work of Election, from whence flows all the graces which sanctify and bring to glory. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Now all faith is a drop out of this fountain, the weak faith is a fruit of that great love of God, electing us in Christ, as well as the strong, and is, though not so sensibly evident, yet as really a true testimony of our election: The reason for this is not grace restrictively considered, but grace in the whole latitude of it is the fruit of God's election: my meaning is this, not only Graces as eminent, as raised and elevated to some more

perfect quality and pitch, but grace in the whole compass of it, from the conception of it to the perfection of it; from the dawning to the full day; from the nature to the act; from the acts to the degrees; all of it in nature, in parts, in totum & solidum, all of it whether more or less, strong or weak, all is out of the same grace of Election. It was not one love which elected him, who is therefore now strong in believing with Abraham, and another love which elected him, who is now weak in believing with the father of the child; No, but it was one and the self-same love which produced this and that faith; yea, that electing love was intensively one in producing both. It was as equally high towards this person as towards that, and was as equally causative of the faith that is weak, as of the faith which is strong, being habitually considered, and also in relation to the grace of God's love in election.

3 In the ordinary and usual instrumental cause: the same womb of the word brought them both forth, being efficaciously assisted by that Almighty Spirit. That word which discovered misery, and impotency, and necessity to the one, did so to the other. That word which revealed the Covenant of grace and mercy in Christ to the one, did so to the other believer also. That word which assured the one, that if he would come in and accept of Christ, he should be saved, did also assure the other. That word which inclined the heart of the one to trust upon God's promise, and so to accept of Christ, did likewise (being quickened with the same Spirit) draw and persuade the other.

4 In the lively nature of believing: just as the strong and weak man, though they differ in the measure of power, yet they agree in the nature of man; though they differ in respect of working, yet they agree in respect of being. And as the sick man and the healthy man, though they vary in their

condition, yet they agree in their nature; though they differ in liveliness, yet not in life: So, though strong and weak faith differ exceedingly in respect of particular abilities and exercises, there is a true nature of faith in the weakest as well as in the strongest. There is as true a knowledge of the sinful and miserable condition in ourselves, and of the blessed condition in Christ, in one as well as in the other. There is as true an assent to the word of grace, the Gospel of salvation, revealed in one as well as in the other, I say, as true, though perhaps not equal and full. There is as true accepting and embracing of Christ, to be Lord and Savior; the will does as truly receive Christ offered, though perhaps there is not such a strength of adherence at first. There is so much in the weakest faith as makes up the match between Christ and the soul; indeed, there is not anything in the strongest faith, which is an effectual ingredient to espouse the soul with Christ, but the same also is in the weakest faith. Does strong faith take Christ? so does the weakest; does it acknowledge him as the only Savior? so does the weakest; does it embrace him as its Lord? so does the weakest; does it breed union? so does the weakest; does it make a man a member of Christ, and heir of promises? so does the weakest. Thus you briefly perceive the habitual unity of all true faith.

SECT. II

Secondly, now a word on the intensive diversities of faith; How faith differs from faith: I do not mean true faith from false, but true faith from true faith. As one man truly living may differ from another truly living, notwithstanding they agree in the common nature of man and life; Or to use the Apostle's simile, as one star may differ from another star in glory, though all be in the heavens. The rungs in Jacob's ladder are not all at the top, yet are they every one of them steps to heaven; so with faith, every

faith is not triumphing, yet every faith is mounting up to the Lord of life and King of glory. The several and particular habits of faith, though they consent in one truth of nature, yet they differ in many things.

First, in the strength of the parts and acts: As in the eyes of men, though the visual faculty be equal in all, yet vision, or the act of seeing, is diverse; one sees colors more clearly than another. So it is in faith, (which is the eye of the soul,) Though the nature be common and equal, yet the act of believing is different. There are three acts of faith, and with respect to all of them, there may be a diversity among believers.

1 Knowledge and apprehension, this is as it were the groundwork of faith; for believing is not rooted in ignorance, but in light. Now every believer does not have as full and distinct a knowledge as another. Divine revelations (which are the general objects of faith) are not grasped alike by all: No, nor yet the promises, (which are the special objects of faith) they are not so equally apprehended. There are several promises, and in them several parts, and degrees of goodness and truth; now, it is possible for some believers not to be acquainted with all their treasures; they have not been so long acquainted with the Word, as to know all the good which concerns them; And that special good which they do apprehend, one believer reaches the large compass of it more than another: All (even in Christ) is not equally known by all who believe in Christ. Hence it is, that age, and time, and communion, and study, and use of means, and experience, do raise the apprehension and knowledge to far more degrees and strength than at the first; and the believing soul, which at first saw things (as the man whose eyes were touched by Christ) dimly, at length rises by degrees to a more perfect light of the same truths, and to a more full and enlarged apprehension of other truths, which he was ignorant of before.

2 Assent; even in this also may one believer differ from another: I confess, the usual and palpable diversities of faith are most in things as good, rather than in things as true. Nevertheless every believer, as such, assents to all revelations, as in particular to those of Christ, as true, yet the assents in believers may vary very much, not only in the circumstances of the assent but also in the immediate workings of the assent. The judgment is not equally captivated in all, or else why do some believers question and scruple more than others? Yea, and why else is there a need for further evidence and demonstration to establish some in doctrinal truths if all believers were equally grounded and rooted in the word? Yea, and why are some good people more apt to errors than others? No plausible error can be taught or spread with the speciousness of taking reason, but presently they are questioning their old truths for new opinions, which shows that all assents to divine truths are not alike in all believers. Nay, and this appears to be so by the several instances of diabolical temptations, which in some are of that great force as to make them not only question their particular interests in God and Christ (which may befall the highest believer) but also to question the first principles of Religion, whether there be a God, and whether the Scriptures are his Word, and whether true or false.

3 Reception, embracing or consent: though it be hearty and sincere in all, yet one believer cannot so rest on Christ as another, nor does everyone take Christ by the hand alike. Like a child who gives out a trembling hand with some shruggings even to his Father, so the believer may put forth his hand of faith even to Christ with many fears and shakings; O that I may have him, that I might receive him, that he would be mine, that I could lay hold on him! O that God would pardon my sins, says one; yet another raises up the soul, I will rest on his promise in Christ to pardon all.

2 In the measure of degrees: Hence you read of that by Christ, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel, and, O woman great is thy faith, Abraham strong in faith, Paul persuaded, &c. and Job, I know that my, &c. In a comparative opposition to which you read those phrases, O ye of little faith, and why didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith? and of the weak in faith.

The degrees of faith are many, namely, the habitual inclination of the heart toward Christ, the actual laying hold on him, the strong embracing of him; reflection of the act, that I know I take him as Lord and Savior; reflection of the object, I know that he is my Lord and Savior; then, a fullness of this reflexive assurance, I doubt it not; then, the reasons for this full assurance, (which, whether it means the great continuance or the great abundance of the measure of assurance, is disputable). Again, the longer duration of this full and great assurance. Now in all these respects (except the first), faith in one may differ from faith in another: How many hearts are set only towards Christ? O that I could apprehend him, but I cannot believe: How many souls do apprehend him? Yet, O that we were apprehended by him; How many are apprehended by him? (that is) know him to be theirs, by some gracious and firm evidence? Yet by and by with Mary weeping, they have taken away my Lord.

Yet some others rise high and stay long in resting, in persuasions, in affirmations, that it is heaven with them many days together. You may see one Christian look up to heaven with tears of joy, (as Job, I know that my redeemer lives.) Another looking up with tears of grief, (Lord be merciful to me a sinner.) You may see one sitting down with thanks, (who gave himself for me.) Another falling down in prayer, (I believe, Lord help my unbelief.) You may see one triumphing above all fears and scruples, (I am persuaded

that nothing shall separate me from the love of God in Christ,) and yet another combating with many fears, (but will the Lord be favorable unto me?) One blesses God for assurances, another cries unto God against doubtings: one is like Mary, rejoicing in God my Savior, another like Esther, in venturing towards the scepter, and, if I perish, I perish. One says, thou art my rock, my fortress, my strong tower, my portion forever, and the horn of my salvation, another sighs and breaks out, O that salvation were come out of Zion, O that I could believe, O that I were once persuaded. Thus it is with several believers, as with several children: one lies in the cradle, another is led by the nurse, another is going by the chairs, and another can run. Or as it is with a flock of sheep, some are strong and bearing, others are young and must be gently led or carried. Or as with an orchard, some trees are able and well-limbed, others are tender plants and are weakly rising.

Reasons for this diversity may be either the different ages of faith. In some it has had a longer time of strengthening; in others it is but seed newly sown; or else different external helps; some believers are brought up in a more fertile soil under powerful ministries which are experimentally acquainted with inward conflicts and therefore are more suited to weak consciences to understand and remove their fears and doubts and to answer objections either arising from natural unbelief or from Satan's subtleties; others live upon a more hard hand and want those directions and counsels.

Or else different assistances of God's Spirit; for as that Spirit breathes where he wills, so he blows where he wills: some he is pleased to assist more in a way of combat, others more in a way of conquest; though he be the Spirit of life to all that believe, yet he is the Spirit of assurance to some of those more than to others.

Or else the different employments and services; all believers do not encounter equal conflicts, either within or without, they are not subjected to the same trials, the same crosses, the same difficult duties. Now the Lord is wise as well as good, and therefore proportions different measures of faith according to the diverse degrees of exigencies. A man can do and suffer much after a day of gracious assurance, whose heart perhaps would have trembled if his doubts and fears had yet to be answered. Yea, and some hearts are more apt to pride and forgetfulness, which are therefore kept shorter, lest they should swell by a multitude of revelations. To all which if we add that sometimes former sins may justly make the soul struggle long for assurance, because the Lord will not give easy and sweet answers before we know that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against him.

SECT. III

Now I proceed to the second General, viz. the proofs of a strong faith, with the instances of a weak faith in truth. Three queries on how to know: 1 Whether our faith be great; 2 or little; 3 and yet true. You see there are two parts of this, I will begin with the first, which respects the discoveries of faith in strength. Concerning which, take these things briefly. Signs of a great and strong faith.

1 Confidence of easy answers for great matters is an argument of a strong and great faith. As in the Centurion, who came to Christ for the healing of his servant, who was sick with palsy and grievously tormented, "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," (that is) Though he be very weak, yet I am confident that thy power is very strong, you need not trouble your person, one word from your pleasure will heal him, Matt. 8:6, 7, 8. What says Christ now of this faith? See verse 10. Verily, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. The more difficult we esteem things to be in

God or Christ, the weaker is our faith: If we impose a different readiness to help, or mercy, or pardon on God according to the different matter which we are putting up unto him, this argues a lack of strength: For it is all one with God to pardon abundantly as to pardon singly; and his power is as able for the greatest difficulty as for the least trouble. But when the soul draws near unto him and can believe great matters as well as small things; that he will be merciful to great transgressions as well as compassionate to ordinary infirmities; that he will subdue strong temptations as well as weak glancings; that he will in time conquer the busiest inclination to sin, etc., this shows that faith has come to some strength.

2 Again, a repetition of adherence and a steadfast following of Christ, notwithstanding the discouragements which the soul may be apt to take from Christ's behavior towards it, argues their faith to be strong and great, 2 Sam. 23:16. They were the three mighty men that broke through the host and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, Matt. 15:22. As in that woman of Canaan, who came to Christ to heal her daughter; "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David"; how did Christ entertain her? (the text says, he answered her not a word) yet in the same verse it is said, she cries after thee, (Christ's silence raised her voice the higher). Again, she came and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, help me," how is she now answered? ("It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs"); such an answer to some spirits would have been far worse than silence. But mark it, her faith followed Christ still, and that very word which would discourage another encouraged her; (O, that faith is strong which can urge Christ from a small hint) "Truth, Lord," said she, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." As if she might say, Be it so Lord Jesus, I am no better than a dog, an unworthy creature, yet let me have the compassions

to a dog, though not plenty, yet the crumbs. Now, what says Christ of her? Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith." Remember it, that the faith which can bring up the soul, which can lead it up to Heaven against discouragements, though God does not answer, yet I will seek; though he kills me, yet I will trust in him: I say, such a faith is strong; an expostulating faith, a faith which will make the soul press on after denials, after suspensions; it has come to a great measure of faith, which will not be answered or will not be gone; a faith that will not let God go or Christ until it succeeds. Jacob was as a wrestler; he would not let God go except he blessed him. A faith that can dispute much with God, which will in holy reasoning take and urge God with God, and will so enforce the promises on him (which he has made) that God is even fain to yield, "Be it unto thee as thou wilt," this is faith ripened.

3 The more entirely the soul is carried to expectation from the sole strength of a divine promise, the greater and stronger is that faith. As in Abraham's case; he wanted a son, and God promised him an Isaac; Abraham did not now stagger through unbelief, he did not consult the truth of it from his own natural abilities; how unable he was, that he neglected, but how able God was to perform his own word, upon this his faith did pitch. And for this the text says that he was strong in faith, Rom. 4:20. Remember this, that the more sensible helps the soul needs to draw out the act of believing, the weaker is the faith; as the man is judged to be very weak who cannot go without many crutches and holdings; but the more strength a naked promise has with the soul, when it alone puts life and quietness into us, new faith is grown; as David said, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me." So when we can quash all our troubles with the sight of a promise, I have God's word for my pardon,

his word for my help, his word for my comfort; I desire no better paymaster than God, no better security than his own promise; though all things stand contrary in sense and feeling, yet all is sure in God's promise, and there I will settle; this argues a great faith.

The more ability a man has to deny himself in near and great occurrences, the greater is his faith; Abraham in leaving his country, parting with Isaac: The more easily we can believe great things and part with great things, the stronger is our faith. There is nothing more hard than to give up a man's self.

There is a three-fold self.

First, his sinful self, in respect of old and dear sins.

Secondly, his natural self, in respect of the separation of soul and body.

Thirdly, his temporal self, in respect of the comforts of this life. And it must be a strong faith which enables strong denials of ourselves when a thing comes nearer to the quick, either when God denies a man a special comfort or draws off from him a special comfort. Now to submit, now to be quiet, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me," said Paul; "I know how to want, and how to abound, to be exalted and to be abased, I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

To have the heart pleased with Christ alone and satisfied with his presence; mark it, the more entirely that the soul makes up its state in Christ, and the less power that the world imprints upon the heart in its changes, this imports the faith has come to strength. Strong faith is like a strong tree, which holds its body unmovable against great tempests, but weak faith is like a plant which every wind makes almost touch the ground.

Fifthly, the weaker the arguments of distrust grow in the heart, this is a sign that the faith has gained strength. This I conjecture, that the strength or

weakness of faith is not to be judged by the multiplicity of distrustful arguments, but by the force and efficacy of them; It is possible that manifold arguments of fear and doubts may present themselves to the mind of a strong believer, as well as unto the judgment of a weak believer, but then, if faith is strong, it weighs them down, it prevails over them (that is) it brings the soul to Christ, it cleaves still unto him. The soul maintains its title to Christ and owns God in his promises; it will not cast away its hope nor its strength, wherein the soul can habitually foil the reasonings which cross its way and can clear up and vindicate its state, what God is to it, and Christ is to it, and what it has received from them, this is an argument that it is not weak but strong.

Sixthly, the more easy compliance with change of a man's condition is evidence of a faith which is stronger. There are several changes incident to man's temporal life. The Moon sometimes is full, and anon it is in the eclipse; our sea does ebb and flow; sometimes prosperity (like the candle of the Lord) shines upon us, by and by adversity (like the wind) blows out the candle; sometimes we abound, and our mountain seems strong; anon we are stripped, and our mountain is shaken; one while health and presence of friends, another while sickness and loss of all. Now in these changes not to be changed, like the ship right up in a calm but tossing and reeling in a storm, but to be as the rock fixed and settled, holding up and rejoicing in the God of our salvation, and encouraging ourselves in the Lord our God, and willing to be anything in any condition; yea, to bless God for all, as Job did. If I die, I shall go to God; If I live, I will serve my God; If I enjoy, I will be fruitful; If I want, I will be thankful; The more passive the heart is, the more active and strong the faith is. Paul had been learning that lesson; In every state, therewith to be content.

Oh, when a Christian can comply with contrary states, not through an insensibility of spirit, but from an apprehension and approbation of divine wisdom, goodness, love, and authority, his faith is singularly clarified and well improved.

The more satisfaction and quiescence that the soul has in Christ alone, the greater is the faith; when a naked Christ is the center and lodestone, and the All in all, as the Sun to make day. "I desire to know nothing but Christ crucified," said Paul, 1 Cor. 2:2. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," said Asaph, Psal. 73:25. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," saith Paul again, Phil. 3:8. "Lord, let thy servant now depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," said Simeon, Luke 2:29-30. As when we come to heaven, we shall be so heavenly that heaven alone will be enough for us, and this shows perfection; so while we live on earth, if Christ alone be heaven and earth to us, if he can fill our hearts and satisfy them. O Lord Jesus, thou art righteousness enough, satisfaction enough, wisdom enough, peace, comfort, and pleasure enough to my soul: O this comes from great strength!

The more that the body of sin decays in strength, the lesser prevalence of it; this shows that faith is strong. When sin becomes more dead in its actions or more ineffectual in its temptations; when a man can walk and not stumble, reel, and fall; he has now outgrown his former weakness. It shows weakness when every stone makes thee apt to fall; it is a sign the army is strong when many of the enemy are slain, and the rest are easily discomfited. Sin is our enemy, and Christ is our General, and faith is our champion, and the more that sins fall, it is an argument that faith has become stronger; the victorious faith is much more than the combating

faith: Sins go down by believing; the more that any grace is in victory, the more it is in strength. Indeed it argues truth of faith to resist, but to conquer sins, this shows strength; to wrestle is something, but to overthrow is more; to oppose sin is not so much as to vanquish it.

The more fruitful a Christian is in his graces and exercises of them, the stronger is his faith. You know that the extension of the branches arises from the intention of the sap; if the branches grow big and yield more fruit, it is because the root is more full and filled. Faith is (well styled) the radical grace; though the habits of other graces grow not out of it, yet the measures and exercises do exceedingly depend upon it: And according to the latitude of faith is the latitude of other graces; as the days receive shortness or length from the Sun. A weak faith is attended but with a weak love, a weak patience, a weak hope, and a weak joy. But if the faith becomes strong, now it is spring with our graces; they revive and shoot out themselves; there will be much love, much labor of love, strong hope, and a better heart and life.

The more able a person is to live upon Christ or God's promises in times of desertions and contrarieties, the faith is certainly greater. The more use any can make of God or Christ at all, his faith is greater; for the more that any soul believes, the more is his faith enabled thereby. But then this is yet more strength: even against hope, to believe in hope; to look up for that God who hides himself; to venture on an angry God, one who seems to shut out our prayers, one that speaks bitter things unto us; like Levi, not to observe our own children but to keep the Word and Covenant of God, Deut. 33:9.

12 The more able the soul is to wait on God, to pray and wait, the stronger is the faith. A waiting faith meets with more difficulties and contrarieties

and is upheld by the strength of a mere promise. That man not only has faith but lives by faith if he can wait for God's time, etc.

13 When you can glorify many promises at once by believing; yea, when every promise can be trusted upon gracious terms, the more fully you can glorify them by trusting for pardon of great sins, subduing of strong corruptions, deliverance out of great distresses, the stronger is your faith. The less difficulty you conceive in God to perform his Word; when you can come for great matters, with great confidence, fewer doubts, exceptions, fear, the less power discouragements have. If you can believe against sense, reason, Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him. These are discoveries of faith in strength.

SECT. IV

The second part of the second general point of the instances of weak faith in truth. Here are two things which I will touch.

One is, some demonstrations that faith is weak.

Another is, some directions of truth with that weakness.

Concerning the first, observe these things.

1 The more that doubtings stagger the heart, it is a sign that the faith is weak. As the more smoke goes up with the fire, it is an argument that the fire is little, or as the more a person halts and reels in his motion, it discovers the impotency of his strength and joints. You read in Rom. 4:20. That staggering at the promise by unbelief is opposed to a strong faith: observe that word (staggering). It is such a temper of the soul, wherein it does suddenly and easily change its thoughts and acts: As a man who is staggering, his foot checks (as it were) itself and alters its pace and place; so when a man's heart is giving on, and then falling off, may I take? may I not?

I will lay hold, I will not; God will be good to me, he will not; I shall have mercy, yet I shall not; this is staggering.

The soul lets go its hold, doubtings prevail against actual believing; the believing soul sees strong arguments to draw it to fasten on Christ and on mercy, and then it is putting forth the hand; but then unbelief thrusts forth contrary arguments of suspicion and fears, so that the soul is in doubts; may I indeed lay hold, but will the Lord be merciful to me? Why did you doubt, O you of little faith, said Christ to Peter? and this stands with reason, for the stronger that quality is which is contrary to faith, the weaker is that faith which is contrary to that quality; as the stronger sickness is, the weaker health is, etc.

2 The more easily a man can suspect God's favor and Christ's love; this is a sign that faith is weak. See Psal. 77:7, 8, 9, and then verse 10. They say of love, that the more pure love has least fear, 1 John 4:18. and multitude of jealousies is an argument of mixture in the affections. So it is of faith, the more steadfastly it can hold up the immutability of God's love and kindness and his ancient grants of favor, the stronger is the faith: But the more apt it is to question the loving-kindness which has been ever of old, now it is the weaker, Luke 24:21. We had trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, and besides all this today is the third day.

There are two things which a weak faith is very apt to challenge.

One in God for kindness.

Another in its own estate for soundness. As Gideon said in another case, If the Lord be with us, why has all this evil befallen us? So where the faith is weak, the soul is often in suit with God: yea, but if God were my God, had I an interest in Christ, were my estate good, could it be with me thus, could it be thus within me, thus without me, thus upon me? &c.

3. The more quick and hastening that the soul is for answers and satisfactions, the more impatient of God's delays, this is a sign that it is now weak in faith. For did it thoroughly believe, it would not make haste; were it persuaded fully of God's goodness, which makes the promise, of his wisdom, which will take the fittest time for the grant, it would now quietly wait and expect. But an over-hastening, when the soul will scarcely allow any time between the petition and the speeding of it, but I must presently have it, or else God is not my God, or else my state is bad; I say, hasty eagerness to be answered, and quick conclusions from God's silence, do show much weakness of faith in the soul. There is an importunity which may come from faith, and this is a holy pressing of a promise, yet with submission and patience; and there is a hastiness which comes from fear: As if God would not always be in a good mind towards us, as if the present testimonies must be the only arguments of his love and intentions.

These two things will usually meet in a man whose faith is weak. One is, he will be hasty to be answered. Another is, he will be faint if delayed.

4. The more inclining the heart is to the life of sense, the weaker is the faith: like Thomas, unless he sees the print of the nails, &c. he will not believe, John 20:25. So unless Christians have promises budding, they will hardly believe that there is fruit growing on them; unless I feel the sensible favor of God, I will not believe that he loves me; unless I read my pardon, I will not believe mercy; unless I discern sensible means, I will not believe helps; unless I feel sin slain in me, I will not believe that God will subdue it; all these in promises affect not, and support not the heart. It is a sign of a weak child that must still be carried in the arms. When a man's persuasions cannot be wrought by the naked word of promise without some sensible pledges and pawn, he is very weak. When he is puzzling his heart in an

endless maze of disorder, viz. he would have the things of the promise and then believe the fidelity of the promise, this argues weakness. The abstractions of things from sense, when God gathers up all a man's estate or any particular good only into his promise, into his own hand, and says, now can you believe that I will be good unto you? I promise you to be thus and thus; will you now trust me, will you adventure your soul now upon my word of pardon and mercy, upon my word of grace and help? So to do would evidence much strength.

Now you may observe a manifest difference between strong and weak faith; if strong faith sees its estate in the promise, it has enough, it goes away rejoicing; if weak faith has not some of the estate in its own hand as well as in God's hand, it is troubled and afraid.

5. The more difficult it is for a believer to be persuaded and assured of God's undertakings in Covenant, the weaker his faith is. When one word of God is not enough, but God must say it once and twice, and yet again more clearly: As Gideon would have one sign, the fleece must be wet, and the earth dry; and then another sign, the fleece must be dry, and dew lie upon all the earth, Judg. 6:37, 39. This showed weakness in his faith; so does it in a Christian, when not one or two promises, and scarcely all of them, with all the arguments in God and in Christ, can persuade him that God will be merciful to him, or that Christ belongs to him.

6. The more easily the soul lets go of that assurance, the weaker is faith in it; when a soul is like a weak hand clasping a staff, and the staff is easily wrested out; so the soul lets go of that promise, which did revive it, and that Christ, which seemed to embrace it, this argues weakness; as in Peter, when he believed that it was Christ on the Sea, upon Christ's Word he ventures out, but when the waves met him, he begins to sink, his faith was weak,

"Why didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?" said Christ to him. Though Christ's Word drew him out of the Ship, yet it did not hold him up all alone; And the Disciples, "We trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel." So when a temptation comes upon a soul, and the soul is ready to be led by it, to credit it against God's promise, and God's testimony in the Conscience, this readiness to let go of our hold argues much fear, and much fear argues weak faith.

7. The more apt the soul is to insist on personal and inherent qualities and abilities as *media fiduciæ*, means of persuasion, this shows that the faith is weak: when something in us makes us more confident, as when it is unapt to believe unless it can discern such an inherent strength of graces, to mourn, and to pray, or to keep down sin, or keep off temptation.

Object. It is true, these abilities are testimonies, but yet they are not Media.

Sol. They are evidences of a solid faith, but they are not means or causes of believing. The means or causes are God's promises, which ought (alone) to be our foundations and encouragements. Now when a person is unapt to believe that God will do these things for him unless these things be done, this is weakness. Good things, when they are done, they are matters of thankfulness, and when they are promised, they are matters of faith. They say in Logic that *demonstratio à posteriori* is the weaker demonstration, that *à priori* is much stronger: for this depends on the cause, and that on the effect. So is it in believing. A believing *à priori* from the persuasion of what God says (from his goodness and truth) is more strong than a believing *à posteriori* (that is) from a fruition or apprehension of what God does.

8. The more dull and uncheerful the heart is, this shows the faith to be weak: A sad Spirit and a weak faith usually are companions: for a strong

faith breeds much peace in the conscience, Rom. 5:1-2. and rejoicing, 1 Pet. 1:8. In whom (though now ye see him not) yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: such a faith as this has got too much assurance, but uncheerfulness of heart argues either as yet the want of all assurance or assurance very weak.

9 The more anxious and careful the soul is, it is a sign of weak faith. What shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and what shall we put on? This, our Saviour says in Matthew 6, shows little faith. For the lesser the things are for which we are to trust, the more weakness is there if we do distrust, especially where the helper is sufficient and willing, and has passed his promise. Now, God is willing to do for believers more than all the earth is worth, and has done greater matters for them; and therefore a suspicion of him for small matters shows but a small persuasion.

10 The more apt the heart is to be offended at the estate of Christ, it is a sign that faith is weak. This is evident in the disciples, who being weak in faith, Christ was forced to keep many things in because they were not able to bear them; and when he spoke of his sufferings and departing from them, they were much amazed and troubled.

SECT. V

Thus for the discoveries of faith in weakness: Now follow the demonstrations of the truth in faith, though weak.

The truth of faith has a great latitude; it is not confined to such a height, to such a point of eminency, as some conceive. Look as heat has several degrees, and as health has many species, and as life has many steps within which the true nature of them may be seated, so is it with faith; the true nature of it may be in a great measure, and yet in a lesser measure, and though weak faith be not strong, yet it is faith: weakness is not like death,

which is opposed to life, but like infirmity, which is opposed to strength. Strong faith is weak faith more perfected, and weak faith is strong faith in disposition, in tendency; it is within the compass. Negation is one thing, imperfection is another thing; no faith is quite opposite to faith, but weak faith if it be opposed to strength, yet it is not opposed to truth.

Now the truth of weak faith may appear in these things.

First, though weak faith be not sure that Christ is its Saviour, yet weak faith will honor Christ as its Lord: though it cannot see Christ bestowing itself on the soul, yet it will make the soul resign itself to Christ: though it cannot find comfort, yet it will oppose sin: though it cannot comprehend Christ, yet it would not willingly offend Christ. Faith in strength can put out itself in persuasion, I know that my redeemer lives, Job 19. Yet faith in weakness (as was that of Thomas) can put forth itself in subjection, My Lord, and My God; I will have no Lord but Christ, John 20.

The vital act of faith is not reflexive but direct. It is not this Christ is mine, but this, I receive and embrace Christ. Now the weak faith cannot settle its title to Christ so as strong faith can do, yet it can vindicate the title that Christ has to the soul; though it cannot see its own propriety in Christ, yet it can maintain Christ's propriety to it; it does acknowledge, it does yield unto no law, or power, or right over the soul but Christ's: it looks on sin as an enemy, though it cannot see Christ as a friend.

2 What weak faith lacks in the breadth of persuasion, it makes up in the depth of humility. A weak believer, though he cannot see himself great in God's eyes, yet he does appear low in his own eyes: it will not quarrel with God because he opens himself no more but abases itself because it is most unworthy of the least of truth and goodness.

There are two things which all true faith will work.

One is to value Christ.

Another is to undervalue ourselves; It can put glory on Christ and shame on itself; He is the sweetest Saviour, and I am the greatest sinner.

Faith usually acts in one of these ways, either in receiving or in humbling: For either it makes the soul see its happiness in Christ, which breeds joyfulness, or it sees its own unworthy vileness because of sin, and so it causes lowliness of spirit. Strong faith (like John) can be in Christ's bosom, but weak faith (like Peter) will fall down at Christ's feet; strong faith may be seen by the eye, and weak faith by the knee; that stands up and blesses God for Christ, this falls down and begs of God for Christ. And this, not for my sake, O Lord, (for to me belongs nothing but shame and confusion) but for thy goodness' sake, O Lord, (for to thee belong mercies and forgivenesses.)

Weak faith, though it has but tender confidences of its interest in Christ, yet it has strong dislikes and combats with that unbelief which hinders its persuasion. Though weak faith cannot see Christ as its ease, etc., yet it can feel unbelief as its burden and trouble.

There are two things (if I mistake not) which accompany all true faith, even the weakest. One is to magnify the state in Christ. Another is to dislike the state out of Christ. O happy is that man who can comprehend, as he is comprehended, says weak faith, and what shall I do with this unbelieving heart, this doubting, suspecting, fearful heart? Shall I always question? Shall I always find these disputings? Carnal reasonings, reelings, staggerings? Lord help this unbelief, Lord persuade this heart of mine, cause it to trust in thy salvation in Christ, say unto my soul that thou art my salvation.

The weak believer has many prayers in his heart, many tears in his eyes, and many conflicts in his mind; he believes and doubts, he prays and doubts, he mourns and doubts, yet though he doubts he will believe, and though he doubts he will pray, and because he still doubts he will therefore still mourn. He looks often towards Christ, O that I could believe; he looks often on his own heart, why wilt thou not yet believe? He looks up to God, O make me to believe; sometimes he spends his time in prayer for more faith, sometimes in dispute with his weak faith; one main difference between him and the strong believer is this: that the strong believer has got into Christ's arms, and this weak believer is fighting for the way unto him.

Weak faith will not rest in weakness if truth be in it. In a weak child, well and living, there are two qualifications of life: one is this, that it is active; another is this, that it is progressive; it will be doing, and it will be increasing. So it is with all true faith; though weak, it is a drawing of the soul unto Christ, yea, it is a drawing of something more from Christ unto the soul; what hinders it grieves it, and what it wants, after that it longs and craves. No grace is right which is idle or labors not to exceed itself. Lord help my unbelief, said that weak believer. O Lord increase our faith, said they of little faith. The weak cripple would be lying at the pool, and so will weak faith; it will be at the means of strength: It loves to be doing about Christ and to be where the strength of Christ is revealed.

It is wise to observe the grounds of its fears and doubtings and careful to remove them. O how earnest is the weak believer to hear what God will speak unto him, and if at any time the soul can get by the assistance of the Word to close with mercy and Christ, it is revived with joy of tears and falls down with thanks: Lord what is thy servant!

Nay, if it has apprehended but a hint, but a crevice, if it is enabled but a little to step above its dark doubtings, to apprehend but a darting beam, any persuasion that all is well, or will be so, it is refreshed, and says that God is good. I observe that the weak child will be much after the breasts, and the weak man will handle his staff much, and the weak believer will be much at the places and ordinances, and ways of more strength. It is with faith as it is with a blade of corn; at first, the ear of grain is quite skinned over, yet it breaks open a side, and at length is at the very top of the stalk. So faith at first is swathed over with doubting (none but a tender and merciful God can see that little mustard seed), but at length, it opens to more adherence to God and Christ, and promises, and in time it can triumph against its former fears and suspicions. Or it is like a weak man recovering: if he can but stand, it is well, then if he can set on in a few paces with his staff, then if his motion can be single, then if longer, then if stronger; so is it with faith, if it can make the soul look upon Christ, then if it could look on him as mine, then if so without fear, then if so with joy, then if so with strength and steadfastness. It will not rest in weakness, though it begins in weakness, but like the weak ivy which is winding up the tree, so will faith be winding up the soul higher and higher into Christ by the help of his Spirit, of his Promises, of his Word, and of his Sacraments. Weak faith will yet venture the soul upon Christ, though it cannot clear its title, nor answer its fears, nor (to its own sense) rely on Christ; yet if the soul is put and determined to one of these, either to renounce all hope in Christ, and so to be lost, or to put itself upon Christ, though it has no inward encouragement from itself; I say at such a time, even weak faith will discover itself; it will not renounce its hidden interest in Christ but will roll the soul on him; If I perish, I perish,

yet I will cleave to Christ, yet I will cast my soul on him, and on his blood and righteousness.

SECT. VI The third general which we observed to the former scruple was the concordance of all faith which is true (whether strong or weak) in fundamental comforts. First, every believer has a sure interest in Christ; It is with the members of Christ as with the members of the body; though they are not all of equal strength in comparison one with the other, yet they are of equal conjunction in relation of all of them to the head. So one believer exceeds another in a special measure of faith, yet every believer is a member firmly and surely knit to Christ, the head of all believers. Christ is not the Savior and Lord only of the strong but also of the weak; not only the old man nor only the young man but also the children, the little children (to whom Saint John wrote); they are all in Christ, 1 John 2.

There is a wide difference between reflexive certainty and real certainty of interest. Strong faith has the pre-eminence over weak faith in respect to reflexive and sensible certainty, but not in respect to real certainty. This is univocal; the union between Christ and the soul does not depend upon the strength, but upon the truth of faith. If my will consents to Christ, if my heart accepts him on his own terms, if I take his whole person and his whole condition, the match is truly made between Christ and me. He is surely mine, and I am surely his. Although I am not in an assured condition, yet I am in a sure union; Christ certainly owns that soul which by faith truly embraces him: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine," says Christ, John 17:10. He speaks of the Disciples and of all the Elect, who were the Father's in respect of a gracious election and gift, and Christ's in respect of a tender affection and union. So that here is one concordance of all faith in respect of fundamental comfort, namely, that the objective unity is one and

common; the weak and the strong eye meet in the same colors as the object, and weak and strong faith are two different hands, yet both of them upon one and the same Christ.

Secondly, every believer has a beneficial interest in Christ: (that is) weak faith has an interest in the benefits of Christ, as well as strong faith. I will instance in some special and choice benefits.

First, redemption from the malediction of the Law; Christ took that off. He was made a curse for all that believe on him: He did not stand in the room only of eminent believers but of every believer, and endured the wrath to the utmost for everyone who does believe on him. You are freed from a cursed estate by the least faith; every degree of true faith makes the condition to be a state of life and passes us from death and condemnation. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:1.

Secondly, remission of sins. What Christ said to that impotent person, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," is true of every believer. Christ has purchased a pardon for him, Acts 13:38: "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Verse 39: "And by him all that believe are justified," etc. If any believer went without his discharge, then it is probable that the weakest should be he, but the Scripture speaking of the weakest faith makes it a hand holding a pardon in it. 1 John 2:12: "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Though children, though little children, yet pardoned children; and mark it, the cause of that pardon was common to them with the stronger men (namely, for his name's sake). A man is not pardoned for the strength of his faith, nor debarred of it for the weakness of his faith, but both the one and the other enjoy it for his name's sake (that is) for Christ's sake.

Nay, observe it, that though strong and weak faith may vary much in the manner and degree of the apprehension or persuasion, or reading of the pardon, yet they both agree in the strength, and in the latitude of pardon. The weak believer has as an effectual, and as ample, and full remission as the strongest believer; for Christ did not become an unequal surety, or an uneven Sacrifice for sin; my meaning is this, that he did not only undertake the debts of some believers, but of every one; nor did he undertake some debts only of some believers, but all the debts of all believers. Therefore it is said, Isa. 53:6. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; and Jer. 32:8. I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, which words extend to all believers, because to all that are covenanted.

Thirdly, Justification by imputed righteousness; There is a common equal interest in this by all believers: It is but one garment for every believer, it is an entire thing. One believer hath not one righteousness to justify him, and another believer another, but all are justified by the same righteousness of Christ, neither is the imputation of this righteousness partial, or unequal, but alike to all that believe, Rom. 3:21. The righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. Ver. 22. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference. Therefore God is said (in v. 26) the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; if any man does truly believe in Christ, God justifies that man, and Christ is made righteousness unto him, (that is) the Lord will reckon unto him the righteousness of Christ, he will in Christ pronounce him just, and acquit him.

The most elevated believer cannot be presented in a judicial way before God's justice safely, in the strength of his own perfections, and therefore has

no reason to glory or boast; and the most weak believer is not excluded, but adorned with the robe of Christ's complete righteousness, notwithstanding his own manifold imperfections, and therefore has no reason to be discouraged or dismayed, for as much as Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believes, Rom. 10:4.

Fourthly, the inheritance of glory, even those weak Disciples who were often rebuked for their fears and doubtings, were commanded by Christ to rejoice; because their names were written in the book of life.

If we be Believers, we are sons, and if sons, then heirs, heirs of life, and co-heirs with Christ in glory, Rom. 8:16, 17; Gal. 3:26. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Ver. 29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, John 3:16. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life, for eternal life is founded in Christ, God hath put all life in him, from him we draw our life of grace, and by him we possess our life of glory, 1 John. 5:11. God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Ver. 12. He that hath the Son hath life.

Obj. Yea but who are they who have the Son?

Sol. See ver. 13. These things have I written unto you, that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, as if he should say, every believer is he who hath the Son, and by him that eternal life.

Every believer hath virtual interest in Christ, (that is) he shall partake of the virtues, and graces, and strength of Christ.

The Virtues of Christ are many; I will touch at some, viz.

1. A crucifying virtue, which subdues the love and dominion of sin, now every believer shares in this. Though one believer may be more troubled

with the insolent motions of sin than another, yet no believer shall lie under the dominion of sin, Romans 6:14. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the Law, but under grace. Galatians 5:24. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Every believer is gathered under the rod and scepter of Christ, and is made alive to Christ and dead to sin. Yea, Christ will more and more mortify his corrupt heart; He will bring death to the strongest lust in the weakest believer.

2. An assisting virtue, which aids the soul in matters of duty and service; now Christ will not only guide the strong but also lead the weak believer. He will send forth his enabling strength for all the services which he requires, 2 Cor. 12:9. He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness; most gladly therefore will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. As if he should say, there was weakness and infirmity on Paul's part, but there was strength and power on Christ's part, and this strength would Christ make to appear in Paul's weakness (that is) though Paul saw and felt his own strength insufficient, yet he should find Christ sufficient, sufficiently enabling him in that particular. Rom. 8:26. Likewise, the Spirit also helps our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Mark that place, though we are very infirm, very weak to any holy duty, to prayer and the rest, yet Christ will help; he will come in with his Spirit, which shall enable us with supplications, so that even very weak believers may take comfort in this, that Christ will strengthen and aid them by his Spirit in duties, as well as the strongest.

The greatest believer cannot perform service by his own strength, and the weakest shall be enabled by Christ.

There are three things which Christ will communicate to every believer, even to the weakest, about duty.

One is an affection and heart.

Another is strength and assistance.

The last is pardon and acceptance; what is amiss and wanting shall be pardoned, and what is imperfectly and weakly good shall yet through his intercession be accepted. His Father (for his merits) will not despise the day of small things.

3. Persevering virtue, by which the soul comes at length to cast anchor and to be safely landed. Now strong faith has (in a sort) Heaven already, yet weak faith shall also make a saving voyage: as it was with them in Paul's shipwreck, some of them could swim quickly and better get to shore; others were more unskillful and therefore laid hold and made use of broken boards, yet the text says that they all came safe to land: That I say of strong and weak faith, though the strong believer can better cut through the manifold oppositions of the world, though he can rise more easily above the waves of Satan's temptations than the weak believer, yet both of them shall hold out to the end and meet at Heaven. You see several ships at sea; one makes more speed than another and perhaps is better ordered; but those duller and slower ships follow after, and at length they come to the same haven and so cast anchor together. So, &c.

That Christ, who is the Author, will also be the finisher of all true faith, and though faith may be very weak, yet the weakest faith is invincible: The gates (no not) of Hell (and they imply the strongest opposition) shall not prevail against it. It is confessed, that Satan may much assault and batter, and the World may oppose and totter, and Sin may weaken, interrupt, and stagger even the foundations of the truest faith; but to be oppressed is one

thing, and to be suppressed is another thing; to be wounded is one thing, to be killed is another; For faith to fall in its strength is one thing, for faith to fail in its being is another; Simon, Simon (said Christ to Peter) Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: O malicious devil, who hath strong temptations to weaken faith! O gracious Savior, who hath stronger intercessions to preserve faith! Even the weakest faith is wrought by a divine hand, and is kept by an almighty guard; See 1 Pet. 1:5. who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; Answering the prayer of Christ, John 17:11. Holy Father, keep them through thy own Name, those whom thou hast given me, ver. 20. Neither pray I for these only, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. Whosoever believes on me shall not perish, said Christ.

Again, this is a sweet comfort, that the weak believer shall hold out as well as the strong, and that Christ is the Guardian of both; verily, that must needs be good which God gives, and that must needs be sure which Christ keeps; the weakest believer is held by a strong hand, and is secured by an inseparable arm.

Every believer is in the same fundamental league with God, he is reconciled unto him, and hath a true (nay for aught I yet understand) an equal interest in his special love and tenderness: It is freely confessed, that the strong believer hath more sensible discoveries of the streams, yet the weak believer is as deep in the fountain. They say in Logic, that substantial relations do not admit of degrees of more and less, as the Father is an equal Father to every child, his paternity and their filiation are indivisible things; So is it I am sure in this business, God is one & the same Father to all that believe; his radical love is alike, his fundamental gifts (which testify that love) are all alike, one and the same Word, one and the same Christ, one

and the same Sacraments, one and the same Spirit. And for his tenderness, why? If any child finds the gentle voice and easy hand, it is the weak child; If any believer finds soft and encouraging expressions from God, it is the weak believer. God would have them comforted, yea, he hath prepared the breasts of consolation for such sucklings; yea, and the knees to dandle them; yea, the hands to lead them, yea, the arms to carry them: And Christ will not quench the smoking flax, nor bruise the broken reed. How often doth God call upon the weak ones, to look up and behold their King, and their salvation, and to trust upon him, and not to fear, nor to be dismayed? Nay, for his sake doth he often double and treble the promise; yea, he confirms the promise, I will surely have mercy on him; yea, he takes his oath, he swears by himself, that he will not lie unto them, nor fail them, yea, he ratifies and seals his word with blood and truth.

O how doth God condescend in his nature, in his Word, in his ways, in his dealings, in his forbearances towards weak believers? How hath he prevented and answered all objections to their hands? All which shows his singular love and tenderness unto them.

SECT. VII

Now I proceed to the fourth and last discovery, viz.

The inequality of strong and weak faith in respect of circumstantial comforts, and some other consequences; thus they differ exceedingly, though both be in a sure and saving condition.

1. The weak believer falls short of that joy which the strong believer possesses. Joy may be considered three ways: either in its cause, which is the love of God and the blood of Christ; or in its title and claim, which belongs to faith receiving Christ; or in its actual presence and feeling, which depends upon a believing apprehension and persuasion. Now, though the

weakest believer has cause for great joy, for as the Angel spoke to the shepherds, that may be said to him, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord, Luke 2:9, 10.

And though he has a true title to the sweetest joy, for faith does unite him to Christ, and Christ entitles him to joy, yet he does not have such an actual presence of joy as the strong believer. Every faith is a hand holding, but strong faith is the mouth tasting that sweet wine. He does not have such full apprehensions of his own state; he does not yet so clearly conceive of that great love and goodness which God has put in Christ for him. He does not have such an evident view of his own particular interests in God or Christ but is infinitely tossed with doubtings and suspicions, whether he may yet take Christ as his, whether he may own the promises of mercy, and appropriate the great loving-kindness of a Father. Now ignorance is apt to breed suspicions, and doubts are apt to raise fears, both of which keep off or under actual joy: No man can well joy in a concealed good or joy much in a questioned title. All the good which God has firmly and largely made over unto me in his Son does not affect my heart with gladness and rejoicing while I am in dispute with it and am rather apt to conclude it is not for me than that it is my portion. The stronger believer therefore has this advantage over the weak; he is more acquainted in particular about his good, and so his heart rejoices with joy unspeakable and glorious; his soul does rejoice in God his Savior: but the weak believer cannot yet see his pardon, yea often suspects whether it shall be drawn or no: one is in a fair day, the other in a wet; It is day to both.

The matter is clear to the strong believer, and therefore his heart goes away rejoicing; the matter is doubtful to the weak believer, and therefore his

soul goes away weeping. One of them has a good Christ and a glad heart too; the other has a good Christ but yet a very heavy heart: His possession is doubtful, and therefore his heart is sorrowful.

2. The weak believer does not have that sweet peace that the strong believer has: where faith is weak, there the conscience is not thoroughly settled.

Peace in the conscience is, as it were, the harmonious tuning of the soul; it is a heavenly tranquility, a serenity, a gracious quieting and pacifying of the spirit of man, springing from a persuasion of God's love in Christ. Now, weak faith has strong scruples; it has many troubles; it is not sure that all is right and all is clear. It may be that God is my God, and it may be He is not; it may be Christ is mine, and perhaps not; it may be my sins are pardoned, and it may be they are not; it may be that God is my friend and reconciled, and it may be He is not. You know that the peace of a Christian must be seen ratified in a double court, or else the soul will not be quiet. One is in the court of heaven, another is in the court of conscience. Nay, and the peace in this lower court is not clear till it comes from the higher court; conscience cannot be quiet till God is quiet; it cannot give testimony and discharge until God has begun. If God has not yet dismissed the soul, if He holds up the case of a sinful soul without release, conscience cannot acquit and free that soul. But weak faith sees its suit and trial yet depending in the high court of heaven; a weak believer does not yet see or know that God will assuredly pardon him, that God is reconciled unto him, that God will indeed do good unto him. Here are his doubts and fears, and therefore here are his troubles and perplexities.

The strong believer is like David in Psalm 4:8: "I will both lay me down and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

The weak believer is like David in Psalm 42:11: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?"

The one is like the mother who has the child in her arms or at her breasts, with many smiling delights and satisfactions; the other is like the mother now in labor and travail with the child, which has many bitter throes and pangs one succeeding the other. The one is like a man standing upon a rock, where his foot stands unmoved and steady; but the other is like a man in a safe ship upon unquiet waters, tossed up and down. Weak faith is in a safe ship (which is Christ) but tossed upon a variety of waves (which are our doubtings): sometimes faith and hope, then faith and fear; sometimes I may have confidence, then I am cast out of His sight; now I will look up to God as mine in Christ, by and by, surely this is presumption, God will not accept me.

Such a storm and such a calm are there in the weak believer, such an unsettled settling: The day of his small comforts easily sets, and the night of many troubles abides long upon him. You shall seldom see a weak believer without a tear in his eye, a sigh in his breast, and a fear in his heart: "Yet I fear all is not sure. O that God would once assure me that He is my God! I know not what to do, or what to say, or what to think. I cannot see the handwriting yet blotted out, nor the heavens opening, and do you think there is any hope for me?" Thus the weak believer. But strong faith can answer many arguments and uphold its evidence against many temptations: It can more easily place and stay the soul upon its rest; it has seen and tasted more than weak faith; it knows whom it has trusted, and that He will be its God and guide forever; that He has pardoned transgressions and will remember iniquity no more. Where faith is great, there the war is strong

with sin, and the love high to God, and the peace more large and settled in the conscience.

3. The weak believer does not experience the same sweetness in communion with God as the strong believer does. Whether in the way of ordinances or in the way of duties, his interactions with God are more brackish and flat. When any threat is opened and applied, his heart immediately misgives him, wondering, "May this concern me? I fear this is my portion." When any precepts and graces are revealed and differentiated, he is usually apt to charge himself with a lack of them or hypocrisy under them, thinking, "Either I am not as God requires, or if so, yet not in truth."

When the box of ointment is opened, meaning the blood of Christ, and the offer of rich mercy and spacious promises of God, yet the savor of them is mixed to his soul. He disputes his right more than he can embrace their goodness, questioning, "But how do I know that I am intended?" and answers, "I am not ripe for such consolations; my wounds have not bled sufficiently; I am not fitted; I doubt I should presume if I should apply."

Again, in matters of duty, he does not have sweet communion with God either. Sometimes he is so overwhelmed that he thinks it is in vain for him to pray or look up, and therefore is ready (in a fit of temptation) to lay aside the work. Yet he cannot help but pray, but then the knee is bent with such suspicions and conclusions: "Perhaps this shall only harden me more, and God will not hear me." Or if the soul can gather any degree of better confidence that it shall find some grace and acceptance, then instantly it questions all this and suspects even the very grants and answers, as well as its own heart and petitions, conjecturing them to be rather the deluding fancies of a deceitful heart wishing well to itself than the sincere resolutions and satisfactions of a good and gracious God who hears prayer.

And thus the weak believer is kept in bitterness for a long time. He cannot taste the goodness of God, which he desires to embrace, nor relish those promises which he desires to apply. In all communions with God, he either disheartens his way before or displaces his comforts afterward; either he is not fit to pray, or else he is not fit to enjoy; either he cannot desire what is good, or else he is still questioning what is true. So that oftentimes, even the ways of his own comfort are uncomfortable to him, and the very method of peace is his usual trouble and vexation.

The reasons for all this may be not only the nature of unbelief, which is an uncomfortable ingredient and disquieting impediment to the soul in all holy communion but also the properties of this unbelief, causing the soul to look more on itself than on God and raising more fears for present want than hopes for assured and promised help. Besides limiting God to present satisfaction or else concluding no interest in His favor and gracious intentions; besides usually forgetting the mediation and intercession of Christ, in whom alone the soul and petitions are worthy.

4. The weak believer does not have the same success in communion with God as the strong believer does.

For all doubtings do prejudice our suits: there is not a more sure and compendious way to non-suit our petitions than by delivering them out of an unbelieving heart. No faith may be sure of denial, and he who delivers up his requests to God with one hand of faith and another hand of doubting, either receives a longer or a shorter answer. "According to thy faith be it unto thee," said Christ; strong faith brings God much glory and fetches in much good to the soul, but the lesser the faith, the lesser the good—just as according to the largeness of the vessel or strength of the hand, etc. The

higher the sun is, the more light is in the horizon; so the greater the faith is in our requests, the sooner and the larger shall be our promised answers.

You remember what Elisha said unto Joash King of Israel: "Take the arrows," and he took them; and he said, "Smite upon the ground," and he smote thrice and stopped. And the man of God was wroth with him and said, "Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it, whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

Prayer is the arrow of the soul; it is the swift messenger sent up to heaven, and faith is the hand which dispatches it. Now according to the strength of faith is the greatness of prayer in success. Thou didst pray (though) with much weakness of faith and hast got a little comfort; why didst thou not smite the ground six times? Why didst thou not double thy strength in believing? Thou shouldst then have had comfort like a river, whereas now thou hast only the smaller drops. Thou hast prayed (though) with much weakness of faith and hast got a little power over thy sinful and rebellious heart; why didst thou not smite the ground six times? Why didst thou not abound in more believing? For then thou shouldst have had a fuller victory over thy corrupt lusts and inclinations.

Herein hath strong faith the pre-eminence over weak, that the one hath not that full speed at heaven as the other; not that God will not answer the faith that is weak, but that its answers are not so full because it is accompanied with doubtings. This we find experimentally: that our helps (much of them) yet stick behind in heaven, and our corruptions (much of them) yet insult below in our hearts—not that we do not hate them, nor that we do not pray against them, but because our faith is new or weak, we rather think that God will not help than that he will indeed answer or do us good.

5 The weak believer is more under the power of the creature than the strong. My meaning is this, that his heart is more apt to sink, fail, perplex, and disquiet him in the changes of outward things; a cross cannot come but he startles, and if the affliction is close, he can hardly hold up; if he has not some friends to smooth and cherish him, some calm estate to maintain and uphold him: If the tide does not come in, if the wind does not blow, if the fig tree does not blossom, if God puts him upon an unusual way, if He touches him in his name, ease, advantage, any near outward support, if the cross is long, now I am cast off, I shall perish, what shall I eat? what shall I drink? what shall I put on? we and ours are undone, there's none who cares for my body, as David spoke for his soul. The heart gathers into many agonies, many prognostications, many challenges of God, many impatient vexations, perhaps murmurings, repinings, discontents, and distempers; yea, and has sometimes vile and inglorious thoughts of the fruitlessness of serving God, &c. I think there is scarce any one of these which the weak believer does not sensibly feel in the times of his straits and exigencies (which may exceedingly humble and abase his soul therefore): But the strong believer is a better seaman; his soul is more quiet in the absence because more loosened by faith in the presence of the creature. In a fair day God was much better; though others break with joy in the fruition of wine and oil; yet Lord, says David, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me. As if he should say, I prize and joy in that more than in anything else. In a fast day God is enough, Psal. 23:1. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Verse 4. 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. Ver. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. So Psalm 93:3. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted

up their voice, the floods lift up their waves. Psalm 93:4. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea. So Psalm 118:6. The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me. Ver. 10. All nations compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. Ver. 11. They compassed me about, yea they compassed me about, but, &c. Ver. 12. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns, for in the name of the Lord, &c. So Psal. 48:14. This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death. (Sin is a greater trouble, and the world is a greater burden to the weak than to the strong believer.) 6. The weak believer cannot bring God so much glory as the strong believer.

God has glory from us in many ways.

By acquitting his fidelity, truth, power, and other attributes, Rom. 4:20. By a bearing and fruitful heart and life, John 15:8.

By thankful praises and acknowledgment, Psal. 50:23.

Now the weak believer does not acquit God so in his attributes; it is often with him: Will the Lord cast off forever? will he be gracious, or will he be favorable no more? or if thou wilt, thou canst do this for me: He does not so clearly justify God in the greatness of his power, in the readiness of his mercy, in the immutability of his truth.

He is not so fruitful; for where the root is weak, there the branches are not so strong or full; the fruitfulness of the heart consists in the rich increase of all graces and in the enlarged heavenliness of the affections; and the fruitfulness of life depends upon the inward enriching of the heart, as the streams on the spring, or the beams on the sun; and the fruitfulness of both depends upon the richness of faith. Though the habits of grace depend immediately on God's Spirit, and not on faith, yet the measures of grace

depend (instrumentally) very much on faith, it being the conduit pipe that draws grace for grace from Christ. A weak believer cannot have such a strength of affection, nor vigor of actions as the strong.

He is not so thankful; you shall forever find this to be true, that what is a weakening to faith, that is a lessening to thanks. No man's tongue is more in praise than he whose heart is filled with persuasion: God has but cold thanks from him who is yet disputing and questioning his receipts; where the mercy is fully cleared, there the heart is exceedingly enlarged. But until the soul sees itself indeed a debtor, it will prove but an ill and slow paymaster; how can I fully thank God that he has expressed that wonder of love, to give Christ to me, when yet I do in my soul suspect and question whether this be so or not?

How can I fully bless and praise God for his rich mercy in the pardon of my sins, while my soul does yet suspect that the book is uncrossed, and the controversy of guilt is not yet taken up between God and me? But where faith is strong, there praise is great; when the moon is fullest of light, then the tides are higher in their returns; so the more clear apprehensions of God's love to us in Christ even raise affections to a greater flow of thankful retributions, Psal. 103:1. Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name. Ver. 2. Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: See how he charges and recharges his soul to praise; but why? Ver. 3. Who forgives all your iniquities. Ver. 4. Who crowns you with loving kindness and mercies.

7. The weak believer will be more puzzled to die than the strong believer. It is with the strong believer as with Simeon, who held Christ in his arms, "Now," said he, "lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He may easily desire death to release him from a

miserable world, who has assuredly obtained Christ, the author of a better life. Or as with Paul, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better, 2 Cor. 5:1. We know if our earthly house, etc., we have a building of God. For the strong believer knows that life and death are to his advantage. By him, we shall go to the God of all mercies and to the Father of all consolations. He shall go to that mansion which his Savior has provided and there have a glorious union with God and society with saints forever. But the weak believer will perhaps stagger, and his heart will divide itself; "I would not yet die; if I must, what shall I do? Christ is he whom I have loved and served, but I am not sure that he is mine. Heavenly glory is the reward for our service, but I am not sure that I shall enter it; matters are yet doubtful, and my heart is yet fearful. I know not whether such sins are yet taken off, and how will God look upon me if I die, of whose loving favor I have not been assured while I have lived? I hope for the best, and yet I see cause to fear; death may do me good, yet I would rather live to clear accounts 'twixt God and my soul, so that then I might give up," etc.

8. The weak believer does not have such cheerful expectations nor quiet submissions as the strong believer. The strong believer is like the Church in Micah, "My God will hear me;" and if he denies a particular good, yet he can sit down and sing; when he is going to prayer he cheers up his heart with confidence in God, and when he finds God determining and revealing his will, there he blesses God and follows his calling. But the weak believer is apt to forestall a mercy; he cannot see a plain way for his grant nor easily quiet his heart after his denial.

9. The efficacy of temptations entangles the weak believer more than the strong, like the weaker vessel at sea amidst the greater waves; Satan deceives his soul with ease and ever and anon disrobes him of his comforts;

like a lewd subtle enemy, he forces the weak believer often to try and clear his title and increases mistakes in all passages 'twixt God and the soul.

1. If he casts himself on mercy, then it is presumption; if he holds off, then it is infidelity and rejection of Christ. 2. If he doubts, then it is despair and a forsaking of God. 3. If he sins, then it is unpardonable because of knowledge and mercy. 4. If he finds distractions in duty, then this is hypocrisy in the heart. 5. If he meets with hellish suggestions (of which Satan is only the author), "O then, who could be in Christ and have such abominable thoughts!" 6. If the ordinances do not presently comfort, "O then, they are sealed up, and there is no faith, else the Word would profit." 7. If every corruption is not subdued in every degree and motion and act, "O then, virtue is not gone from Christ; the heart is still naught and the faith unsound." 8. If not the same constant tenor of smart affections, "Why then there was never any true love of God, no reverence of him now, nor fear, nor duties; but the soul is dead, utterly hardened, and God has no pleasure in it."

9. If God does answer the soul, yes, but that is just an imagination. If He does not answer, then it is clear that God neither does nor will ever regard you. 10. If I do not go to the Sacrament, then you slight Christ and His blood: If I go and come away with tears, oh then you were unbelieving, or else you would have been sent away with joy and increase. 11. If I do not strive for grace, then you are wicked: If I do strive for grace, then you are so wicked that God will not bestow it on you. Thus does Satan involve, distress, and set the soul of a weak believer (like a man at chess) forward and backward; he makes him suspect every mercy, every grace, every affection, every duty, every promise, and every Ordinance; so violently does he toss, though he cannot totally sink the heart of a weak believer.

SECT. VIII Motives to strive to strengthen your faith.

1. This is a sign of truth. True grace is rising; dead things decay, and artificial things remain the same; but the living child is growing to full stature. Phil. 3. Not as though we had already attained; the grain of mustard seed grows, and the smoking flax will flame. Presumption has all its perfections at first.

2. This is a right answer to great means. To whom much is given, of them much is required. Pharaoh's lean kine are called ill-favored because in a great and large pasture. All is not right when the breasts are full, and the child is still weak. The Gospel should be revealed from faith to faith, Rom. 1.

3. The greater faith is, the greater perfection: every degree of further grace is like a star of greater magnitude, which differs in glory from another; an addition of faith to faith is an adding to the treasury, an enriching of the soul, a further clarifying of it. The less of grace, the more of corruption; and the more of corruption, the more of imperfection.

4. The greater faith, the greater comfort; the mind will have fewer doubts; will have fewer fears, conscience more settledness, the soul more sights of God, and tastes of Christ, experiences in life, and confidence in death.

5. The greater faith will be the greater help in times of desertion, in times of trial, in times of temptation, in times of affliction; and greater help to all active duty and passive changes. You know not what may befall you in evil times: then you would be able to commit, to submit, to conquer, to suffer, to do much better if your faith were much greater.

Chapter Sixteen

Exhortations to labor for saving faith

If believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way to be saved, then be exhorted to labor for and obtain this saving faith. Let not the consolations of God seem small to you, as he said to Job; so say I, let not the salvation of your soul seem a light thing to you. If a man were deeply wounded, and there were but one plaster that could cure him, and this were presented to him, would he not reach out his hand to receive and apply it? The love of life would easily incline him.

Why, brethren, not one of us is without a deadly wound by sin, and there is no remedy for the sinful soul but in the blood of Christ. O, if the love of life will constrain us much, let the love of eternal life, the love of our souls, of our salvation, persuade us much more to get faith, which gets Christ, who gets salvation for our souls.

There are various things which I will touch upon in the finishing of this Use, namely:

1. The motives to persuade and draw the heart to strive for this saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The impediments and hindrances that stop

the soul from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, which we must attempt to answer and remove, as he did the body of Asahel which stayed the people in their pursuit.³ The means or aids and furtherances to cultivate this believing quality in the soul.⁴ The resolutions or answers to several doubtful grounds and arguments which entangle the heart of a sensible sinner, and which he holds out as strong pretenses why he should not by faith close with Jesus Christ.

Now that great and holy God, who is the Author of faith and finisher thereof, whose word is the word of faith, and by whose Almighty working the hearts of men are persuaded to believe, let him so direct me in speaking, and all of us in hearing, that after all his gracious and manifold revelations and offers of our Lord Jesus Christ, our unbelieving hearts may be subdued, and true faith may be wrought in us all to receive the Lord Jesus Christ to our eternal salvation.

SECT. I First the Motives.

I speak this day to an understanding and sensible people, to whom the doctrinal parts of our natural misery and of our purchased felicity are not hidden mysteries, and therefore I trust that the succeeding arguments and motives shall find little stop in your understandings but shall more easily and powerfully pass down into your hearts and affections, to persuade and excite you to lay out all your strength and that speedily, to get this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus then:

First, sadly and seriously consider the state of Positive infidelity. Divines observe a twofold infidelity.

One is Negative, which is among the Heathens to whom Christ is not revealed, and therefore they do not believe; it consists both in the absence of the quality of faith as well as in the object and doctrine of faith. This Sun

of the Gospel has not risen unto them, and therefore they sit still in the regions of darkness, and (for all we know) in the valley of death.

Another is Positive, which is incident to us Christians, to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed; Christ is manifested as the body of the Sun by the beams of light: so he by the brightness and evidence of the Gospel, and yet the soul knows him not, receives him not, does not take him both as Lord and Savior.

Of this there are several degrees; and all of them fearfully dangerous, to speak the truth plainly, damnable.

1. A careless neglecting of the Lord of Life, a not minding of that singular mercy and goodness which God has treasured in Christ, and reveals and offers to sinful men.

2. A slighting of him and his excellencies, which is a preferring, as it were, Barabbas before him, a bestowing of our hearts, and studies, and labors, and delights, and services, not on him, but either on our sins, or upon the world, in the rivers of its pleasures, and in the mountains of its profits. 3. A refusing of his Articles and Covenants, which is a breaking off, and vile disliking of those terms upon which he offers himself to be ours: we would bring him to terms of competition with sin, or the creature; we would abridge his holy and Lordly Scepter, like what we please, do what we list, have him to be our Savior, and sin to be our Ruler, we would bestow our safeties on him, and our services upon the world; we will not freely and fully consent to all that he is, nor submit to all that he proposes, or may befall us with him and for him: And so like the vain Merchant, we miss the pearl, because we will not go the price: We enjoy ourselves still, and our sins, and our world too, but we forsake our mercies for lying vanities: the soul is Christless still, because thus sordidly unbelieving. 1. But then know,

of all estates in the world, none so fearful, so damnable as the unbelieving estate. A man may lose every farthing of his inheritance, and yet faith will bring him to heaven; he may lose every friend that he has, and yet faith may bring him to heaven; He may lose every spirit in his members, and every drop of blood in his body, and yet faith may bring him to heaven; He may be as poor as Job, as distressed as David, as sick as Lazarus, as forsaken as Paul, as derided as Christ, and yet faith may bring his soul to heaven. But if a man had as much wisdom as Solomon, greatness as Nebuchadnezzar, strength as Samson, days as Methuselah, riches as Dives; were his dwellings like the doors of the Sanctuary, and shaped into the most imaginable Paradise of all exquisite and earthly delights: if yet his soul remained, and expired unbelieving, if he had not faith, his unbelieving soul shall be cast out into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, Revel. 21:8.

Nay again, a man may (perhaps) be guilty of many sins, and those very foul, high, and crying; he has perhaps been an idolater, or else an adulterer, or else a blasphemer, or else a persecutor, yea even of Christ; yet upon his repentance and faith in Christ, his soul shall be saved in the day of the Lord. For no former sins shall prejudice the soul which is now truly turned from them and has by faith yielded up itself to Christ. But the unbelieving person has every sin and every guilt upon a severe and sure account; he rejects his own satisfaction by refusing Christ. The law of God will sue him out for every rebellion, and the justice of God will break out upon him for all his iniquities; and conscience will give up all his guilt; and because he is unbelieving, vengeance to the utmost shall seize on him, and there is none to deliver him, nor is he ever able to deliver himself.

Unbelief binds all the sins upon the soul, and condemnation fast unto the sins; it leaves the sinning soul naked to the eye of divine justice, neither has the soul any shelter which is out of Christ. O thou who wilt not kiss the Son now, who wilt not have Christ to rule thee, who despisest the tender love of God, the precious blood of Christ, who wilt not receive him for thy priest, for thy prophet, for thy king: in the last day thou shalt curse thy heart, and curse thy sins, and cry to the mountains, but they will not cover thee; to mercy, but that will not pity thee; to Christ, but he will not regard thee; to justice, but it will not hear thee. Thou wouldst not believe, thou wouldst not receive Christ as Lord and Saviour, but thou wouldst have the love of sin, and therefore thou shalt have the portion of a sinner; thou shalt not see life, but the wrath of God shall abide upon thee.

Nay, if the Father has given and offered unto thee his own Son, and thou harden thy heart by unbelief, thou wilt not take him upon those terms; I tell thee in the name of the Lord Jesus, that if thou wilt thus bid Christ farewell, thou dost bid God farewell, all mercy farewell, all salvation farewell, all hope of it farewell; and thou bindest all thy sins upon thy soul, and all the curse of the law upon thy soul. Woe unto thee; it is better thou hadst never been born.

If thou hast any sense as an ordinary creature, any reason as a man, any understanding as a Christian, any true estimation of an immortal soul, any conceptions of heaven or hell; if salvation be any comfortable thing, if damnation be any miserable thing; then I beseech thee, I beseech thee, labour for faith, get out of an unbelieving condition; thou perishest if thou stayest there, thou art lost forever. He that believes not shall be damned, said the Prince of Salvation.

O repent and believe, why will ye die, O house of Israel? Consider thoroughly the love of God in giving Christ, and of the love of Christ in giving himself, and perhaps this may persuade thee to labour for faith.

The love of God in giving of Christ. See 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."

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

Oh, this love of God to sinners; to give His Son, and not a servant, His own Son, and not another, His only Son, and not a second, His only begotten Son, and not an adopted child, and that not for any ill, but for good; He did not send Him as an enemy, but as a friend; not to deliver a poor and mean good, but the best and highest good, to save us; not to deliver us from an ordinary danger, but from condemnation. Yea, and He is sent and given; He was not sought by us, but given by Him. Yea, and in no way deserved, but freely given; yea, and given to us, not friends, but enemies.

"Thou hast showed this day," said Saul to David (1 Sam. 24:18), "how that thou hast dealt well with me, forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" Thus here 'twixt man and man: but (saith the Apostle) God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Now, shall all this love be in vain? Shall God think of a Christ and we pass by Him? Shall He give a Savior, and we reject Him? Shall He bring salvation to our doors, and we not accept it? Why, you need my Son, and you are damned if you take Him not, and I

freely offer Him unto you, that you may be saved. And shall we not strive for faith to receive Him?

2. The love of Christ: O, how wonderful was his love to us! It was not a love for the fallen angels, but for fallen man, and such a love for fallen man as the like cannot be found. He laid aside his glory to do us good; he humbled himself to raise us; he became poor to enrich us; he fasted and prayed and endured the contradiction of sinners, reproaches, crucifixions, wrath, bloody agonies, conflicts with Satan, sorrows in his soul, piercings in his body, and a bitter death to satisfy for us, and to reconcile us; and shall we not accept him? Shall all this be in vain? Why! Dost thou not hear Christ calling and crying out unto thee, never were any sorrows like my sorrows, never was any love like my love. O unbelieving and sinning soul! Look upon me, why dost thou pass by? Why dost thou hide thine eyes from me? Why dost thou stop thine ears at me? I am the Savior of sinners, and there is none else besides me; thy own miseries might cause thee to look up and embrace me; and let my love unto thee a little draw thee, move thee, melt thee. Hast thou not heard of the revilings and scoffs which I sustained? My love to thy soul made me willing and patient; hast thou not heard of the agonies of my soul, which made me sweat drops of blood, and my soul was exceedingly heavy even unto death? Yet my love to thy soul made me willing to drink that cup: Hast thou not heard of that desertion, and of that wrath which made me cry out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And yet my love to thy soul made me pass through it: Hast thou not heard of that accursed and spiteful death which I was put to; numbered with transgressors, cast out of the city, nailed to the cross, pierced through the heart? And yet my love to thy soul made me pour out my soul an offering for thy sins. Why! And shall I veil my glory under the condition of a servant

in vain? Shall I combat and conquer Satan in vain? Shall I bear the scorn of men, the wrath of God, the terrors of death, the curse of the law, in vain? Was not all this for thee? Shouldst not thou have sustained all this if I had not? And must thou not if thou refusest him who hath done it? And yet wilt thou prefer thy sins before me? Yet wilt thou not accept me? Yet wilt thou not get faith to receive me? Have I sought thee freely, bought thee so dearly, and thou neglect and refuse me so easily?

Thirdly, consider, thou hast extreme need of a Lord Jesus Christ. Excellency prevails much with an ingenious nature, and necessity with the worst: when the lepers saw that they must either venture their lives or die, they went out into the camp; when the prodigal saw he must famish abroad or return home, he went back to his father's house. Why brethren! The captive does not more need a redeemer, and the sick does not more need a physician than the sinner does need a Christ and a Savior. Were we in Adam's created innocence, then we need not look after a Savior, but we are fallen, but we are broken, but we are sold under sin, but we are transgressors from the womb; but we are by nature the children of disobedience and wrath. Had we any stock left in our hands to set up our broken souls again, had we any strength to repair our loss, to recover our good, to purchase our own peace and salvation, but we are dead in trespasses, Eph. 2:1. We all fall short of the glory of God, Rom. 3:23. We are all without strength, Rom. 5:6.

Could anything be a plank to the shipwreck but Christ, or a hand to lay hold on the rock but faith? Then we would not need to give such diligence for faith to believe; but there is no salvation in any other name, and there is no quality but faith to get us into Christ. It is not the confidence which you may put upon the faith of another that will do it: as every man's soul is for

his own body, so every man's faith is for his own soul; the wise virgins had no more oil than would serve their own lamps, and no man's faith is more than enough for himself. Though Christ can save many, yet faith saves only him who has it.

It is not the confidence of a naked decree that will do it: "If God has decreed to save me, I shall be saved"; oh no, his decrees are his own secret ways, and the way which he has opened to us is to get faith and to believe in his Son. It is not an empty profession, nor the worthless access of all the creatures, that can ensure or save your soul. Only Christ, none but Christ: you are wounded, and Christ is your plaster; you are dead, and Christ is your life; you are sold, and Christ is your ransom; you are an enemy, and Christ is your peace. The debts are infinite, the curse great, the justice of God pure, your strength nothing, and nothing satisfies and delivers but Christ, and none has Christ but the believer; why then will you not labour for faith?

Fourthly, consider, Christ is every way fitted to your need. Why, brethren, gold will ransom a debtor to man, but it will not ransom a sinner from the law, an offender against God. Why, look upon your need aright, and then judge—who but Christ for a sinner? There is guilt, much guilt lying upon your soul, and who is the priest to suffer, to offer, to satisfy, to take away transgressions but Christ? None can blot out the guilt of sin for us, but he who had not a spot of sin in himself. There is filth, much filth defiling our natures, poisoning our actions; and who is the prophet to enlighten, to teach, to change, to cleanse from sinfulness but Christ? None can teach us holiness and obedience but he who was holy, undefiled, separated from sinners, and was obedient to death.

There is dominion, much dominion of sin, prescribing a law to our members, sending out all insolent inclinations, holding us in a willing subjection to every base lust; and who is the king to conquer the heart, to subdue iniquities, to lead captivity captive, to spoil principalities and powers, to bid the captive go free, to erect a throne of righteousness and peace in the soul but Christ? So that the wise love of God has prepared and fitted Christ in all respects suitable to the exigencies and straits of a sinful soul, and has appointed faith to be that which shall put on this Christ upon the needy soul; why then will we not labour for faith?

Fifthly, God has not only fitted a Saviour for you, but he comes near unto you with him; he deals mightily with your soul to believe on him. You have the word of revelation (to this very day) wherein the mystery of your salvation is made known and clear unto you. You need not say in your heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down from above?" or "Who shall descend into the deeps to bring up Christ again from the dead?" But the word is nigh you, even in your mouth, and in your heart, that is the word of faith which we preach: "That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:6-9).

You have the word of gracious proposition; God has offered Christ with all his plentiful redemption, with his strong salvation unto you: yea, he has assured you by his Word of truth (which cannot lie nor deceive) that if you believe in him, you shall be saved by him. You have the word of injunction which lays a bond of duty upon you, This is his Commandment, that we believe in the Name of his Son Jesus Christ. Nay, you have the word of penalty and correction. God has said that he will judge you for not believing, and that in the sharpest method of expression, He that believes

not shall be damned. Nay, you have the word of obsecration and gentle entreaty; God stoops infinitely below himself, he does strain courtesy with you, God does beseech you by us, and we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Nay, you have the word of expostulation; why will you not believe? why will you die in your sins? why will you not come to me that you may be saved? How often would I have gathered you? All the day long have I stretched forth my hands. Nay, your unbelief grieves the very heart of Christ, (he grieved at their unbelief) he complains of that slowness in the heart to believe (O slow of heart to believe,) &c., nay, and he sheds tears, because you do not believe and receive him; When he came near the City, he wept over it, O Jerusalem! you that, &c. How often would I, &c. Sixthly, consider how unreasonable, and unequal, and foolish a thing it is not to receive Christ, being thus revealed and offered. 1. There is none who have right to your soul but God and Christ; our souls are God's workmanship, and Christ's purchase; Why then should we not give to God that which belongs to God, and to Christ that which is his own; You are not your own, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. for you are bought with a price. God put forth his own power to make your soul, and Christ shed his heart's blood to redeem your soul, and yet will you through infidelity withhold it from him, and pass it over into the possession of a stranger, an enemy? 2. Christ outbids all merchants for your soul, he outbids sin, and he outbids all the world, and he outbids Satan. Can the Son of Jesse give you vineyards, said Saul? can sin give you that which Christ can? can the world? let them now appear and declare their strength and treasury; Is there any one of them that presents redemption unto you? Is there any one of them that can procure remission and pardoning mercy for you? Is there any one of them which can satisfy the wrath of God for you? which can make your peace?

which can present you righteous before the judgment seat? which can settle eternal life upon you? All this can Christ do, none of this can they do. 3. You cannot possibly be a loser by receiving or believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Suppose it costs you many tears, and many prayers, and many searchings, and many waitings, yet Christ will recompense all these in a moment, one word, I am your salvation; It is I, be not afraid; I am yours, as you are mine, your sins are forgiven you, will be a day for all former nights. Suppose that the world does cast you off, as they cast him out of the Synagogue who believed and professed Christ, yet Christ will come unto you as unto him; And as Elkanah said to Hannah, 1 Sam. 1:8. Am not I better than ten Sons? or as the Prophet answered the King for the hundred talents, God will be better unto you, 2 Sam. 20:9. So will Christ, he will supply all your losses, he will be better unto you than houses and lands, than father and mother, a hundred-fold better in this life, and a thousand-fold better in the life to come.

4. What extreme shame and blackness of confusion will befall you if you are so wickedly unreasonable as to keep your soul from Christ? When you are cited before God and Christ, and the holy Angels and just men, and God shall demand of you, whom have you served? Upon whom have you bestowed your soul? Who was it that made your soul? You, Lord; who was it that purchased and redeemed your soul? You, Christ; and who beseeched you to bring back your soul? You, by your servants in your Word; And what did they say to you, which should have prevailed upon you? They assured me in your Name, that if I would come in and accept Christ, I should have favor, and pardon, and eternal life; and what kept back your soul from accepting this? Oh, it was such a lust that I loved, and it was the world which I preferred. And would you prefer earth before heaven, your profit

before your soul? Nay, would you prefer a base sin before a merciful God and a blessed Redeemer? Your own mouth testifies against you; was not my mercy better than a sin? Was not my Son better than a sin? Take him, all you children of darkness, seize on him my wrath to the utmost, close him up in the lowest pit of hell, conscience gnaw on him, and sting him forever, fire and brimstone consume and torment him eternally; he shall never have part in my mercy; he shall never have portion in my Son; He shall never see my face nor heaven, who preferred his sin, his delights, his profits before my love, my mercy, my Christ, and his own soul.

Lastly, faith would do great things for you, and Christ would do wonders for your soul if once your heart could be persuaded to consent unto him and to accept him as Lord and Savior.

SECT. II

Secondly, the impediments and hindrances.

Obj. But now, as the Eunuch said, There is water, what hinders me that I may not be baptized? so you may say, why? Here is Christ set out to the life; here are arguments fair enough to draw on my soul; what hinders that we do not believe and receive Christ?

Sol. After all these discoveries, yet the heart stands off; and why? Because there are yet many cords with which the soul is held; there are yet several impediments which do entangle and seduce the heart, which keep it down from mounting and rising up to the Lord of life, against which we must earnestly labor if ever we would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will touch on some of the choicest of them.

1. One impediment to faith is that natural atheism in the sons of men. You know that as in the concoction or digestion of meats, that which is a prejudice to the first concoction or digestion of meats is a hindrance to the

two others, and as in points of demonstration, that scruple which weakens the apprehension of the truth of the principle ever disables the strength of assent to the deduced conclusion: So is it in divinity; whatsoever vile quality in the soul prejudices the reverent respects of the most common and first truths, it hinders it much in embracing the depending truths, which receive much authority and strength from the grants of the former.

Now Atheism is a slight quarrel with the first truths: An atheistical spirit has most sordid and loose conceptions of God and of His word; it does not set up God in the greatness of His nature, and Majesty of His Attributes, and Authority of His Word; God does not look like a God to him; nor does the Word of God work upon him like the Word of God. God is not in all his thoughts; he does not really conceive of Him as one who indeed is omnipotent, and so holy, and so just, and so merciful as He reveals Himself: Those sweet truths of favor, and kindness, and mercy, and the blood of Christ, they are either nothing to him or as empty notions. Those sharp threatenings against an unbelieving person, with condemnation, and wrath, and hell, they are as terrible fables and scarecrows to him; He does not believe any such displeasures or torments, that thus it shall be indeed. Now how can the soul be inclined to believe in Christ, to part with its dear lusts, with its worldly advantages and pleasures, and to submit itself to the Laws and Scepter of Christ, when it expressly or virtually denies the nature of God and the power of His truths?

Did you indeed believe that there was a God; did you indeed believe that His revelations of man's sinful misery, and of His singular mercy in Christ were true and real; did you believe that God has wrath, and blackness of darkness, and vials of vengeance forever to be poured on the unbeliever; and that the lake which burns with fire and brimstone must be your assured

portion, (as God has spoken) how could you sit still, content your heart, neglect your salvation by Christ, stand off from the ways and endeavors for faith?

Therefore to remove this impediment, beg of God to forgive and cure the atheism of your spirit. Strive to set up the true God in your understanding, and to believe that He is the Lord who will not lie. Whatever He has revealed Himself to be and to do, why that He is, and that He will perform; that it is your duty to return from sin to Him in Christ, and if you do return, He will in mercy spare and deliver your soul from the pit because He has found a ransom; but if you will not return, He will bathe the sword of His flaming justice forever in the blood of your soul.

2. A second impediment to the getting of faith is gross ignorance. Whatever is contrary to knowledge is contrary to faith; for though faith sees not its ground in natural reason, yet it must have divine evidence to show it its object, way, and causes, or else it cannot be wrought in the soul.

The soul must have light for all its apprehensive operations, for the eye to see, and the understanding to perceive, and for the heart to embrace.

Now this is what keeps men off from believing; they are extremely ignorant.

1. First, of their own sinful condition; they do not know their nativity and conception, what sin is, nor what belongs to sinners; how abominable and vile their natures are, without all good, and like a fountain full of all wickedness; how dead in trespasses and sins; how totally defiled, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot; how perpetually rebellious against every precept of heaven, and how slighting of the tenders of salvation and mercy.

2. Secondly, of God's just disposition towards the sinful person. They do not see Him armed and setting out against them in all the threatenings and curses of His Law; as Balaam in his passage he ventured on, for he did not see the Angel of the Lord with a sword in His hand ready to cleave him asunder: so men rest securely in their natural state; talk what you will of Christ, and of God, and of sin, and of faith, they are not moved; they do not know the fearful issues of a natural and unbelieving condition, they do not know that God will judge them and condemn them forever.

3. Thirdly, of the excellencies of Christ, what He is, whether God, or man, or both, even as it pleases Him; but savor what He is in respect of His Natures, in respect of His Offices, in respect of His Actions, in respect of His Passion, in respect of His Benefits, in respect of His Virtues, they do not understand these things. How God has manifested love in Christ, how Christ manifested love to them, to what end He was made man, why Ministers preach Him so much, what is more in Him than in any other; Alas they do not think of these things, they do not know them. Now brethren, how is it possible for the soul to believe, or to be persuaded to believe in Christ, or to labor for this precious faith which is a stranger to itself, to God, to Christ?

Did you indeed know your condition to be the condition of death, would you not make out for the Lord of life? Did you indeed know your condition to be the condition of enmity, would you not strive to get unto the Prince of peace?

So again, as Christ spoke to the woman, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says unto you, Give me to drink you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water, John 4:10. O if men did know what a gift Christ was; If heaven and earth, men and Angels had

studied the helps of a poor sinner, they could never have imagined such a remedy as God found in giving His own Son. Now, if men did know Him aright, what a Redeemer, what a Lord He is, what living water is in Him: That in Him only there is life for the dead, recovery for the sinner, satisfaction for guilt, sanctification for the soul, atonement for trespasses, comfort for distresses, balm for wounds, salvation for their persons: why, how could it be but that they should ask of Him for a drop (at least) of water, for some faith to receive Him who is the fountain of grace and life!

3. A third impediment to the endeavors for faith is a vain confidence in natural righteousness: This was what kept many of the Pharisees away; the text says that they trusted in their own righteousness. Indeed, this is called the stumbling of the Jews; it cast them flat because they were so fixated on legal abilities. When a base heart has proud imaginations of Christ, and peace and safety from something within itself, it will never seek after Christ. A proud person who has money in his house scorns to be beholden to his neighbor; the proud sinner, who believes that all is well between him and God, and that he has done no man wrong, and none can say anything against him, he is neither whore nor thief, and his heart is as good as the best, and his intentions are always honest, and none can accuse him of injustice, and he has kept all God's Commandments as well as he could, and he has had a good belief (he thanks God) ever since he was born: I tell you such a person will not be beholden to God for Christ; for he (in his opinion) being so whole, needs not the Physician, neither shall you persuade him to mourn for his sins, or to repent, and to part with all for Christ, to deny himself and all his own vain confidences, and to rely only on Jesus Christ; he trusts to be saved by his good deeds and by his good intentions.

Ah foolish and seduced soul! Who has bewitched you to forsake your own mercies? Do you think that God would have sent his only Son, and poured out his own soul for sinners, if there had been any ability in sinful man to purchase his own safety and happiness? And do you see no sin in yourself, which may therefore forever thrust you off from relying on yourself? And are your works such absolute foundations when the Heathens can match them and exceed them? Or cannot God find a flaw in your ship, much false conveyance in your title, and much defect in your deeds, who can charge folly upon the Angels? And are your intentions and works so good while your heart is yet so ignorant, your life yet so profane? Can what you do find acceptance or merit when you do not trust in him who alone is the merit for a sinner? Do you think your intentions can be good when they dishonor the Redemption by Christ and the freeness of mercy? O no my brethren, the soul is the passenger, graces are the sails, the spirit is the wind, but Christ, only Christ is the foundation which carries all safe and sure to heaven.

No, if you can see a Savior in your own good intentions; if a Savior in your own good works, a Savior in any part or degree of inherent righteousness, either inward, for the change of nature, or outward for the improvement of life; this, this will keep you and Christ apart. No one will labor for faith in Christ who already has faith in themselves as their own Savior. Therefore, as they in the Acts of the Apostles burned their books when they came to believe in Christ, so must we unbottom ourselves of ourselves. Renounce our filthy rags, abhor ourselves in dust and ashes, lie flat before the mercy seat, cry out with the leper, I am unclean, unclean; with Daniel, To us belongs nothing but confusion, for we have sinned; with David, Enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight shall no flesh be justified; with the Publican stand afar off, and say, Lord be merciful

to me a sinner; with Paul, I count all things but as dung and dross in comparison of Christ, and I desire to be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is of faith; with those Elders cast (if we had them) our very crowns to the earth before the Lamb, and say he only is worthy.

If ever you would get to believe in Christ, labor to get the mountains to be leveled, the high imaginations to be cast down, to cast yourself out of yourself: There is nothing that I have been, or have done, or do, or can do, which I can trust to; I seek for the living among the dead while I look for a Savior in myself. He is far enough from safety who rests on the arm of his flesh, and we shall never close with or magnify Christ's righteousness until we can (in matter of merit or justification) deny our own.

4. A fourth impediment to believing is the league of the heart with sin: Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, John 3:19. Sin absolutely does not prejudice the contract of the soul with Christ; for Christ does not negotiate for any soul but the sinful soul; He does not come to a person and say, If you have no sin, I will bestow myself on you; or if you have not committed sin, I will be a redeemer, a Savior unto you. Oh no, the offer of Christ is only to the sinner, and it is none but the sinner who is to believe in Christ. But that which hinders the contract between men and Christ is the love of sin; Christ comes in the Ministry of the Gospel unto us and reports unto us our own exceeding sinfulness and then his exceeding graciousness and invites the soul (by many sweet and tender arguments) to accept of him to be Lord and Christ and assures it of pardon and righteousness and salvation. Now says Christ, that which I require of you is this: leave but your sins, your sins which will damn you, and I will be yours. Why, says the soul, this is but reason, and I will hearken to it; well

then says Christ, go and quit such a lust, your uncleanness, or your Sabbath-breaking, or your drunkenness, or your lewd society, etc. Why now the base and foolish heart falls off: I cannot live without my nature; I must and will be allowed in such a course. The heart rises up: Oh, Benjamin shall not go; no, anything but this lust; I will never be divorced from it; if I may have Christ and this sin too, well and good. Thus the love of sin steals away the heart; it bestows the heart elsewhere; no, it inflames an opposition against the Lordly power of Christ; the soul will never yield to the dominion of Christ which delights in subjection to sin.

Brethren, if we could but reveal the secrets of men's hearts to you, you would clearly discern that it is the love of some sin or another which mars all; men often can make no exception against Christ, they see reason enough to come to him; they know they cannot be saved without him; but then they will not leave their sins, it cuts their souls to think of such a divorce; come what may, they will take their pleasure and hold fast to their wickedness.

A fifth impediment is the world: The honors of it; how can you believe who receive honor one from another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? John 5:44. The profits of it; He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions, Matt. 19:22. The examples of it, Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? John 7:48. The terrors of it, the fear of the Jews kept many from coming to Christ. The losses of it, and crosses; He that will be my disciple must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. The cares and thoughts of it, when a man minds earthly things, and will be rich, and devours all his precious thoughts, to compass that which will be but a feather, a thorn, vanity or vexation. Press men to labor for Christ, why, we have no leisure: press to frequent the ways

of getting faith, why, we must not neglect our callings. Urge them to embrace Christ as Lord, to shape and fashion their hearts and ways according to his rules, after his righteous laws, and to deny themselves in some sinful compliances, O then we shall not be esteemed of, we shall be derided and scoffed at as vain and singular.

O these sensible things, which we can see with our eyes and grasp with our hands, they put us off from the great moments of our best and eternal good. And what are the honors of this world but as the shade of the sun which every discontented cloud and frown removes? And what are the profits of it but heaps of chaff which any wind from heaven may scatter? And what are the friends of it but a gourd which any worm may gnaw out and shrivel?

And why do you fear man, whose utmost power exceeds not your body, and fear not that God whose vengeance can seize on your soul? And why will you bestow the strength of your time to get no more than nothing, and in the meantime lose eternity, a soul, a Christ, a heaven? Yet thus it is; the poor creatures (at best) but our servants have got our hearts, while Christ complains against us; we withhold our souls from him, our just Lord and best Master.

But if there were not more glory in Christ than honor in the world; if there were not more gain in Christ than profit in the world; if there were not more love in Christ than friendship in the world; if there were not more comfort in Christ than discouragements in the world; if there were not more safety in Christ than dangers in the world; nay, if the real and true exceedings of infinite betterness were not on Christ's part, I would not dare to incline your hearts for faith in him, etc.

Sixthly, the cunning of natural unbelief is a great impediment; I will not speak of all of them; only I will discover a few, all of which are hindrances.

1. Imaginations of impossibility: it cannot be that if I should labor for faith, that ever I should get it; the intentions of mercy lie not that way, nor do the streams of graciousness run toward such a deeply sinful and guilty soul. My sins have grown to such a vastness of provocation that if all the angels in heaven should be sent to me, I could never credit their relation of hope or peace unto me.

Now when the heart is thus preoccupied with a strong belief that God never did, nor will bend the cure of the blood of Christ towards the soul, why, the hands sink; no man will be persuaded to attempt impossibilities.

2. Apprehensions of difficulty. Unbelief sets up a lion in every path, and so keeps off all endeavor: First, I shall never be able to spare time, I shall never be able to pray, I shall never be able to keep on in such a course, I shall never be able to leave such society, I shall never be able to deny the world, I cannot take such pains, I cannot wait, I cannot tell how to get off these sins, to change this heart, to bring it to yield to Christ.

3. Discourse of carnal reasonings, which try all the promises of God at a human bar; disputing against just precepts by unjust practices; and the undertakings of a great and faithful God, by the shallowness of a blind and proud and weak understanding, throwing up infinite exceptions.

4. Instances of sense and feeling; Why, if a man will judge of God by what he always hears and feels within himself, he shall never believe. Yea, if I were now sure I should have mercy, that Christ were mine, that my sins were pardoned, if I could see my heart changed, and sins dispersed and subdued, then I would put out for faith, and then I would look up to Christ. And would you have your cure before your plaster, your health before the

medicine, your life before your soul, the portion before the person, your meal before your meal, the benefits of Christ, the virtues of Christ, before Christ himself?

SECT. III

Thirdly the means.

Now I come to direct you to the use of such means by which God works this saving faith in the hearts of men. Where, premise with me some particulars.

1. There is no natural power in man to produce a cause within himself; This great grace of faith is no fruit of the wisdom of the flesh, nor is it the birth of a corrupt will; if it were possible for a natural heart to see all the excellencies of Christ, if it were possible for him to draw out and behold all the arguments of Scripture, yet could he not by his own strength make his own heart believe.

2. The immediate and sole cause of faith is the Spirit of God: He it is who is greater than the heart and who can persuade and draw the heart and who can change and renew the spirit, which till it is renewed by him, will never be moved to believe in Christ.

3. There are means appointed by God, and which God does ordinarily bless, for the production of faith; as he has ordained means for the revelation of Christ; so he has likewise consecrated means to lead the soul unto him, to implant faith.

4. Now the great and ordinary means by which God works faith in the hearts of men (I speak of such as are come to ripeness of years) is the preaching of the Word. So Acts 13:48. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, Rom. 10:17. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by

the Word of God, Eph. 1:13. In whom you also trusted after you heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.

That the Word is the ministerial instrument which God uses to beget faith in Christ may thus appear.

1. It is that which reveals to the soul its extreme misery and great need of Christ; nothing quickens the conscience to that reflective evidence, to the clear and true sight of the natural state, which pricks the soul, which in a sort compels the soul to seek after the Redeemer of the world, as the Word does. You see it has been thus formerly, that when men have heard it, it has unfolded their state to them, it has broken all their proud imaginations, it has driven them to their feet, it has made them cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Yea, and we find it in experience to be so, that the preaching of the Word opens the eyes of sinners, it frames in them the sense of sinfulness and accursedness, it makes them indeed feel the need of a Physician such as Christ.

2. It is that which discovers a shore for a broken ship; which reveals and proclaims to poor sinners Articles of peace in Christ; it makes known the great love of God and Christ; and how Christ is the Son of God, was sent by God, and satisfied for sinners, and this was accepted.

3. It makes the soul confess those things as most true and good in themselves: It convinces a man that of a truth God means graciously to men, that his Son was a Sacrifice, was a propitiation, that he did purchase pardon and salvation for sinners.

4. It is that which casts down all the reasonings, arguments, and disputes of the mind against the conditions of Christ, and renders all the terms of Christ upon which he will be taken as most equal, fair, and reasonable.

5. It is that which clears the way for the soul against all its fears and unbelieving doubts, from the freeness of God's mercy, from the fullness of Christ's redemption, from the willingness on Christ's part, and requests unto us to accept him.

6. It is that which powerfully renews the disposition of the understanding and will, and so inclines them to esteem Christ as the highest truth, and to bend after him as the chiefest good.

7. It is that which stirs up the heart with a choice of Christ and resolution to have him whatever may befall it.

8. It is that which makes the heart cry fervently to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to work his blessed grace of faith: Yea, which draws out of us strong supplications with many tears and longings, and to plead all the promises of making mercy good, and Christ good, and faith good unto us.

9. It is that which establishes the soul to a patient expectation forever to lie at the pool, forever to attend the doors of the Sanctuary, till the soul can take and close with Christ by true believing.

But then to open unto you the way more distinctly, I would commend this course unto a person, that he may at length get a believing heart.¹ Study your natural condition thoroughly. The right sense of this, though it does not formally cause faith, yet it may have a compelling force to make us seek after Christ and strive for faith. The Apostle calls the Law a Schoolmaster to Christ, Gal. 3. Why? Because it reveals such a smart and strong evidence of the sinful condition that it scourges a man out of himself to look for a Savior; yea, it helps much to cast the proud soul down and to break and crush his natural bottom; which otherwise would stave off and hinder a man from believing. Therefore study your natural condition: O I would believe, and I would have Christ: yea, but why? What need do you see in yourself

for him? I tell you that the more desperate the soul sees its own natural condition, the more willingly may it be drawn to apprehend, adore, and embrace its remedies and safeties.

Now there are three things to convince ourselves of, about our natural condition, I mean the state without Christ.

1. First, the ugly vileness of it. That it is sinful and utterly corrupt; it is not something that God likes or approves, but His soul abhors and hates it. For it is composed of nothing but a lack of good and an inclination to evil, to all that is opposite to God and holiness; that you are in it, poor, blind, miserable, naked, an ignorant, opposing, unconceiving creature of any spiritual good; proud, sensual, vain, earthly, loathsome, and dead.

2. Secondly, the sure and fearful misery of it: You are without God, without Christ, without the Covenant; not a drop of mercy for thee while you remain thus; but all the wrath of God is against you, and you are under the dominion of sin and the terrible curse of the Law; all the threatenings in the Book of God are ever ready to seize on you; and how soon may they arrest you if God gives them commission?

3. Thirdly, the utter insufficiency to deliver yourself out of this state: You are never able to merit the least mercy, nor to answer the great justice of God; though you should offer thousands of lambs and ten thousand rivers of oil; you are so totally broken in your strength that you cannot pay a farthing, and never can you be a Redeemer to yourself from your sins or God's justice.

Now drive and fasten these things as real and experimental truths into your heart until you are shut up under sin, as the Apostle speaks in Galatians 3 (that is) so convinced on all sides concerning your natural self that you are forced to fall down and cry out, O Lord, I am unclean, I am

unclean; I am unclean, a miserable wretch, a lost person forever unless you show great compassion to my poor soul; this condition is deadly and barren, I am full of sin and without strength; and this condition is so fearful that verily I will not rest in it; Men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved? Is there no balm in Gilead for a wounded soul? No City of refuge for a distressed sinner? No Rock of safety for a shipwrecked person? No hope of salvation yet left for me?

2. Then study the hope of a sinful soul. Why, though you have been very wicked and have exceeded in transgressions; yet there may be hope. The Gospel is the Cape of Good Hope, it is that which thrusts out some sight of land to a tossed sinner; it is a message from heaven, proclaiming both the hope and possibility, and also the way and method of salvation for a sinful person: Look, as the Law points out a way of salvation for a righteous and innocent man, so the Gospel does for an offending and sinful man. Therefore study it much, take some accurate pains to be thoroughly and really informed and convinced of what God's dispositions are therein revealed towards sinners.

Now here are two things which I would commend.

1. One is the study of Christ; study Him all over; perhaps you may see that in Him which may answer many, yea all your fears. Perhaps you may see so much in Him as may win much upon your heart to come in and accept Him by faith.

Therefore, examine him well.

First, that he is God and man, and as such, a Mediator, and because of this, therefore an Almighty and compassionate Redeemer.

Secondly, that it proceeds from the love and counsel of God to give him to be the Savior of sinners. God did see the fallen state and great misery of

man, and his absolute insufficiency to recover himself; and therefore his own love moved him to give his own Son in whom he did ordain the salvation of sinners.

Thirdly, that Christ was willing to become a Mediator, yes, he did freely give his life to make peace and procure salvation; and this sacrifice of his was both acceptable and effectual.

Fourthly, that God would have you come unto him for life, and that Christ is the surety, and Mediator, and only hope of sinners.

Fifthly, that Christ has in him all, and enough to make up your state, and to reconcile you and God, and to get full pardon, and to present you righteous, and to procure for you eternal life.

Sixthly, that Christ seeks even after you by the Ministry of the Gospel, and both offers himself with all his purchase unto you, and has, and yet does beseech you to accept of him: I say, study these things; who knows how the great studies of Christ may be at length blessed with faith in Christ? This I am sure of, that the ignorance of the nature and offices, and works, and benefits, and all-sufficiency, and marvelous affections, and readiness in Christ is a notable strength to unbelief. Ergo, on the contrary, the knowledge of them is a good means for faith.

2. Another is the study of the new Covenant: Why, what may you not there see to draw on your soul to Christ? Yes, what arguments does God there fill your mouth with to conquer himself? He gives you in that Covenant ample and prevailing grounds by which you may with humble confidence even plead with him for Christ and faith: You shall see there all your good set freely open, that God stands not for this, nor for that, and it matters not what you have been; there is mercy enough for what is past, and there is grace to renew your heart for the present, and strength for the

future, and you may sue out the Lord for this faith (of which we now speak) and he will surely give it unto you.

3. Study the main hindrances of distance between Christ, the Covenant, and your soul. There is one thing (above all the rest) which keeps you off, and that is unbelief: For God does not require any other thing of you in the entrance of Christ but only to accept of him. He does not say, if you had never offended me, then I would have bestowed my Son on you; or if you had not offended me so much, or if you can bring any singular nature and excellent qualities of your own, then I will give my Son unto you, or then I will give you leave; No, but all that he requires is this: Believe and accept my Son to be your Lord and Savior, and I will in him give you pardon.

Why now brethren, this is the last and sore check of the match; our hearts are unbelieving, we will not condescend to this condition but fly hovering after some unknown and devised method of our own.

4. Study much the sinfulness of unbelief: that it is a sin, and a great sin, and that in you: What! After all sense of misery to hold off from remedy; not to close with God's great love, as if God were not wise enough to show you the way of salvation, or as if he were not true, that you dare not venture and fasten your soul and state upon his Word.

5. Study well wherein the nature of faith does consist: Many persons seem to complain that they have no faith and cannot believe. Why? They are not right in the doctrinal part of faith; they mistake faith exceedingly, thinking it to consist in a full assurance and in a sensible taste of God's love in Christ, and in a sensible and clear persuasion that their sins are pardoned, which, because as yet they never had, they therefore perplex themselves much about faith. Therefore, inform yourself what faith in Christ is; it is the hearty accepting of Christ upon his own conditions. If your heart and soul

are willing to accept Christ as the only Lord to rule you, and as the only Redeemer to save you, and to cleave unto him for better or for worse, through all the changes which may befall you for Christ's sake, why this is faith, viz. An accepting of his person, and a reposing of the soul upon him for its safety, and a cleaving to him upon all states. If you can find thus much, that there is no one sin which shall rule you, to the love and obedience of which you will resign yourself, but Christ is he whom you choose to be your Lord; and there is no name in heaven and earth upon which you will put confidence for your righteousness and discharge, and salvation, but only in Christ; and upon him your soul entirely and unfeignedly desires to rest itself, you have true faith.

6. Know this and convince yourself of it, that you shall never hurt yourself, nor offend God if you could believe. Wherefore has God given Christ? And wherefore has Christ given himself? And wherefore is he now offered to sinners? And wherefore are we commanded to believe, if yet to believe (that is) to accept of Christ, to consent to the acceptance of his person upon his own condition were a sin?

7. With all this, beg fervently of God that he would persuade your heart to believe (that is) to accept of Christ to be your Lord and Savior, and to rest your soul upon him: No man comes to me (says Christ) except the Father draw him. Now then, O Lord draw me, and I shall run after thee; O subdue this unbelieving heart, and give unto me the spirit of faith, and love, and obedience.

Lastly, look for this gift of faith to be wrought in you by the Spirit of Christ in the Ordinances, and wait upon God there continually. You shall in time (perhaps sooner, perhaps later) find your soul touched, and your fears answered, and your soul made exceedingly willing to accept of Christ as

your Lord, and to put itself upon him as your Savior. Yea, hold on in waiting and seeking, and you shall not only have Christ formed in you, and faith formed in you, but you shall come to know him whom you have accepted and trusted.

This is a sweet and safe course for a sensible sinner, viz.

1. To present up his request unto God in the Name of Christ, earnestly beseeching him to declare this almighty working of his Spirit in causing the heart to believe.

2. Then to stand in the ways of grace, and come to the Ordinances wherein God does reveal his arm, and give faith, and so inclines and unites the soul with Christ. What you earnestly seek in a private way, that God does ordinarily answer and bestow in a public manner.

3. Then wait and expect, not to limit God just to this time, nor to this preacher, nor to cast off all confidence of an answer upon present denials, but to look up from day to day, from week to week, if at length God will give you faith. I never read or heard of any whose hearts were thus set, but God has found a time to give unto them the desires of their souls: He has replenished their souls with His salvation and loving-kindness. Therefore, go on cheerfully in the use of these means; whatsoever befalls you, yet it shall be well with you. He that has found Christ cannot but say that this way is good; and he who is thus seeking Him shall say it was not in vain to follow it.

SECT. IV

Fourthly, The Objections.

Now I proceed to the resolution of those scruples which do entangle the soul of a sinful sinner and hinder him from believing, which beget extreme fears and doubts, that he may not lay hold on Christ, and that God will

never bestow Christ on him, neither would He take it well of the soul to be so busy and forward.

Obj. 1. Why, says the sensible sinner, my sins have been so great, and transgressions so mighty, that I may never look up with any confidence upon the rock of salvation; nay, it is not Satan only, but my own conscience which does testify against me, the manifold numbers, and the high exceedings of my rebellions. I tell you, you would tremble to think of such lewdness whereof I have been and now do stand guilty; and the sensible consideration of them makes my heart sink and checks me with shame and blushing when I think of laying hold on Christ.

Sol. For the resolving of this objection, consider these particulars.

2. First, the greatness of sinning should be a strong reason to compel the soul to Christ: Great sins are never eased either by despair or by unbelief. But two things they should cause:

1. One is great humblings and sorrow.
2. Another is great desires and beseechings for Christ. Suppose a man owed his whole estate; his only way was to beg a whole discharge. Suppose a man had many wounds, and deep ones too; for this reason should he go to the surgeon.

Why brethren! What would you alone do with great sins? Can you ever discharge them? Can you ever satisfy for them? Nay, do they not open unto you your great need of Christ and point the way to Him? 1. God has greater mercies than we have sins. 2. Christ has stronger merits and satisfactions to the utmost. 3. Greater sins should hasten us into the mercy-seat, the greater wounds to the physician. 4. The greatest sinners, when humbled, have been accepted and pardoned: Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Paul. Some great sinners have miscarried because they never came to Christ.

6. Had you fewer sins, would you not come in? Why then? &c.

7. The greatest sinner never miscarried by coming to Christ; and the least sinner does for not coming to Christ. Your not coming to Christ binds all your sins on your soul.

2. Your unbelief is a worse sin than all the rest: and that shall appear unto you thus.

First, it is a refusal of all your remedy; as if it were a small thing to provoke justice, you now provoke mercy too.

Secondly, it is that which besides its own guilty qualities keeps also all the former guilts upon your account: every sin that you have committed heretofore keeps its stings, its accusation, its force against you if you will not believe; so that this can be neither safety nor wisdom for you to hold off because of the greatness of your sins.

3. Christ is a great Savior: He is called a mighty Savior; and the salvation in him is called a great salvation; and the redemption in him, a plenteous redemption, 1 John 2:1. If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Verse 2. And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. I remember, in the Levitical Law there were sacrifices for all sorts of sins; what did they prefigure, but the ample efficacy in the death of Christ, which was an atonement for sins of all kinds, and was as the daily sacrifice for the expiation of the continued and augmented number of transgressions? Why, what are your thoughts of Christ, and of redemption in him? Do you not know? First, that the sinner must find his full discharge in his blood: you must be beholden to Christ for the payment of the smallest, as well as of the greatest debt. Secondly, that the strength and merit of Christ's death exceed the merit of all sin: where sin abounded, there grace abounded much more:

If it had not, then the sinner could not have been pardoned, for then justice had not been satisfied. Thirdly, what the extension of Christ's death may be, I will not dispute; but this is clear, the intention or merit of his death is infinite and exceeds the greatest sins. Why! if sins had not been great, or if the greatness of them did prejudice from Christ really, God would never have given so great a Savior as Christ; the Apostle says, Heb. 7, that he is able to save to the utmost. And that he redeems us from the law, Gal. 4. From all transgressions whatsoever committed against the Law, and from all the curses of the Law against them. Fourthly, Christ has already answered this scruple by giving instances of mercy to great sinners; was not David a murderer of Uriah? Was not Mary Magdalene a foul sinner? Was not Zacchaeus a griping oppressor? Was not Paul a bitter and sore persecutor? Were not those amongst the Corinthians sinners in the highest form; and yet Christ called them and washed them and justified them. Fifthly, the matter is not between you and Christ about the greatness or littleness of former sins, but about the present disposition and affection of your soul; not what you have loved heretofore, but what you will now love; not what you have followed and served heretofore, but what you will now choose and obey. Though the Jews had been a sinful nation laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, corrupters of themselves, Isa. 1:4, 5, 6. Forsakers of the Lord, provokers of the Holy One of Israel, apostates, revolters, putrefied from the sole of the foot even unto the head, stark naught. Yet God comes unto them; and articles thus with them, verse 16. Wash you, make you clean, cease to do evil, verse 17. Learn to do well, as if he should say, though you have been thus abundantly evil, yet now hearken unto me, let your hearts be turned from sins and bestow them on

me and my service. 1. Object. But what shall we do for pardon of the former sins?

Sol. Why does God say, do not trouble yourselves about that, only listen to me, and be willing and obedient for the future, and as for former sins, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, ver: 18. The same I say in this case: Christ will find enough blood to secure the pardon of sins if your heart would turn from sin to accept him. I do not stand, says Christ, upon what you have been; I can easily discharge you. Only what I require is this: leave your sins and accept me. I beseech you to take heed of two things: one is a secret pride, that you will not be brought to be beholden to God for great pardons. Another is a present love of sin. This, and not the former sins, prejudices you against Christ.

2. Obj. But God is just, and he will not hold the sinner guiltless, and he has revealed his wrath from heaven against all unrighteousness, and therefore if I should flee to the City of Refuge, yet from there would he withdraw me and be avenged on me.

Sol. I answer.

1. Even this also should constrain you to believe, forasmuch as by unbelief you become a great rebel against the Gospel, and he will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, 2 Thes. 1:8.

2. Unless justice is satisfied, assuredly it will never spare you, for justice will have either your obedience or your satisfaction. But then the way to present satisfaction to God's justice is to believe in Christ, forasmuch as God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses. It was Jesus Christ who performed full obedience and endured

an accursed death to satisfy God's justice, and this not for himself but for the believer, and for none but the believer. So there is no other way comfortably to answer justice but by believing in Christ. For now you have a surety, one who stood in your stead and answered justice for all your sins.

3. Divine justice will not desire a double satisfaction: It will not require satisfaction from you and from your surety too. The quarrel ceases between you and God; for Christ has by his own blood taken that up. As Elihu spoke of uprightness, that I say of believing in the Lord Jesus; if you do, then the Lord will be gracious unto you and will say, deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom, Job 33:23-24.

Obj. But I, who am I? so totally unworthy; there is nothing in me to move Christ to favor me; he will never bestow himself on someone like me; will Christ ever look on such a dead dog as I am?

I answer to this.

1. Personal unworthiness is no prejudice: You read in Matt. 8:8 that the Centurion came to Christ for his servant and believed in him and succeeded well. Yes, will you say but he was worthy? No, he professes the contrary; Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof: as if he should say, I have nothing in me to merit and challenge this gracious act of yours; nothing, and yet I believe that you can and will heal my servant; so the Prodigal, I am not worthy to be, &c.

2. Nay, the humble sense of our unworthiness is a furtherance; Christ does not expect any excellencies or meritorious motives from you; you must come unto him as an empty vessel; the full soul and the sound spirit are not for him; bring a soul to Christ which is spread all over with misery and need, why, such a soul is a proper object for mercy to deal with; bring a soul to Christ which is all over with lostness, with poverty, with sickness,

with unworthiness, why, this is the soul upon which Christ will look. It's never well with a man until he can take Christ upon his knee, upon a bare knee, with an empty hand, (that is) till he is brought to be poor in spirit, that he is nothing, and deserves nothing, and begs of Christ to accept him, even for Christ's sake. The Lord be merciful to me a sinner, went home justified, when The thank God, I am not as other men, returned as he came, a proud Pharisee. You shall find it thus, that God looks most on him who looks least on himself. The humble and contrite spirits, which are broken out of themselves, and can cry out, O Lord, I am really vile and mostly unworthy; these the high God (who inhabits the lofty places) does behold. And Christ is ready to take him by the hand who thinks himself unworthy to touch his feet. There are two tempers which please Christ well; one is a believing heart, and another a humble soul.

3. Personal worthiness is not the motive nor designed ground for faith in Christ; the ground of belief, that which invites the soul to draw itself to Christ, is no deserving or eminent quality in ourselves, but the goodness and fidelity of the promise, and the gracious offer of Christ himself to the soul. Behold, he calls you; why, this is enough; if you can find God holding forth the golden scepter, offering Christ unto you upon such and such terms, and you consent unto them with all your heart, you may confidently close and lay hold on Christ by faith. This is the wise skill of a Christian, truly to observe the proper rise of faith. When God promised Abraham a son, the text says he did not consider his own body, Rom. 4:19. (that is) he did not consult with the strength of his own nature, what an able principle there was in himself to accomplish such an effect, but he was fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able to perform. The ability and fidelity of God's promise exceedingly inclined his heart to believe. So it is here about

faith in Christ; if you consider your own body, your own deserts, your own excellencies, you shall never believe; for faith can find no ground in these to encourage the soul: but the ground of faith is outside ourselves: Why, God offers me Christ, and Christ calls me unto him, being heavy laden; and he says that he who believes in him shall have eternal life. Now this is a word of truth, and this word of his is worthy of all acceptance; I will venture my soul upon it. It is with faith as with a bird; cast him into the water he cannot fly; that element is too gross for him, he cannot gather and beat his wings there, and therefore is kept down; but cast him into the air, which is a more pure element, then he can clap and spread the wings and mount: why, faith is the wing of the soul, and the promise is that spiritual element, that air which breathes life and motion to faith; faith is raised by it alone, and it is checked and hindered while the soul would force it to act itself upon those poor and gross excellencies in ourselves. Faith desires no better object than Christ nor surer pledges than God's promise. Fourthly, to receive Christ by faith is not a matter of merit but a point of duty.

When God commands a sinner to repent, forsake his sins, and accept Him, He shall have mercy if he does so. This may not now be said, "O Lord, I am not worthy to obey Thee in this duty. If I were worthy to repent, I would repent." Nay, but O man, divine commands are to be obeyed; it is thy duty to repent. So God commands the soul to believe in Christ and to accept Him. The soul now looks on the excellencies of the gift but forgets the obligation of duty. It's true, Christ is a most excellent gift and blessing; there is nothing like Him in all the world for a poor sinner as Christ. But then know that His excellencies may not take thee off from thy duty. This is His Commandment: that we believe on the Name of His Son.

Brethren, you are mistaken. To believe in Christ being proposed unto us in the Gospel is not a matter of indifference, "I may, or I may not," nor is it a matter of courtesy, as if we did a work of supererogation more than God requires. Nay, but it is a matter of conscience; a man sins and violates a command, an evangelical precept, if he does not believe. It is not a dispute of worthiness or unworthiness, but it is obedience to the Command which thou art to look upon.

Christ is given out of rich grace, mercy, and love, and therefore none can receive Him but the unworthy. There is this difference between the reward of justice and the gift of graciousness: Justice has an eye upon the disposition and acts of the person, and according to their qualities and degrees does it commensurate reward or punishment. But graciousness has an eye only upon itself; the free bountifulness of its own nature is the reason for its gifts and acts. Suppose that a King executes a malefactor; this is an act of justice and finds cause in the rebellion of the offender. Suppose that a King pardons a malefactor; this is an act of graciousness and finds its reason only in the breast of the King, and not in the worthiness of the delinquent. Thou stand'st upon thy worthiness: "O, if I were worthy of Christ!" Why; but is not Christ a gift? He is often said to be given; yea, but is He not a gracious gift? See Ephesians 2:7. God did show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Jesus Christ: As if He should say, if ever there were a gift freely given, it is Christ. If Christ be a gracious gift, then He is not bestowed on the worthy, but on the unworthy: not on him who can challenge and say, "Lord, there is good reason why I should have Christ; and Thou shouldst do me wrong if I have Him not." O no, but He is a gracious gift, and therefore the broken sinner may come in and say, "O Lord, though I am unworthy, yet give me Christ." Graciousness

does not expect any motion out of itself, and therefore, though in respect of my desert, shame and confusion be my portion, yet Thy gifts of grace are free; for Thy exceeding riches of grace, mercy, and love, give me Thy Christ.

If I meet an old decrepit poor beggar and seeing misery and poverty in his face, I freely draw my purse and say, "There is a shilling for thee." "O no," saith he, "Sir! I am not worthy. I am a poor man and ready to starve; give it to that gentleman yonder who is in gay clothing and has thousands in his chests, for he is worthy." What a proud folly were this? Why, my alms was a gracious dole, and if any man in the world had it, he had who does need but does not deserve it. So, &c.

6. Christ is worthy of your taking, though you be unworthy of receiving, 1 Tim. 1:15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. As if he should say, this is so necessary a thing, so good a thing, so admirable a thing for a sinner, so fitting for him to listen to and embrace. What if the choicest Prince in the world should this day present himself to the foulest, most ill-favored, neglected woman, one without all beauty, without all parts, without all estate, and assure her, if she will consent to his terms, he will bestow himself upon her? Though she be totally unworthy to hear of such a thing, yet the person is worthy, and the acceptance of the offer is worthy; all the world sees reason enough that she should listen. So it is, Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, the Lord of life, the Author of salvation comes to a sinful soul, utterly naked and void of spiritual excellencies, or overrun with all the spots of inglorious deformities, exposed to all kinds and degrees of present and future miseries, calls and invites that soul to accept of him upon his own terms, yet that soul stands off and objects, I am not

worthy; You worthy! says Christ; what do I esteem of your worthiness? Not for your sake be it known unto you, is it that I offer myself unto you; not for any beautiful or ingratiating ornaments and gifts is this, but for my own sake. Am I worthy of receiving? If so, then accept me: Christ has worthiness enough; and as our helps in the promises draw us thither, so the treasures in Christ should do.

Objection. But you will say, Christ has let fall a word, which tells me that there must be a subjective worthiness in me, as well as an objective worthiness in him; Matthew 10:13. If the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it.

Solution. I answer that there is indeed a double worthiness.

First, one of the object, when it is so every way excellent and necessary and suitable to the exigencies of a person; so Christ is worthy.

Secondly, another of the subject, which (to restrain it now to the place alleged) is a worthiness of judgment and affection, not a worthiness of qualities and action. Then a man is said to be worthy in reference to Christ, not because he has any taking and inviting qualities, but when he judges worthily of the Lord Jesus, and his affections draw after him as most worthy of all acceptance.

7. Lastly, what is that which makes you unworthy? It is nothing in the world but sin; all the debasings of the soul are our sins; and so there is a twofold unworthiness. 1. Meritorious. 2. Excluding.

But then mark, two things could never be if mere sinning did effectually prejudice the soul with an excluding unworthiness; one is that Christ could never have been a worthy gift; another is that faith could never have believed truths in Christ; it could never take Christ as a Savior nor believe in him for the sure pardon of sins if sins absolutely did involve the soul with

such an unworthiness as should forever exclude it from partaking of Christ. Oh no; though sins make unworthy, yet Christ came to call sinners; and though ungodliness makes unworthy, yet Christ justifies the ungodly.

4. Objection. But I am not sure that Christ is willing to bestow himself on me or that I should lay hold on him; else I should (I think) be able to believe.

Solution. To this I will return two things.

1. One is clearing Christ's willingness. 2. The order of a Christian's assurance.

First, that Christ is willing.

I shall but light a candle to the Sun in endeavoring to manifest the willingness of Christ to accept sinners; why? What can possibly express a willingness which is not visible in Christ?

First, when you were a sinner and an enemy, even then did Christ shed his blood and die for you, Rom. 5:8, 10. Indeed, he did not do this through constraint, but through consent; it was a free-will offering; therefore he is said to offer himself; and lo I come; and to give himself, and to lay down his life, and to pay a price; indeed, to be constrained until it was accomplished, Luke 12:50. His death was the putting of the seal to the bond. It ratified all the Covenant, which it would not have done, had Christ not been willing. Why, he knew you long before and saw you in your blood before he shed his own: and had he been unwilling to have done you any good, or that you should have received any good from him, he would never have clothed himself with such a nature as he did assume, neither would he have anguished his righteous soul, nor have suffered such a tormenting and accursed death. Truly, if I would lay down my life for a person, this would

sufficiently argue and declare that I were willing to bestow myself on the person. So, etc.

2. Secondly, consider his many personal invitations: he has from his own mouth both counseled and invited the poor sinner unto him. I counsel you to buy gold, and raiment, and eye-salve, Rev. 3:18. The spirit and the bride say Come; and let him that hears say, Come; and let him that is thirsty come; and whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely, Rev. 22:17. Ho! everyone that thirsts come to the waters, and he that has no money, come buy and eat, yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price; listen diligently unto me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come unto me, and your soul shall live; And I will make with you an everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David, Isa 55:1, 2, 3. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people. Ver. 4. Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirsts let him come unto me and drink, John 7:37.

3. Thirdly, consider, he has assured you of acceptance: Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out, John 6:37. He will not shut the door against you when he has invited you, but you shall be a welcome guest; indeed, he will surely do you good, Mat. 11:28. Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

4. Fourthly, there was never anyone who did come unto him but fared well. You cannot find any one iota of unwillingness nor of his disregard, but all have found him to be a merciful High Priest and a compassionate Savior who have accepted him.

5. Fifthly, consider that he does still negotiate with you: Though he has returned to the highest heavens; yet he has dispatched Ambassadors in his Name to publish and to call upon you and to beseech you, 2 Cor. 5:19. God

was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Ver. 20. Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God, Ver. 21. For he has made him be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Object. If there were any hope of reconciliation (may a man reply) then I should believe.

Sol. Why, says the Apostle, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Object. But if God had commanded any in his name to publish this:

Solution. He has committed to us the word of Reconciliation.

Object. But you may do it out of your compassion, not from a commission.

Solution. We are Ambassadors for Christ and pray you in Christ's stead.

Obj. But our sins will prejudice the Reconciliation. Sol. He hath made him to be sin for us.

Sixthly, consider his marvelous patience: If he were not willing, he would never have reinforced his suit, but would have taken the first denial. But he hath followed them who have fled from him: He hath gone after the sinner, who hath many times turned his back, Rom. 10:21. All the day long have I stretched out my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. In this sense, we may apply that of the Prophet, He doth wait that he may be gracious, and yet continues his ambassadors to bring thee home unto him.

7. Seventhly, consider His sad complaints for thy holding off and not believing: when he came near to Jerusalem, he wept over it, and said, How often would I have gathered thee? Matt. 23:37. And O if thou hadst known,

even thou, at the least in this thy day, the things which concern thy peace! Luke 19:41, 42. And why will you not come unto me? John 5:40. As if you did see a tender father pursuing a rebellious child, and working upon him by counsel and entreaties, and by hands of bounty, and he will not yet hearken; the father steps to a friend, and pours out tears, O I cannot win him, I cannot turn him; doth not this show a willingness? So, &c.

8. Lastly, consider his Will is exhibited to us in all the kinds of willingness: I observe that his will may be manifested three ways.

First, in commands, and there is a preceptive will, and Christ commands thee to believe.

2. Secondly, in promises, and there is a gracious and encouraging will, and Christ hath promised himself and all that he hath done and suffered if thou wilt believe in him.

3. Thirdly in threatenings: and there is a just and vindictive will, and Christ hath pronounced an abiding wrath and an everlasting death against him that will not believe; So that this is most clear, that Christ is most willing that a poor sinner should come in and embrace him, and be saved by him.

Secondly, The Order of assurance. But then for the order of assurance, that Christ is willing. Observe that there is a double assurance.

1. One which is precedent, and grounds the soul to believe.

2. Another is subsequent, and attends the soul after its believing. That precedent assurance consists in a clear and convincing demonstration that Christ is willing to be taken by the sinner. This subsequent assurance consists in a reflexive persuasion that he is my Christ and Saviour, being by faith taken and accepted.

Now if a sinner expects this latter assurance before he will believe, he does preposterously and vainly perplex his soul; nay, it is an impossibility to lead on the soul this way; nay, it would be a falsehood and a delusion to the soul if it had a reflexive assurance that Christ and his benefits are mine before the heart did by faith believe in him and accept him: I would deceive my soul with a lie; for Christ is not that man's who does not yet believe in him; the ways of this kind of assurance are as it were the echo of the original ways of faith; a consequent of it, but never an antecedent. For a man to solace himself that the estate is his before the person is his, or that the person is his before he has accepted the person: Why, this is but the fruit of a vain and idle fancy. But the former assurance is a sweet inducement unto the soul to believe, viz. when the soul can get three things cleared and resolved.

1. The certainty of a Savior.

2. The all-sufficiency of him.

3. His willingness to embrace and accept a believing sinner. Now this assurance is to be drawn from the very nature, offices, and dispositions of Christ, and from the command, invitations, and promises of the Gospel; which when the soul has thoroughly perused and scanned, it shall clearly see and freely acknowledge (if it will not blasphemously suspect God's own truths for lies) that Christ is both an able and also a willing Savior; not only willing to lay down his life but most willing that sinners should come to him and believe in him, and so find eternal life.

So that you may from this take notice of three things.

One, that to be assured of Christ as mine is no ground to move a man to believe, but it is a consequent of it.

Another, that to be assured that Christ is willing and ready to be mine and to accept me, this is a sweet motive and an encouraging ground for the soul to believe.

A third, there is no better way to feel the sweetness of Christ's being willing to bestow himself upon a man than by believing first in him; for it is faith in Christ which opens to a man all his interests in Christ: And if this be sure, that Christ's willingness precedes yours; if therefore you are willing to accept, the very nature of the treaty and match assures you sufficiently that Christ was ready long ago.

5. Obj. But then says the sensible sinner, I am not prepared and humble enough: Christ is to bind up the broken-hearted, but my heart is still hard; and Christ is to open the prison for them that are bound; but I am not (at least) in sufficient bondage; And he is to give the oil of joy for mourning; but I have no melting nor mourning spirit, and therefore I may not believe in him nor take him, for I am distinguished.

Sol. I shall not need to say much to this because I have touched upon it heretofore in the Exposition of Mal. 1:1. yet I will touch a little at this time.

1. There is a twofold humbling according to a double cause of it. One is in the exceeding beatings of the conscience, with inward terrors and fears, springing from the power of the Law, which quickens the conscience and wounds it with the express sense of former guilt, and which presents God in all the glory and terror of His justice, and as the great and sure avenger of an unrighteous person. When the soul is in this kind of humbling, it is filled with exquisite sense and exquisite torment, like a man with a burning arrow in his thigh, or like a thief hearing the sentence of death pronounced upon him by the judge. Now this kind of humbling, though sometimes it may be an antecedent to faith in Christ (for God does many times bring a man to

heaven by the gates of hell; He does bruise, wound, and even kill him by the terrors of the Law, and then revive him with the workings and tender goodness of the Gospel), yet it may be possibly without any future access of the soul to Christ. For this, mark, that though God does many times graciously superadd another work of conversion to this of legal affliction, yet He may and does many times distribute these sorrows in wrath, and they are but the testimonies of His pure and displeased justice, even in this life to begin a hell of anguish in the conscience of a proud and daring sinner.

Another is in the tender abasings and sweet bathings or mournings of the affection, when there is a fountain of sorrow set open within the soul, giving out itself in several streams of melting because of sin and transgression. Now this latter is not an antecedent but a consequent of faith in Christ, as you shall hear presently.

A man cannot rightly judge of his fitness to lay hold on Christ by the mere strength or measure of any legal humbling, but by the issue and event of them.

If instead of one item from conscience thou shouldst now hear a hundred; and instead of one lash from conscience, thou shouldst now feel a thousand; though thy heart were broken into as many pieces as the glass which is dashed against the wall; though thy spirits did even fry within thee for the heat of horror, and that thou didst roar day and night for the disquietment of thy guilty conscience, yet couldst thou not confidently affirm by all this, I am now for Christ, and Christ will assuredly accept me; I shall not miss Him.

Reasons whereof are these:

1. Because these may be God's tokens of just vengeance on thee, mere punishments and judicial acts.
2. The soul under these may be rather taken

up with the stinging guilt and fears of sin than with the soul's vileness and base nature and acts thereof (standing in contrariety to the holy and good will of a gracious God).³ The thus afflicted soul may cry out for Christ merely out of self-love, to ease the burden but not to cure the nature, to deliver it from pain but not to heal it of the sinful inclination.

Therefore this I would say to any legally broken spirit: Do not judge fitness merely by the strength or depth of tears; there is a threefold enough. 1. Intensive for the degree. 2. Extensive for the time. 3. Dispositive for the efficacy; therefore do but observe what disposition attends and follows these: There are five things which if they follow upon legal humblings may be subordinate encouragements to the heart to put itself upon Christ.

First, if quite driven out of oneself.

Secondly, if sin comes to be felt as the basest evil, as the guilt of it has been found the sorest pain.

A third is if the heart finds itself any way loosened from the league of iniquity; yea, and that a secret war is begun now 'twixt the soul and the sinner.

Fourthly, a high estimate and valuation of Christ as the only and choicest good of my soul and hope, etc.

An active and fervent desire to put the soul under the government of the Lord Jesus. Whether your legal humblings be great or small, long or short, more or less, that's not the thing; but if they be thus attended, you may safely venture your soul upon the Lord Jesus; you may believe, and he will in no wise refuse you.

3. Faith in Christ will not hinder the humblings or meltings of your soul. I observe when there is a thunderclap, then there is such a hurry in the cloud that fire flashes out, and the cloud is burst asunder, and a mighty deluge of

water is thrown down; and you may likewise observe that the sun does (though there be no storm) draw up and sweetly open and pierce the clouds, which thereby give down the most seasonable and refreshing showers of rain. The law is like a thunderclap; it does many times so toss, and hurry, and vex the conscience, that infinite sighs, and fears, and tears gush out: But then faith makes the Sun of Righteousness arise within the soul, and nothing melts the heart more than Christ apprehended by faith. Zech. 12:10. They shall look upon him whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for his only son, and they shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

For faith,

First, sees the greatest love, the sweetest kindness, the freest pardons, the readiest acceptations; all which do even melt the heart into a river, and work the greatest mourning. I doubt not but the very behavior of the father of the Prodigal broke the heart of him with more thawings and kindly mournings than ever did his former misery and hardship; O this, that though he was an ungracious spendthrift, a stubborn child, a lewd companion, Luke 15. yet his Father should run to meet him, that he should fall upon his neck and kiss him, the kindness of those lips wounded his heart with the deeper sense and judging of his own unkindness. So when a sinner shall by faith see Christ stepping forward in the Gospel, putting forth the hand to him, calling him, Come, you have done evil as you can, have wronged my Father, me, my Spirit, my servants, yourself; I will get you pardon for all: fear not, nor be dismayed, I will take upon me the discharge: I will be yours, my blood yours, my righteousness yours; O, this melts the heart: you cannot take Christ, but your heart will break: nor read your pardon but your eyes will melt; what for me, Lord! yea, for you. What after such deep rebellions! yea,

after all, and that most freely and willingly; Good Lord, how the soul weeps now, &c.

Secondly, faith sees sin in the greatest vileness: It is one thing to see sin at Hell-gates, and another thing to see sin (if I may so allude) at Heaven-gates: there I see it in its reward, which causes fear; here I see it in its proper nature, which causes hatred. When I can see sin as wrong of a righteous and holy will, as a rebellion against a holy and just law, as a provocation of a great and holy God, as the spear thrusting through the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the basest quality, and vilest abuse, and indignity to love, and mercy, and blood; now, now I begin to melt, to grieve, a God is wronged, a Father is wronged, a Saviour is wronged.

3. Faith melts the promises, and the promises melt the heart: Why, brethren, our soft and mourning hearts are not first in us, and then in the promises, but first in them, and from them they come down into us. The heart of flesh is first in that promise, Ezek. 36: I will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh, and thence it comes to the person to fashion and mollify his heart. But what draws the promises? Is it not faith? It is the only hand which reaches out unto them, and receives them; whence it does fully follow, that believing will be no prejudice, but a great furtherance to your mournful humblings and softenings.

Object. I grant it, when a man can indeed believe, this believing will much abate, and perhaps remove the actuals of a horrible stumbling, (that is) a man shall not now feel such a desperate terrifying, bitter, hopeless anguish as before, but yet it does open a full vein within the soul, which drops with vital sorrows, with gracious lamentings, with hearty displeasures, with hopeful tears; and though under them the soul is not so

hurried, yet it weeps bitterly, as the wife who holds the lately reconciled husband by the hand, or as the child who is newly pardoned and embraced.

This is a truth, that faith can heal the tears of a slave, and breed the tears of a child: It can rebuke the ragings of the sea, and yet continue its flowing courses; It can still a raging conscience, and yet beget a stream of godly sorrow; It can both quiet a troubled spirit, and raise within us a soft and mourning heart. Yea to speak plainly, a man never till then begins to mourn as a child until he has faith to see God as a father; and the gracious looks of Christ (which only faith espies) they upbraid our sinnings more, and no such springs of grief as they.

6. Object. But I have stood out my day, and have refused many invitations and offers, so now I may not believe. I am sure that Christ will never regard me because of my former proud refusals of him in his gracious offers and invitations: Now the day is gone, it is too late.

Sol. To this I answer.

1. That not only the positive refusals but also the slighting pretermissions of the voice of the Gospel are (undoubtedly) sinful; for if disobedience to the Law, then much more unto the Gospel is very bad; no man can refuse his remedy but he makes his wound greater.

2. Again it is granted, the greater kind of refusal adds a greater measure of guilt: the refusals of light against light is a more dark condition: (that is) when a man knows the Gospel to be the voice of Christ, and to propound heaven and mercy upon the only terms, and yet he is not gathered, this is sin in more degrees than passing over it, than ignorance and inobservation: again, the more willfully a man refuses his opportunity and invitations, this also makes the refusal more heinous and calls upon the soul for greater humblings.

But then know,

1. That Christ is not always so quick to break off (forever) for some refusals: It is not an incapable condition (a sealed state) if a man has stood out against many particular invitations. This simply is not the sin against the Holy Ghost; and therefore it is pardonable; and if the sin be pardonable, then the sinner is capable of Christ, in whom alone sin is to be pardoned.

2. Scarcely any believer (who is called after reaching maturity) has not refused many invitations by grace and mercy before their conversion. It would be a horrid harshness for any Minister to send all those to hell who once refused the news and offer of heaven. Indeed, we see that Christ has several seasons of conversion; some he brings home to himself at night, at the latter end of the day, who undoubtedly refused him earlier in the day. Indeed, that grace which gathers a man to Christ conquers our refusing hearts. Therefore, mere refusal is not an eternal prejudice. It is true that while I refuse, I cannot believe; yet though I have formerly refused, I may still believe.

There is a double refusal of Christ and the invitations of the Gospel; one is malicious, which is fearful; another is rash, and this is pardonable: The former is accompanied by a spiteful spirit; the latter depends much upon rashness, temptations, and inadvertency.

Again, there is a double refusal; one is total but temporary; a man does not listen, though Christ calls; he will not subscribe, though Christ proposes, but goes his own way and course; yet at length, like Paul, he may be struck to the ground and yield himself to Christ.

Another is total and final, which is impenitent rebellion; a man holds out against the voice of Christ forever; there is no hope for such a person.

2. No broken and grieved heart for former refusals can justly say that it has stood out its day, and it is too late to believe.

This is a matter of some concern, and many are very strict about it; I will only present my thoughts amidst the crowd of conjectures.

First, how precise God's day of grace is in the offer of Christ, so that if a man does not take it in the first moment of offer, I think none can tell.

Secondly, to say of this or that particular man that he has gone beyond his day, for all I know, goes beyond our commission.

Thirdly, at any time when the Gospel is published, it ought to be embraced immediately: Today if you will hear his voice, etc.

Fourthly, God does not always take away from a man his day immediately upon his first refusal; if so, perhaps it would have been night for all the world by now.

Fifthly, it is probable that the day of grace is not closed against a particular person when his heart begins to be broken for former refusals: for when men outlast this day, usually they are given up to a seared conscience, to a reprobate mind, to senseless stupidity, and to the works of sin with greediness; they grow worse and worse, being not only destitute of all softening qualities but being more hardened by the Gospel which they refused and despised. The man who outlasts his day is either deprived of the sound of the Gospel or else he has only the judicial power of it working upon him.

3. The sense and grief of the heart for former standouts; this, I say, proclaims that your day is not set; indeed, this is your singular and special day.

Divines distinguish the day.

One is General, like the rising of the Sun; the very rising and publishing of the Gospel makes a day.

Another is special, which is like one of the twelve hours in the day, when the Spirit of God begins to make day within the heart, and Christ is dealing and secretly parleying with the soul, by conviction of its former refusals, by sweet humblings and meltings for such proud and erroneous denials: That the Prince of my peace should be refused, that the Lord of my life should be refused, that the terms of righteousness and mercy should be refused; O how the heart judges, condemns, rends, and afflicts itself for it; falls down at the feet of Christ, not worthy O Lord to look upon thee, whom I have so often undervalued! This is a special day, here's a season for thee, thou mayest go to Christ, Christ hath dealt with thee effectually, this is the acceptable time.

4. If thou hast stood out against Christ hitherto, thou hast therefore now the more reason to come in, and not to refuse the offer yet continued.

Observe two things.

First, that former rebellions are never taken off by new and continued ones. For this is to make sinning much worse; perhaps you did refuse Christ before through ignorance (you did not see his excellencies, nor your own necessity), or perhaps through inadvertency or carelessness, you did not wisely and seriously heed that great salvation in him. But now you are convinced, now you see your refusals and careless neglects to be sinful. Why then, is this the way to cure the former—by adding more refusals? Did you do well to refuse him upon his own terms? If you did ill, then cease refusing; labour to accept him. You can never please God by continuing in a sin, nor help yourself by pleading against your duty.

Secondly, your obligation and present duty do not cease because of former refusals. It was your duty to have received Christ at the first, and to this very day that duty still lies upon you. Former miscarriages should cause our humblings, but they never disannul our duties. Why, the Gospel is yet in its revelation of Christ, and yet in its tender of Christ unto you, and yet in commanding you to refuse him no more, but to hearken and to believe (that is) to accept Christ to be your Lord and Saviour.

Objection. Oh why, what should I do? says a soul that has stood out.

Solution. I answer, you should look back on your withstandings with hearty grief, and should press on towards your duty with fervent requests. Now lay down your weapons and strive to give up yourself to Christ, not to harden your heart any longer, but beg of God day and night to forgive your refusals, and to give you now a heart to believe and to yield.

5. Christ will accept of any man who is willing to lay down his weapons. Object. 'Tis true that Christ saith, These mine enemies who will not have me to reign over them, bring them forth and slay them before me; If a man will be still an enemy, if he will not accept of Christ to be his Lord, to govern him, then Christ will be a Judge and enemy to that man, he shall perish.

Sol. But it is as true, that if we accept reconciliation, if we would lay aside former enmity, if we come unto Christ and cast ourselves down at his feet, and give up the sword which fought against him; if we confess our rebellions, and beseech him to accept us into his service, and into mercy: If we heartily desire now to be the servants of righteousness, to take Christ to be our Lord, and to serve him alone, assuredly he will not refuse us. Therefore, if any here this day have their spirits entangled with this scruple, that they now have refused Christ, and are past their day, but withal they

find their hearts bleeding for this, and they do now judge of Christ as the chiefest of ten thousands, and it is the desire of their souls to be reconciled, and to put themselves under the government of the Lord Jesus, I say unto such, fear not, come and accept Christ, he will be reconciliation to thee; Though thou hast been an enemy, yet if now thou wilt accept the terms of peace, the Son of peace will certainly accept thee.

7. Object. Yet the sensible sinner is not satisfied with all this; I am afraid; Why? because I find not only former guilts in a manifold number, but present corruptions in exceeding strength; no man living hath an abominable heart as I, surely the Lord Jesus will loathe me and depart from me; a sinful wretch; I cannot think otherwise, how then should I believe?

Sol. For some resolution of this scruple, observe a few particulars. First, the sense of the strength of sin is no unhopeful symptom, nor prejudice to faith. Of all tempers, the hardened is most dangerous; and sin hath the greatest strength where there is the least sense: A man seems to be nothing else but a lump of sin when he is so wholly leavened and soured that not a part in him can reflect upon itself and feel its filthiness; where the guilt of sin is no burden, and the nature of sin is no trouble, that soul is in an ill case.

But the sense of the strength of sin imports something else in the soul besides sin: When the patient is deadly sick, he says he is well and feels no pain; but when a patient is recovering, he is full of sense: and complains his head is weak, his stomach sick, his bones lame, all is amiss. There is more hope of one sensible sinner than of a thousand presumptuous and hardened wretches; And God seldom or never gives a man a sense of Christ who has not had first a sense of his sinfulness.

There is a double sense of sin.

1. One is merely judicial, which is the feeling of the guilt of sin when God awakens the conscience to apprehend its former sins, and imprints some degrees of wrath upon it as the fruits of guilt; and now the sinner is broken and crushed, for he feels a kind of hell in himself for his former sins.

2. Another is more than judicial; It is something more grievous, and that is when a man does not only feel the guilt of sin as pressing but the nature of sin as an oppressing burden; He sees and feels the inclinations and motions of his heart as most repugnant to the will and glory of God, and therefore is exceedingly afflicted and disquieted: This now is an admirably hopeful symptom.

Secondly, unbelief is no cure for the strength of sin: Whether you conjecture the strength of sin to consist in hardness of heart; well, unbelief will never soften you; or whether you conjecture the strength of it to consist in the approbation of sin; well, unbelief will never condemn and disapprove it; or whether you conjecture (though not rightly) its strength to consist in mere inclinations; well, unbelief will never alter them; or whether you think its strength consists in frequency of actions or motions; well, unbelief will never remove or lessen them; or whether you think its strength consists in commands and power; well, unbelief will never conquer them. Unbelief is a sin itself, and therefore can be no cure for sin (for nothing cures the sinner but that which is contrary to sin). Nay, unbelief keeps the soul from its cure, from its help; the help of a sinful soul is in heaven, but unbelief knows not the way upward, the heart of unbelief will depart from the living God.

Thirdly, Christ is a physician for a sick sinner, and he has said that the whole need not a physician, but the sick. Well, the sick person is no unsuitable object or present for a physician; his calling is to heal distempers and sicknesses; and you may confidently go to Christ to have your sick soul

healed. We cannot, brethren, we cannot, and Christ knows it well enough, we cannot come to Christ without relying on him for two things. One, his merit to get our sins pardoned; another is his Spirit, to get our sinful natures changed. And therefore Christ is appointed by God not only to be redemption but also to be sanctification; as he is the author of salvation to us, so he is the author of sanctification in us. We cannot come to him and bring good natures; oh no, the grace which we lack is in Christ, in our head, as water in the spring, and from his fullness must we receive grace for grace. None can change that vile heart of yours but Christ; his wings are healing, and to him are you appointed to come as the sick person to the priest in the Levitical Law.

The Covenant of Grace (you know) is an undertaking not only for pardon but for changing; and all the covenant is made good in Christ. As if God should say unto a sinner, I know you are a guilty person full well, and besides that you have a filthy and abominable nature; but go to my Son, accept him, there is your pardon in him, and there is your change in him. He shall justify you from your guilt, and he shall sanctify your nature from its vile corruption.

Fourthly, Jesus will not loathe you because of your sinful nature but will help you because you are a sick person. Remember it forever; the more vile you are in your own eyes, the more precious you are in Christ's opinion. I never read of any person who came to Christ saying, "Thou Lord heal me," who was sent away uncured.

Fifthly, what do you think of believing? What is your opinion of faith? What, as if faith were an enemy or hindrance to holiness? That it will either increase or suffer lewdness in the heart? Far be it from you to think so; oh no, faith is the singular way of increasing and getting all grace to your soul.

It deals altogether with holy principles: God, Christ, the Spirit, and with holy ways: the Word, the Sacraments. Faith engages all the goodness and strength of heaven for your change and for the renewing and subduing of your sinful heart. Romans 6:14: "Sin shall not have dominion over you," says the Apostle; and why? For you are under grace: Mark it, under grace (that is) under a gracious covenant wherein God and Christ have engaged themselves to your aid and strength. Yes, but what makes us to be under this grace? Verily it is faith in Christ in whom all grace is ensured to the soul.

Nay, if you could by faith accept Christ to be your Lord and Savior, now you might confidently go to him to express the virtues of his sovereignty and goodness to you. Now you might plead with him for the excellencies of his Spirit: Lord Jesus, I have bestowed myself on you, and you did invite and assure me that you would be not only righteousness but sanctification also to me. I beseech you, send forth the rod of your scepter, the virtues of your grace, and change by your Holy Spirit this unholy heart of mine, subdue my iniquities, cast down every imagination exalting itself against you, bring into captivity (O my soul desires to be captivated to you, yea, by you) every thought, etc.

There is a significant difference between presumption and faith; presumption is but the birth of an idle fancy, like a dream of great matters, which yet has no real bottom, but only flies out of a multiplying imagination full of deluding acts. But faith conjoins the soul with a lively principle, with a true fountain of grace, with a root of holiness, even with Jesus Christ himself, without whom we can never be made holy, and by whom (being grafted into him by faith) we shall be sanctified throughout.

Just as the defiling qualities of our nature are first in Adam and then in us his posterity, so changing and sanctifying qualities are first in Christ, the

second Adam, and from him derived to us his members. And then know that there is no such ligament to tie us in union with Christ as faith; nor is there any such instrument to draw out the virtues of Christ into the soul as faith.

You read of those in the Gospel who brought diseased bodies to Christ, and yet when they believed, they went away with cured and healed tempers. What does this intimate to us but that the sensible sinner weary of his sinful nature should make his address to the Lord Jesus for cure and health, and that he should by faith accept him and trust upon him for the healing of his soul and the subduing of his sins? Then verily you shall find virtue to come from Christ, raising a greater hatred of sin, war with it in the very fountain, watching and praying against it, and the power of the ordinances successively weakening and crucifying the power of sin.

Lastly, know this: the time of contrariety is the time for faith to work. When a man sees death, then it is the time for faith to believe in life. When he sees the grave, then it is the time for faith to believe in a resurrection; when he sees guilt, then it is the time for faith to believe in pardoning mercy; when he sees himself as a sinner, then it is the time for faith to believe in a Savior; when he sees strong corruptions, then it is the time for faith to believe in great grace; when he sees great discomforts, then it is the time for faith to believe in strong consolations; the exigencies of sense and the reliefs of the promises are quite contrary; what I feel is one thing, what God does promise is another thing. That which the patient observes in himself is sickness; and that which he hopes for in the medicine is health. Has God made thee sensible of thy sins? Dost thou find thus much, that all that thou canst do will not become a rebuke of corruption? Thou art able now to see the strength of thy sinful nature, but to remove it thou art utterly unable? Why, what is now to be done? Truly, as in the sense of the guilt of

sin, we must then fly by faith to God and put our souls upon His free mercy for pardon; so in the sense of the filthy strength of sin, we must go to heaven by faith and put our souls on God's faithful promises in Christ for the healing and subduing of it. This is the way, and therefore strive to walk in it; you may try other ways, but they shall not help you, and perplex your own thoughts, but they shall not avail you; the cure of the sinful soul is only in heaven, and it is faith only which can lift up a soul to God and Christ, which puts it into the pool. When sin is felt, then let faith work; if thou canst find any one promise which God hath made of sanctifying and healing and subduing; why, here's ground for faith; yea, for thy faith; for in these promises are the cures of thy sinful nature, and faith it is which will apply the healing medicines to thee.

8. Obj. Yet I am not satisfied, saith the sensible sinner and fearful soul; why? Because, first, I cannot find a heart to duty, to pray and seek of God; and surely if God did purpose and mean any good to me, He would in some measure frame, incline, and excite my heart towards Him. Secondly, yea, and again, though I do sometimes seek and entreat, yet I observe that what I was, that I am; nothing comes of it; how then can I, may I, should I be induced to believe?

Sol. Here are two sore and real scruples which do indeed vehemently beat upon a sensible sinner. I shall endeavor to resolve them successively.

1. I cannot find a heart to any duty, to pray for faith, etc.

I answer,

1. As the inability to holy duties depends on natural corruption, so the indisposition towards them depends exceedingly upon unbelief: There is nothing that disheartens a man more towards God than it: For besides this, that unbelief in its own nature is a departure from God (it is a bias drawing

the soul downwards), this also is true of it, that it represents God to the soul in all the appearances and methods of discouragements. It makes the soul see nothing in God or from God which might incline it to Him: O, saith unbelief, there is such holiness and purity in Him that He will never endure thee; there is such truth and justice in Him that He will assuredly be avenged of thee.

There is such strength and power in him, that he will certainly meet with thee, and lay load on thee: There is, I confess, a mercifulness in him, but alas his tender bowels of compassion, his ready forgiveness extends not to thee; there are many sweet intimations in his promises, but they concern not thee; there is a mighty salvation in Christ, and powerful intercession to ingratiate some persons and their services, but what of this to thee! He is a God hearing prayer; yea, but he will not regard the cries nor tears of some, but their sacrifices are an abomination unto him. And thus does unbelief set up God utterly against the soul, so that the poor soul conceiving of God as an enemy, dares not come near him, flies off, is even afraid to speak to him; It is persuaded by unbelief, that God will frown upon all that is done, whereupon the spirit sinks, the affections are flattened; I have no mind, nor heart, am like a lump, a stock, a stone.

Secondly, it is faith which will fetch up the soul, Psal. 27:13. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, &c. As if he should say, my spirits were even breathing themselves out, I was even sinking down, giving up all, unless I had believed; but that confidence of God's goodness towards me, that did put life into me, that did fetch me again, that did put heart into me.

You see now the spring is coming on, that those (seemingly) dead branches of the trees, they begin to thrust out some hopeful sproutings, and

put on another color of freshness; why? because the root is now more fed and warmed. It is faith which will put color into our faces, and spirit into our hearts, and life into our duties.

For,

1. Faith sets open the mercy-seat: It represents God to the soul in all his attributes of graciousness, not as a hard tyrant, but as a good God, willing to give audience to the humble requests and suit of a poor sinner; Nay, willing to dispatch and grant his requests: What is thy request? said Ahasuerus to Queen Esther, it shall be granted thee, &c? So saith the Lord, What wouldst thou have of me? Is it mercy? I do promise it unto thee; Is it grace? I promise that unto thee; Is it strength? is it comfort? is it deliverance? whatsoever it be, if thou believe on me, I will not fail to give to thee. Nay, I will do it freely, nay, cheerfully, with all my heart, and with all my soul, Jer. 32.

Yea, this makes the soul to come unto God, as the ship into the haven with full speed and stretched sails: O the soul bends the knee with cheerfulness, when it sees it shall be raised up with kindness; a man may have some heart to pray, when he knows, My God will hear me, that God hath a readiness to answer.

2. Faith sets the soul in the prevailing way: it puts the soul to seek and pray with such motives as it is most sure shall make it to speed.

There are many motives which men take to prevail with God; O, they can do nothing, God regards them not; the strength of a man's excellencies, of his own worthiness, of his own abilities and frame, alas, these are not the prevailing and binding motives; all these import that they would speed for their own sake. But faith lays these aside; it has motives from God's own heart and mouth, with which it teaches the soul to urge God, the Name of

Christ, the gracious goodness of God himself, the fidelity of his promises, his own word; Now God has said that these shall prevail with him; and faith knows it to be infallibly so, and hereupon draws on the soul with marvelous cheerfulness to seek the Lord.

3. Know this, that no man shall in good earnest set upon God for faith and other graces, but Satan will set upon his heart, and his heart will set against his ways in this. This would indeed be a wonder if a man could get into Christ's arms without any more ado: that he should instantly have a heart (in all imaginable respects) sweetly and totally framed with the strength and uninterrupted gales of heavenly inclinations and performances. Alas! poor soul, you must by weak faith fight hard to get strong faith, and you must by any duty make way for clearer duty: well is it with you if instead of words you can sometimes seek God with sighs, and when sighs fail, if yet with groans and desires. When you would do good, you shall find evil present with you; when you feel a heart to pray, perhaps even that motion is almost struck out by another heart in you, which is most unwilling to pray; when you feel any climbings of your soul by faith in your heart, even these will be opposed by strong doubtings and suspicions by another heart of unbelief within you. Nevertheless, remember this, that this particular opposition being refilled, disliked, bewailed, does only declare that there is in you that which is contrary to you, and that Satan dislikes your way; it does not testify that God dislikes it or will not accept you. If God has given unto you any desires towards him, O cherish them as one would a spark; the beginnings of a Christian are in much weakness and manifold distractions and oppositions; but there is a God who gave unto you those breathings and can understand secret groans; and there is a Christ who can and will make weak services acceptable, and in time will give the victory after the combat.

Secondly, many seekings, but nothing comes of them. This does exceedingly distract the soul; the insensible alterations of the soul after many seekings usually raise a prejudice against God and ourselves; but for this observe some particulars.

1. The efficacy of seekings consists not in the quantity or number, but in the quality and manner. Have you offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? Amos 5:25. So I say, have you offered prayers unto God in these many days of your distresses? Nay, you have come before him with words, but not with prayers. What, do you think that the Lord is pleased with all your tears, and with all the humblings of your spirit, and with all the importunities of your requests, while under them all you do not stick to tell God to his face that he is a dissembler and liar? In all these your sacrifices and approaches unto the great and high God, you did not believe any one promise which he has made; you have thought that God would not do you good; and is it likely that you should speed well at his hand, who reproach the true and faithful God?

Obj. I do indeed pray because I must, I am commanded, but I verily believe it is in vain; tush, what tell you me of God's promises? He will never perform them to me.

Sol. Good God! what, shall the Lord not only command by a righteous word but assure and invite by a good and faithful word, a word as true as truth itself, and is it but a tush with us? Is it not of any more account with us? Nay, not of so much account as the word of a poor man? No marvel that nothing comes after many seekings, such seekings of pride and unbelief, infidelity, for the pardon of which I advise you to speed up many more seekings of faith.

2. Right seekings shall always come to something; though the proud and impatient person said, it was in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord? Mal. 3:14. Yet God assures them that the day shall come when they shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not, Ver. 18. Sweet is that place of the Prophet Isaiah, "Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands," Isa 65:22. "They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble," Verse 23. "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear," Ver. 24.

And the reason is because God is faithful who has promised, and He will never allow His truth to fail. If there be any good thing which He has commanded thee to pray for, and which He has undertaken for thee in His promises, and which thou dost humbly seek out in the name of Christ by faith; I say, rest upon it, it shall be given to thee if thou canst but wait on God in the use of the means.

3. There is a double answer to the seeking of the soul; one is real, another is sensible: As when a request is presented to the King, either for pardon or settling; if he accepts of the request and puts his seal to the authorizing of the grant, the request is really done, though (perhaps) the petitioner knows it not: So it is with the Lord many times in His answerings; He does things really for us, though we are not presently sensible of it: we beg for mourning hearts, and for hearts to hate sin; and for hearts to pray unto Him, and then we feel our hearts hard, and our corruptions bursting forth upon us, which makes our hearts bitterly grieve, and stirs up extreme loathings of our vile natures, and causes the soul to lie groveling with most striving and fervent importunities at heaven's gate; why, here are now the very things

that we would have, yet we are not many times sensible that these things are answers.

4. We must distinguish 'twixt nothing absolutely, and nothing comparatively. Why, it is true that the holy heart has such an extreme abomination of sin, and such a high thirst for grace, that the present answers from heaven seem as nothing (that is) there is yet something more and more which I would have; the present grants are not satisfying my desires, yet something is gained by every faithful seeking; there is not one faithful prayer which thou hast dispatched to heaven but it delivers thy message and is returned with a blessing.

Either it gets more additions to some grace or other, or more alienation from some sin or other, or more disposition to some duty or other, or more resolution to seek, or more strength to wait. Like the many bees which go out, every one comes home with something, one with honey, another with wax; so every faithful prayer flies up to heaven and gathers something or other from the good promises, and though not so much as thou desirest, yet always more than thou deservest; though not so much as to satisfy, yet as to help.

5. Suppose that yet you are not answered; it is then a sin to murmur and quarrel, but it is thy duty to wait.

I observe this:

1. That God never gives thee so large an alms but that thou needest the next hour to become a further petitioner.

2. That God is pleased to make the beggar stay sometimes at the door; He does not always presently give what He intends certainly to bestow, but as His own free grace is the treasury of our gifts and supplies, so His own wisdom is the dispenser of the time and season.

Now then, as the goodness of the promise should draw us to believe, so the fidelity and certainty of it should cause us to wait and expect: God does give thee leave to urge him, but he likes it ill to hasten him; if God does promise, then it is thy duty to believe; and if he stays, then it is thy duty to wait; for God does wait that he may be gracious, and blessed are all they that wait for him.

Chapter Seventeen

Of living by faith

Having formerly shown unto you what it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and earnestly pressed upon you to get faith in him: I now proceed to another Use, which (supposing that by this time you have attained unto faith) shall be to excite and persuade you then to live by that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, there are two offices of faith. One is to breed conjunction and acceptance, and this is done when the heart is upon good, and choice, and deliberated grounds, effectually inclined to consent and take whole Christ upon his own terms.

Another is to breed dependence, and this is done when the believing soul makes continued use of that fullness and virtue which is in Christ touching the continued exigencies of its state and condition in this life. As it is with a woman, she first gives her consent and becomes a wife, and then being a wife, she looks upon her husband as the only person to supply her, direct her, comfort her, provide for her and hers.

So is it with faith, first it does espouse the soul to Christ, it takes him as Lord and husband, and then it casts all the provisions of the soul upon him, all the supplies and helps; it trusts in him for righteousness, in him for pardon of sins, in him for grace, in him for strength, in him for comfort, in him for eternal life, &c.

Now because this is a point of singular consequence, give me leave therefore (and it matters not if now and then I make a little digression) to unfold these particulars, that you may the better understand and be assisted, how to use that faith in Christ, which you have to live upon him by it.

1. What it is (in the general) to live by faith.
2. To what states the life of faith may extend.
3. What it is more particularly to live by faith on Christ.
4. What Arguments and Inducements I have to press, not only the getting of faith but also the living by faith on Christ.
5. In what particulars the Believers should live by faith on Christ.
6. What things oppose the life of faith.
7. Trials, if so that we live by faith.
8. What good helps may be found out to assist, and more and more to incline and enable the believing heart still to live by faith.

If any other profitable and pertinent inquiry may hereafter fall in for the better information and direction, besides those particular heads which I have now propounded unto you, you shall have a view of them likewise; but for the present I can think of no more: Now the God of mercy, and Father of all consolations, direct and bless their deliveries so unto you, that you may not only have that precious faith but live by faith, nay, and die in faith, and so receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

SECT. I

Quest. 1. What is it (in the general) to live by faith? Sol. I will not now stand on the several kinds and sorts of life, viz. That there is a life of vegetation which the trees and plants do live; and a life of sense which the beasts and cattle do live; and that there is a life of reason and knowledge which man does live; and that there is a life of faith which the Christian either does or should live.

Neither will I stand upon the opposition 'twixt living by faith, and living by works, one being a legal life, and upon ourselves; the other being an Evangelical life, and upon Christ. Nor now of that opposition 'twixt the life of faith and the life of sense, the one being a life in hand, the other in promises; That depending upon our eye, this upon our ear, (that is) sense dwelling on what it can see, and faith on that good word which it does hear.

These things being passed over, I conjecture that to live by faith may be thus described. It is a heavenly and dutiful committing of our whole persons and our whole estates unto God, with a pious dependence upon His faithful and good promises in Christ, for suitable and seasonable supplies in all our exigencies, occurrences, and changes whatsoever. Here are diverse things observable.

First, to live by faith is to commit all to God: It is, as it were, to entrust Him with ourselves and ours. I know (says Paul) whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, 2 Tim. 1:12. As if he should say, I have put my very soul and life into the hands of Christ, who I know will look to it, take care of it forever. David makes this to be the putting of ourselves under God, as our Shepherd, Psal. 23:1, and as our Keeper, Psal. 121:5. Mark this, a man lives not by faith when he undertakes to be himself the Lord of himself, or a god to himself, when he trusts in his own heart, or will subsist by his own arm, or when he

puts his confidence in any arm of flesh. Oh no, faith gives God the honor of our beings and safeties and resigns up all to be, and to be disposed as the Lord pleases; If He will have me to enjoy, well; if to want, well; if to abound, well; if to be abased, well; I would be as He would have me to be; and I would be situated as He would have me to be situated; If He thinks good to bestow a fair estate upon me, I desire to be humble and thankful; If He thinks good to limit me to a mean estate, I desire to be humble and contented; If He keeps me in a free condition, I desire to love Him; if in a perplexed condition, I yet desire to fear and serve Him: though I would be careful and diligent, yet I would not be anxious and vexing; I dare to trust Him with my soul, to preserve, sanctify, uphold, comfort, save it; I trust Him with my body, to preserve, enable, change, and dispose it; I trust Him with my whole estate, to give it, alter it, increase it, lessen it, keep it, bless it, as may make most for His glory and my good.

Secondly, to live by faith is to depend upon God for all. You all conjecture that:

First, God is an all-sufficient goodness; He is goodness itself. And whatsoever good the creature is capable of or does actually participate in, He is the sole cause thereof; means which are next at hand and near our eyes are but pipes and stewards, but God is the fountain and Lord.

Secondly, He has put all covenant good for His servants into promises. The promises are nothing else but a deed of gift, sealed with the truth of God: There has God freely undertaken whatsoever belongs to grace or glory; to this life or to that which is to come; do you want this or that? Why, whatsoever is fit for you to have, that I promise in the name of my Son to give unto you, says God.

Now to live by faith is to cast anchor at heaven's gates; it is to cast the soul upon God's promises in Christ, to rely on God for any good which God has promised and undertaken; this I want, and this God has promised; He has undertaken the supply, and I will trust upon Him for it.

Though I feel no such thing; nay, though I feel the contrary, yet I do not cast away my confidence: Though fig trees blossom not, though olives fail, and hinds are gone, yet if my supply appears in any word of promise, I take heart and say, yet my condition is good, all is well and sure; My God has undertaken it for me, and in his Word will I trust, which is good and true; he will not fail me, I shall have whatsoever is good, and that too in a good time: This only in general.

SECT. II

Quest. 2. Sol. To what states the life of faith may extend.

You know that there are two eminent states of our life.

1. One is spiritual, which respects all the exigencies, varieties, windings, turnings, changes, defections, eclipses, trials, and hardships of the soul: Whatsoever accidents may befall a holy soul about the heavenly condition, that pertains to the spiritual state; all the supplies of grace, of strength, of comfort, of assurance, of assistance against temptations, corruptions, troubles; all enlivenments and quickenings of the Spirit about all sorts of duties and services, active or passive.

2. Another is temporal, which is not only the term of our natural breathings but also the sundry and manifold occurrences which befall us in the employments of our life; all the accidents, and interruptions, crossings, checkings, contrarieties, either in our bodies, or calling, or wealth, or persons, or children, or servants, or good name.

Briefly, the temporal state comprehends all whatsoever may weaken, or waste, or distract, all or any of our temporal contentments, delights, desires, ends; as also all our temporal supplements for the being or well-being of this poor and short life of ours, as health, strength, friends, food, liberty, estate, peace and quietness, etc.

Now then living by faith extends to both: The just shall live by his faith, said the Prophet, Hab. 2:4. of the Jews in the temporal state; and, I live by the faith of the Son of God, said Paul in Gal. 2:20. speaking of his spiritual state.

So that faith bears up soul and body and is both for heaven and earth: It serves to fetch in the blood of Christ, the redemption by Christ, pardon of sin, God's favor, all grace and comfort to the soul: And it serves to fetch in also health to the body, riches to the estate, plenty, peace, friends, what not? When I am sick, I yet trust in God for health; when poor, I yet trust in God for sufficiency; when under reproach, I yet trust in God to clear my innocence; when under discomforts and forsakements, I yet trust in God for favor and countenance: In all my distresses and reproaches, I have yet his word for my supplies and helps upon which I rest, and thus I live by faith; so far as the promises extend, so far does living by faith extend.

SECT. III

Quest. 3. Now more particularly what it is to live by faith on Christ.

Sol. I will tell you what I think of it; It is a holy work and course of a believing person wherein he does depend on Christ and make use of him for all the conditions and exigencies of the soul about its spiritual state.

For the opening of this description; I will touch upon three things.

1. The particular conditions and exigencies of the soul by reason of which it has need to live by faith.

2. The fullness and fitness and fidelity of Christ for the supply and help of a believing soul.

3. The conjunction of both these together which is the very living by faith on Christ.

First, the particular conditions and exigencies of the soul: you must know this: That to live by faith presupposes two things on our part: defect and insufficiency.

There is something that lies upon us which should not be there and we cannot help ourselves; therefore we go abroad by faith; this is to live upon the market.

Now there are many things which lie upon our souls.

1. The sense of guilt; this is a great matter, it makes the very heart oftentimes tremble; it is a heavy burden when a man sins against a holy and just God, the least of them provoking and damnable. This is a time of trouble; for a man sees much in debt, and nothing in stock, he is not able to pay a farthing; all that he is or can do can never answer divine justice. This is one exigence now which makes a man capable to live by faith, to look out to Christ, and to try what he will do for him, a miserable sinner, as you shall hear anon.

2. The sense of unrighteousness: Why, God requires a holy conformity to his divine will, in heart and in life, that our nature should be as he requires, and our ways as he commands; but when the soul is able actively to reflect on itself, and look on God, and then to compare what it is and has done with what it should be and should have done, it is amazed at its own unrighteousness, and this is much increased; for it knows that no unrighteous person shall go to heaven; it knows that God will not pronounce unrighteous judgment; He will not acquit a man as righteous

who has not righteousness, nor shall he ever stand in judgment before him. Now this is another exigence which puts the soul upon the life of faith.

3. The times of desertion, when all the comfortable evidences of the Christian state are drawn off, as it were, when the Lord confines himself and all to his promise: The poor soul has no spark of comfort, it has no glimpse of divine favor; if it can find God to be his God, and Christ to be its Christ in the promises, well and good; but there is no feeling nor handling any sensible tokens. This is another exigence.

4. The times of contrariety; when the Sun seems to be darkened, and when mercy seems to be angry, and when fidelity seems to cast off, when mindfulness seems forgetful, God seems not to regard us but to fight against us, and Christ who did call to us to come unto him does seem to go away from us: O this is a strong exigence of the soul, and if ever, now must it live by faith.

5. The time of weakness: when a man sees that his work is great, and his strength is small; duties many, power little, affections dull, not able to do for Christ, not able to suffer for Christ, cannot pray, hear, receive, obey as he should, as he would; This is also an exigence of the soul wherein it needs to live by faith in Christ.

6. The times of corruption: when a man feels sin afresh; he had thought sin had been dead long ago, and all conflicts had been past; but now he perceives sin to rise like an armed man, and like a flood, even ready to bear down the soul with that hideous insolence and violence of wicked thoughts and inclinations; yea, so great is this storm, that as they said to Christ in another case, so here Master help, or else we perish.

7. The times of temptation, which like a crosswind, bears the ship almost under water: The gates of hell seem to open themselves against the soul,

and the powers of darkness fall in upon it with all the cunning of unbelief and excitation to blasphemy; To deny God, to slight his Word, to let go our confidence in Christ, so that the poor soul is almost brought to dust and death by reason of them. This is also another exigence for the soul to make use of Christ and to live by faith.

8. The times of contradiction: when the mouths of wicked and foolish men, like sharp razors, wound and cut off a man's good name; when their hands, like claws of lions, tear away the prey, they take away the innocence of the upright, and the estates, liberties, friends, and all the earthly encouragements of the righteous; I say, this may be an exigency for the soul to live by faith in Christ, and to make up all in him alone.

1. Now, as the one who lives by faith is (in the exercise of that life) always aware of some need or struggle within his soul, so, in the second place, he must be able to behold a suitable fullness in Christ. He must know two things:

First, that Christ has enough in Himself to meet all these needs.

Secondly, that Christ is appointed by God and willing to do so.

Therefore, I urge you to remember:

First, that Christ has enough in Himself to meet every need of the soul. Your soul cannot be cast upon any sea but that He is there as a sure ship and harbour. It cannot fall into any strait or trouble whatsoever but that Christ is able to relieve it.

1. For the sense of guilt — there is that in Christ which can remove it. His blood is full payment, and it was shed for the

remission of sins. He can make perfect peace and fully satisfy divine justice. As the least sin needs His merit, so the greatest does not exceed it. If Christ would offer up His soul for yours, His merits for your trespasses, His precious blood for your bloody crimes — then God will be pacified; for His blood is the blood of atonement, of reconciliation, of blotting out, of peace, and more.

2. For unrighteousness — there is that in Christ which can present you righteous, unspotted, and blameless; He can present you glorious without spot or wrinkle, as the Apostle speaks in Ephesians 5. He can provide an ample garment without any tear, an obedience which was perfect and which God will accept, for which He will justify you — even though your own righteousness (in matters of judicial justification) is as filthy rags.
3. The same can be said in proportion to all the other needs. Though you are weak in grace and feeble in duty, yet He can make all grace abound; He can strengthen feeble knees; He can comfort the mourning spirit; He can open heaven again to you. He can open your eyes so that you will see your God again — yes, and see Him as your own God, just as you did before. He can conquer the most persistent corruption, push back the strongest temptation, and stand by you in the bitterest opposition.

Secondly, Christ is both appointed by God to be and to do all of this for the believer — and He is very willing. *He is made unto us by God* (says the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 1:30) *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. Therefore, He is called the Horn of Salvation, the Justifier of His people, the Standard to which we should flee, the Strength of those who trust in Him. In short, He was invested as Mediator with His threefold office — Priest, Prophet, and King — to be and do all of this for believers.

You do not misunderstand yourself, nor misconceive God or Christ, when you go to the Lord Jesus in any of your needs — asking Him to be your Priest, your Prophet, or your King. Oh no! God has appointed Him to be the Saviour of His body and the Head of His Church. And Christ, thus powerfully equipped, is both willing and faithful to carry out and perform all that is needed.

3. These things being to be known and granted, there follows in the third place the conjunction of these two together, which indeed is the very living by faith upon Christ.

When the soul is in any exigency and comes to Christ, and puts itself upon him, and trusts in him for help, this is to live by faith in Christ. Suppose a person is sensible of much guilt, many sinful commissions, or omissions that lay heavy and sore upon him; he is grieved at heart that he has so dishonored God: he is not able to take them off, and therefore he renounces all in himself; to Christ he goes and says thus, O blessed Lord Jesus, thou didst shed thy precious blood for the remission of sins: thou hast offered me thyself, and all thy precious purchases and benefits; I have by faith accepted of thee, of thee alone, with all my soul to be my Lord and Savior; Now none in heaven or earth can procure me the pardon of these sins, but thyself, and thou canst do it; I beseech thee that thy blood may be

mine atonement to thy Father; yea, I will, and do cast my soul upon thee, thee alone, for the pardon, and I will trust in thee for the discharge of my many, of all my transgressions; Thy blood is the price that I will trust to, and rest upon. This is to live by faith in Christ in that particular; yea, though the sense of guilt be great, and the truth of it undeniable; yet to believe the pardon in Christ, and to offer his satisfactions; yea to venture, and to roll the soul upon him for it: for Christ hath called me, and he hath said that he will ease me, &c.

So again, suppose that thou feelest corruptions strongly working, and temptations grievously assaulting; now to live by faith in Christ is to come unto him (knowing the Kingly power of his grace) and to beseech him to subdue iniquities for thee, and to send forth the rod of his Scepter, the power of his gracious Spirit; to mortify thy lusts yet more, and to trust in him, that he will do this for thee, and therefore thou wilt apply thyself, with patience and confidence to the use of all consecrated ways and means, through which Christ will manifest that power unto thy soul. I thank God through Jesus Christ, said Paul, Rom. 7. As if he should say, I am not able for my life to root out, to beat down these vile motions, but I cast myself upon Jesus Christ, I trust in him, and verily believe he will deliver me; the like may be said of all the other exigencies, but I cannot repeat all.

Consider that the habit or quality of faith is one thing, and the use or exercise of faith is another thing; the soul then lives by faith in Christ when it improves its interest in Christ when it can trust in him to supply all its wants; a man is said to live by bread, not when he has it in his cupboard, but when he takes and eats it; and a man is said to live upon his money, not when he lets it lie dead in his chest, but when he turns and winds it for his benefit and support. So here to live by faith in Christ is to put faith to work;

my works are in myself, but the supplies of my soul are in Christ; as I go to divine providence, and put myself on its faithful powerful goodness for my body; so I must go to the Lord Jesus, and put myself on his gracious and certain fullness for my soul.

Yet observe a few things for the clearer opening of this.

1. To live by faith in Christ is more than a mere complaining of our wants or an acknowledging of his fullness. To see scarcity in the house and plenty in the market, this may be, and it may be vain unless we go forth to fetch in the promises.

While the soul stays home, it does not live by faith: The life of faith lies abroad. A man may have the grace to see his needs, and yet he does not live by faith until he can reach out to Christ. "I will go to the Prophet, to the man of God," said the woman who had a troubled spirit for her dead child; indeed, this recovered her child again. "If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole," said she in the Gospel. You must bring the pitcher to the well if you want water, and the child's mouth must be applied to the breast if it would have milk; and the soul must go unto Christ, it must approach him, or else it is but a fruitless trouble, it is not living by faith in him.

2. To live by faith in Christ is more than merely going to Christ; though the motion of the soul out of itself is required, yet that alone is not sufficient. If I go to a man to lend me a hundred pounds, if either I will not speak to him or trust him, this is labor lost; so, though we do address ourselves to Christ for help but will not trust him for supply, this is not yet to live by faith. For,

The life of faith in Christ is raised by three things.

First, his fullness.

Secondly, his goodness.

Thirdly, his faithfulness; and all these induce the soul to trust him: he is able enough, therefore I will trust him; he is ready enough, therefore I will trust him; he is faithful and will certainly do me good, therefore I will trust him. So that to live by faith is to live by trust; one is said to live by trust when he has nothing from another but his word or his bond; I think him honest, or I have him fast bound, therefore I will trust him. You have the Word of Christ and the Promise of Christ, which is a sure truth, to which, if you trust, you live by faith. If I feel and do not complain, if I complain and do not pray, if I pray and do not trust, this is not yet to live by faith; as far as I can trust in Christ that he will supply and help my soul, so far do I live by faith.

3. Nay, thirdly, to live by faith is not only to trust in Christ for supply but also to expect the performance.

There is a great difference between the life of sense and the life of faith: Sense is opposite to expectation; it is only for the present, what it has that makes it up, it lives upon no stock but that in hand, but faith reckons its estate more from what lies in bonds than what the person finds in the purse: It finds the greatest part of the soul's estate yet in the promises and yet in Christ, and in both graciously and assuredly undertaken; whereupon it makes the soul not only go to Christ but trust him, and not only so but expect and wait patiently; he does hear me, he will do me good, he will not allow sin to have dominion, he will send forth the rod of his power, he will make all grace abound, he will not leave nor forsake me, he will satisfy for me, his intercession shall be effectual, I shall yet feel the power of his death, the virtue of his resurrection.

As to pray and not to trust, so to trust and not to expect, to trust and then to murmur, to trust and then untrust while we are speaking, to get the soul to put itself upon Christ and before we have finished speaking, to pull off the soul again, to deface our own sealing, to cast away our confidence, this is ill, very ill.

It is true that the acts of faith are capable of weakness, and also of opposition; one man may more confidently trust and expect, and another less; sometimes the same man is more pure and high in the act of trusting, and sometimes he has much ado with his heart, to get it to roll itself on Christ; but yet he does do it against many fears, and against many corrupt reasonings; now he lives by faith, but then know it is an ill business instantly to reverse the acts of faith, faint in it, or but to suspect Jesus Christ himself, either in his power, or goodness, or truth.

Fourthly, to live by faith in Christ, it is an extensive work, it is to trust in him, not for one thing only, but for everything which concerns the state of the soul. The soul is a needy thing, naturally it is so, and so it is spiritually; either it needs grace, or more grace, or strength, or comfort, or peace, or mercy, and pardon, something or other it wants; now Christ is an adequate supply to the soul, he has grace enough, and righteousness enough, and power enough, and peace, and plenteous redemption: Now then as our wants appear, or as they multiply, so must faith appear and abound in its acts if we will be said to live by faith.

I will be righteousness to you, says Christ, and I will trust upon you for it, says faith; I will be sanctification to you, says Christ, and I will trust upon you for it, says faith; I will be redemption to you, says Christ, and I will trust upon you for that too, says faith. Yes, I will trust upon you to be my continual propitiation, continual intercession, to be my continual sufficiency

and strength for more grace, for quickening, for comfort, for salvation, for all.

Does corruption work again? I will go to Christ again to subdue it—he will do it for me. Does Satan renew his temptations? I will renew my addresses to Christ, who will again (I trust) bruise him under my feet. My comforts are gone, but I will go to Christ, I will live upon him, he will come again, and then my joy shall be full.

And indeed the life of faith, as it is a multiplied work (for it makes the soul live upon Christ for its manifold grace), so it is a repeated work; it leads the soul often and often even for the same kinds of supplies.

Objection. O, says the soul, I did go to Christ, and did beseech him to rebuke Satan, and I trusted in him, and followed my suit, and found it so; but now Satan tempts again, now sin works again, now my heart is down again, dull, and dead and feeble again.

Answer. I say to such a one, to live by faith is to keep house with Christ; it is to be a daily guest. It is to rely upon him; it is to come as often as we have need; it is to draw water often from the same fountain. As if Christ did say to a person, Whatever your soul needs, come to me for it, and whenever, yet come—I will do it for you. And the heart goes confidently to the Lord of its life and hope of its salvation.

SECT. IV

Quest. 4. What arguments do move us not only to get faith in Christ but also to live by it?

Sol. They are so many that I know not well where to begin.

First, if we consider our own condition, this might put us upon the life of faith.

First, the life of faith is congruous to our condition: for what is our condition but a dependent being, such a being as subsists upon and by another?

Take us as creatures, and so we are but beams of light, which the Sun lets forth, supports, contracts, draws in; We are like a glass which God does frame, and hold in his own hand, or else we cannot stand; or like the flowers they must be set in the ground, and then watered, and fenced, or else they live not: our whole being, and working, and maintenance is from him that made us; In him we live, and move, and have our being. And, take us as new creatures, so shall we find that not only our natural breath, but our spiritual being, not only life, but grace too, depends not on him who has it, but on God who gave it; Grace is a sweet stream, but that flows and runs still, because still fed by a living spring. It is a fruitful branch, but that branch does stand and bear, because upheld and supplied by a more fruitful root: Hence is it that Christ is called the head, and we the members; he is called the root, and we the branches; he the foundation-stone, we the building; he is called the rock, we the house built on that rock; he the husband, we the wife and spouse; he the Lord, and we the servants; he the Shepherd, and we the sheep; he the nurse, and we the babes; All which do evidence this much, that our life is in him, upon him, for we are dependents; from him we live, therefore upon him we should live.

Secondly, the necessity of our condition: our condition here below does so shift, and vary, and fail, go and come, that if we do not live by faith, we cannot (honestly) live at all: Help failed me on every side said David, all men forsook me, said Paul: We know not what to do said Jehoshaphat: God is pleased to call off all our comforts, to gather up into his own hands of promises all our supports. It is with us many times as with a ship laden, but

on a sudden broken to pieces, now the persons of necessity must swim towards the shore, and to the rocks: So God does dash in pieces our lower confidences; he cracks a full estate, he separates very friends; he gives not a heart to people to show us compassion; and sorrows on all sides pour in themselves, a man has nothing in all the world left him, but God's bond, his word of promise. So for the estate of the soul, it is frequently so clouded, so darkened, so checked, so distressed, so assaulted, that all the means under heaven do not relieve it; if the Lord does not help, if Christ be not the rock, it cannot be delivered or supported. Now in such cases, where the condition is wholly reduced to the promises, or unto Christ, there can be no living but by faith: The heart of a man is either broken with despair and grief or will break into the ways of wickedness if it lives not by faith in the cases of all sensible sequestrations: For,

1. It is only faith which can espy something for the soul now: Who is he that sits in darkness and sees no light? let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God? Isa. 50:10. Faith can see the stars in the thickest night of darkness; there is nothing but faith which can tell the soul of rich mercy in the times or greatest sense of exceeding guilt; and there is nothing but faith which can find out fullness of grace in Christ for a soul which is bitterly sensible of its wonderful and continual emptiness. Till the Angel came and opened Hagar's eyes to see the fountain, she gave up her child for dead; so unless we have faith to open our eyes to see the fountain of grace and mercy in God and Christ, I tell you that in many of our exigencies we shall throw away all, all as dead and lost, and hopeless.

2. Again, it is nothing but faith that gives spirit to us from a bare premise: one word of God is security enough for faith. If a mariner can get to the top of the mast and discern just a point of land, he is now glad, all is well; faith

is said to see the promises afar off, Heb. 11. Well, says faith to the soul now, as Paul to those who sailed with him, be of good cheer, you shall yet do well; grace, mercy, and help will come, God has promised it, and Christ will make all the promises, Yea and Amen; and now the soul lives because of that good and faithful word, etc.

Secondly, if we consider God himself, there is sufficient reason why we should live by faith. There are six arguments that we may behold in God to invite and persuade us to live by faith.

First, his all-sufficiency: I am God all-sufficient, said he to Abraham. What's that? That is, I am an absolute and independent essence in respect of myself, infinitely perfect and enough, and have enough and enough to satisfy all the world. Take all the particular creatures in the world and view into their natures and conditions; you shall find every one of them to be imperfect, to be dependent, to be replenished with wants: even one man for his own particular is covered over with innumerable wants; the wants of his soul are many, so of his body, so of his estate; what then, and how many are the necessities of every man? But now God is all-sufficient (that is) he has enough to supply every man; he can open his hands and fill every living thing. You open your hand (said David, Psal. 145:15) and satisfy the desire of every living thing; and he is able to make all grace abound, says the Apostle, 2 Cor. 9:8. He is rich to all that call upon him, Rom. 10:12. He is able to do (Eph. 3:20) exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think. My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ, Phil. 4:19. The sun you see has light enough for a whole world, and a fountain has water enough for a whole country; why, all good is in God, both originally, eminently, and causally (that is) he is goodness itself, and all goodness, fullness without want, strength without weakness,

holiness without blemish; yea, and the universal cause of goodness, and therefore infinitely able to supply, help, and do good: there is no one necessity but he is able infinitely to succor it; and many, yea, all necessities are not to be compared to the unfathomed greatness and exceedingness of his fullness and all-sufficiency.

2. His Command: As God is an absolute and full good (all our helps do center in Him as in their complete cause), so He has commanded us to live upon His all-sufficiency by faith. How often do you read those charges, Trust in the Lord, commit your way to the Lord, rest upon Him, stay upon the God of Jacob, cast your care on Him. As if God should say unto the sons of men, I am He, and there is none else besides Me who can do you good; there is not any good in all the world which you want but I am able to supply it; I am all-sufficient for wisdom, for holiness, for mercy, for power, for grace, for comfort, for peace. If you want water, you would go to the spring; and if you want light, you would look up to the sun; and if you want any good, why will you not look up to Me who am goodness itself? I tell you that I am a God, and have the greatness and the fullness of a God; Nay, and I charge and require you, when you need anything, come to Me for it: I am the Master of all the families of the earth, and the Lord of all good; It is my express will that you come unto Me, and that you put your trust in Me, that you believe in My all-sufficiency, that you live upon that stock which is in My fullness: Nay, I shall take it exceedingly ill if you rest yourselves or live on any other.

3. His promises: Consider this two ways.

1. Generally, His promises of good, wherein is ground to trust.
2. Particularly, His promises to those who will and do trust, Psal. 37:3. Trust in the Lord, and verily, etc. Isa. 26:3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect

peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee: So Isa. 57:13. This gives life to all the rest: for though God were ever so able to do good, and though his commands were ever so urgent to live on him for all our good; yet if he had not made this good over to us, we might maintain secret fears and discouragements: But now God has promised all good to us, (that is) he has firmly and graciously made it over; As if he should say, All the good that I can do, I will do it for thee; all the ample fullness in me is to replenish thee, it is to supply thy wants and necessities; and I assure thee in the word of a God it is so. Psalm 84:11. The Lord is a Sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Ver. 12. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. There is not any one particular want (which is fit to be styled a want, and fit to be supplied in this life, for soul) but God has by promises particularly engaged all his sufficiency to help and supply it. Dost thou want a holy heart, a returning heart, a heart to hate sin, to mourn for sin, a believing heart, an upright heart, a meek and patient heart, a joyful heart? Dost thou want any grace, more grace, pardon of sin, assurance of pardon, strength against sin, strength for any duty, active or passive? Wantest thou any convenient and fit good for thy body, for thy name, for thy estate, for thy children, for thy family? Any good for life, at death, after death? Not any one of these which God has not distinctly promised. If you knew a man to be sufficient, to have an estate worth ten thousand pounds, and all free, you would presently trust him for a hundred pounds; or if such a one should command anyone in his need to come to him and borrow, this would draw many to him; but if he should take a man out particularly and say to him, Friend, my estate is thus great, I have a great estate, and I pray thee if thou needest anything at any time, repair to me, I give thee my word,

and if that be not enough, thou shalt have bond and seal that I will help thee; it were enough, he needed not to say more, he will go to him I warrant you. Thus saith the Lord to a believer, to one who has accepted of his Son Jesus Christ, saith God to him, I tell thee by my Word, (which is truth itself and cannot lie nor deceive) that I am a great God, all-sufficiency and goodness are in me in infinite perfection, and I am able to do thee any good; now my will is that thou shouldst come unto me at any time, in any of thy distresses, and I do promise thee that I will not withhold any good thing from thee; As true as I am God, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee; should not this encourage us to live by faith?

4. His power and ability; as we want much good, so God does undertake all good: And this is another encouragement, that God never over-engages himself; he is able to make good all his undertakings: Many a man is undone by suretyship; he suffers himself to be bound beyond his ability; it is not so with God.

This is granted, that at the least a proportionate power is necessary to give being to all promises and undertakings; goodness and kindness are enough to make a promise, but ability is also required to fulfill that promise. If a subject promises to release or pardon a malefactor, why, this is nothing, he is not to be trusted; why, because he has not the power of life or death; if a poor man promises to discharge a debt of four hundred thousand pounds; why, no man will trust his undertakings: why, because he has no ability, he has not an estate answerable, he is not able to pay twenty shillings; so that power gives ground to trusting, because power is a necessary ingredient to all.

Now then, God has ability enough to fulfill all or any of his promises.

Obj. You will say, his promises are many.

Sol. I answer, as our needs are many, so his promises are many; but then, as his promises are many, so his goodness is great, and his power infinite; now an infinite goodness and an infinite power are able to fulfill not only many but infinite promises.

Objection. You will say; that the things promised are great.

Sol. I confess they are, God has undertaken great matters, to pardon great sins, to convert great sinners, to conquer great temptations, to convey great consolations: But is he not a great God? Is anything too hard for him? Nothing is impossible with God.

Obj. But you will say, that particular wants still increase and renew themselves.

Sol. So they do, as the vessels which we fill today require a new filling tomorrow, and the stomachs which we seem to satisfy now, within a few hours they are empty and craving: But then, though the vessel may be dry; yet the fountain is not: though the vessel may be empty, yet the fountain is full and still streaming. As God's goodness is a living fountain, so his promises are a perpetual bond; they are continued undertakings and depend upon an unexhausted and infinite depth of goodness, Isa. 46:3. O house of Jacob, which are borne by me from the belly and carried from the womb, Ver. 4 Even to old age I am he, and even to gray hairs I will carry you.

Obj. But yet you will say: yea, but God is engaged to so many; there is not a believer but God has bound himself by many promises to him.

Sol. I confess, with man oftentimes this is something; he has but a particular ability and therefore may overshoot himself by general engagements; but with God it is not so, in whom power and ability to fulfill what he undertakes is not contracted, broken, limited, or dependent, but ample, unlimited, and all-sufficient from himself. Therefore he is said to

reserve mercy for thousands, and his promises run to Abraham and to all his seed. Why, the power of God, by which he is able to fulfill all his promises, it is a creating power, such a power as can (upon the pleasure of his will) command things into being; and it is an overtopping power: God alone can command our helps, he needs not the assistance of any to fulfill his undertakings; and it is an enduring power: it abides forever, His hand is never shortened that it cannot save. Is the Lord's hand waxed short (said God himself to Moses? Num. 11:23.) You shall see now whether my word shall come to pass or not. So then, as God has engaged himself to do us good, so he is able enough to make that good.

5. His fidelity and truth: As the promises, for the matter of them, are full of goodness: so for the form of them, they are sealed with truth: God who cannot lie has promised, said the Apostle, Titus 1:2. and it is impossible for him to lie, Heb. 6:18.

Truth and fidelity may be conjectured to consist in three things; I speak now of them as applied to promises.

1. In reality of intention: Where the declaration is a fair letter, and the intention is a blur; when that is large, and this is nothing; this may be a complimentary lie, but it is not truth; the expression must be but the intention clothed in words; it must be the purpose of the heart transcribed if we will style it truth and fidelity. Now when God promises any good to a believer, this is not vox & præter ea nihil: a mere show of eloquent and comfortable words: Oh no, it is his will and intention, and very purpose made known: He does indeed intend that good which he undertakes and speaks of in his promises.

2. In a constancy of resolution: As falsehood is placed not only in present incongruities, (when heart and tongue are at variance) but also in

subsequent inconstancies: As when, though my present intention and expression were parallel, yet afterward, like a rotten bottom which slips aside from the house, so my heart breaks away from itself, it becomes a heart and a heart, as in Saul's promise to David, which changed presently, etc. On the contrary is it with truth, and in particular with God's truth about his promises to believers; His word of promise does answer his purpose at first (for as he thought and intended, so did he speak) and that purpose still answers itself, and therefore he has sworn by himself, that he will not alter the thing that has gone forth of his lips: My Covenant shall stand fast; Psal. 89:34, 28.

3. In a certainty of execution: As when a person has promised to lend or give a hundred pounds, he being free to take his own time, comes and lays it down and says, Lo here is the money which I promised to lend or give, take it; this is fidelity or truth. Such a truth is there in God's promises: This is not all the truth of them, that for certain God has spoken such good things: but further, that he will assuredly perform them: Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Jacob, Jer. 33:14.

6. His performance of them to those that have lived by faith. When persons have committed themselves and their conditions unto him; when they have trusted upon his word, he has not failed them, he has made it good. Abraham, he did live by faith when God promised him a son; the text says that he did believe, he did not consider his own body but gave glory to God in resting upon the sole goodness, fidelity, and strength of his promise, and God did indeed perform the same unto him. Not any of the Kings of Israel and Judah but expressly sped well when in their exigencies they did trust unto God. Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them; they

trusted in thee, and were not confounded, Psalm 22:4-5. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I was helped, says David, Psal. 28:7. The Lord shall help them and deliver them (speaking of the righteous) and save them because they trust in him, Psal. 37:40. Now put all together, should we not live by faith, trust upon God in Christ (and through and for Christ) for all our helps of soul, who is: 1. An all-sufficient fountain. 2. Who commands us unto himself for our helps. 3. Who has promised all good unto us if we will but trust him. 4. Who is able enough to make good whatsoever he promises. 5. Who cannot and will not lie, deceive or fail us. 6. Who has given testimony of his truth in all ages; who has performed his oath to Jacob and remembered his mercy to Abraham; who has been ever in all ages mindful of his Covenant to such as dared by faith live upon him and trust in him.

Thirdly, consider the qualities of this life of faith, and these may greatly encourage us to strive to live upon God in Christ by faith. There are four ingredients in this kind of life, all of which are admirable, and indeed they are peculiar privileges of it.

1. It is the only Christian life. 2. It is the only comfortable life. 3. It is the only prosperous and thriving life. 4. It is the only certain and steadfast life.

1. The life of faith is the only Christian life. The Christian shares a life common with many creatures; his life of eating and drinking, of nourishment and growth, is such a life as the beasts live as well as he; his life of reason and labor, that also is such a life which all men live as well as he; but the life of faith, that is singular and proper to the believer; for no man has that faith which the true believer has; and no man has his estate so in heaven, so in God's hands, so enclosed and treasured in the Covenant of promises, as he. What Christ spoke to his Disciples about this very matter,

Matthew 6:31: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewith shall we be clothed?" Verse 32: "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." As if he should say; it is enough for mere sinners, for such as have not God to be their God, who cannot in Christ call him Father, it is enough for them to lead such a vexing and distrustful life. That I say here, why, it is enough for men of this life, the men of this world, for them who have their only portion here, to live the life of sense, to be scraping, to be plodding, to be vexing their thoughts and hearts, how to acquire, how to obtain, how to lengthen an estate; to have a God, and yet to live without him: a Christ, and not to live upon him: as if either were nothing in this Christian; but for the Believer, who has a God, and a Christ, and all good undertaken for him by a full and faithful Covenant; it is his life now to trust upon his God, to rely upon his Savior, to quiet himself in God's Word of promise. As Christ spoke in another case, "If you love them that love you, and if you do good to them that do good unto you, what singular thing do you? do not even the Publicans and sinners the same?" That I say in this case, if you will make up your own estate, if you will live upon what you see, and what you taste, and what you handle, and go not above and beyond these and yourselves; do not sinners, do not the worst of sinners do the same? If the vilest person can rejoice when his table is full, and hang down his head when sensible things go off; wherein does the believer exceed him, who is merry and cheerful only in a sensible plenty, and his heart is ready to break in the ebb and subtraction of that, by the days or years of scarcity and sensible distress? If you looked upon God as your Father, and Christ as your plentiful redemption, and the promises as a goodly portion and your inheritance; then the days of tears to others would be hours of thankfulness unto you; and the nights of fears to others would

be times of sweet repose and contentment unto you: When the spider's web was swept away, yet you could see the house standing and sure; even in all sensible abstractions of the olive, and vine, and stalls, you could yet rejoice in the God of your salvation. For the place of your defense is the munition of rocks; bread shall be given unto you, and your waters shall be sure, Isaiah 33:16.

I observe a threefold difference between an unbeliever and a believer.

One is in the very estate: for the believer has a far better portion than the unbeliever; he has a portion set out for this life, and a portion also for a better, he has food for his body and grace for his soul. Another is in the manner of settling the estate: for general providence relieves the one, and special affection provides for the other. The one is helped by common goodness of universal kindness, and the other is undertaken for, and secured by a singular bond of Covenant. God has made over himself and all his goodness unto him in his Son Jesus Christ: He has taken upon himself all the care, and all the good, and only wills the believer to be upright, and diligent, and so to trust upon him; he has settled all his grace, and strength, and comfort in Christ, etc. A third is in the manner of managing: The unbeliever, he will, like the prodigal, have all the estate into his own hands, he will trust upon himself, he dares not settle on God, for he fears him, he suspects him, he thinks verily God will not do him good, but he will fail: But the believer knows whom he has trusted, God is his God; and has undertaken for him, and he who has promised is faithful, who will also do it: Now though I have not in hand, yet I have in promise; though I have not in the coffer, yet I have in the bonds; my estate is even all that is good for me, and it lies in a sure hand, in the hand of my good God who will not fail; Hereupon I live, to this I trust: though others vex, and fret, and curse, yet I

sit down quietly; Why, because faith goes about what we see, and it is able to see the estate large enough, though lying in divine promises; and this is to live like a Christian, for this is to acknowledge a God, and a Christ to some purpose. 2. The life of faith, it is the only comfortable life.

It is with our life, as it is with fire; which if it burns fair and clear, then it is pleasant and delightful; but if it is dull and smoking, it makes us weary both of it and the room. While faith guides our lives (by settling our thoughts and desires on God and Christ), then the lamp is clear, life feels like life: we can pray with joy, hear with delight, follow our callings with cheerfulness, and lie down in peace. But if you sever faith from life, so that we dare not trust in God nor rest on Christ, we must possess, or else we cannot trust nor live. Now the chimney smokes, the soul becomes displeasing to itself; the soul craves help from the body, and the body from the soul; but neither is able to help the other, and therefore this is wanting, and this is vexing. The waves now get over the ship and sink it with a load and deluge of worldly, endless, fruitless, anxious, vexing cares and fears. And in sober sadness tell me, what do you think of such a life, wherein the head is disturbed and curiously tortured with a variety of manifold and exquisite suspicions and thoughts, and the heart is deeply racked with the continual breakings of trembling sighs and griefs? That a man is not able to get, nor yet patient to wait; he can neither give himself help, nor will he trust Him who can. That his estate is burdened with many wants, and all this is made unspeakably grievous by another worse burden of unbelieving thoughts; that a man sees he cannot bear, and yet will not ease his shoulder by trusting. That a man cannot begin to think, but his thoughts throw him into the way of "what if," "What if the Lord will not do me good?" "What if I cannot have that?" "What if such a one fails?" or "What if it does not

come on such a day?" etc. So that he cannot think without tumults; nor speak without discontents; nor eat without dislike; nor walk without slavishness; nor work without distrustfulness; nor sleep without terrors; nor awake without bitterness; nor rise without carefulness; and amidst all this, he has no heart for duty, nor to God, nor to heaven, nor earth, nor to Christ, nor to himself, nor his; for either he has no faith or else will not live by it; He dares not trust God or Christ. There are three things which concur to make life uncomfortable:1. One is a sense of want: A man has an extreme feeling of need: no sense or slight sense avails to break our spirits.2. Another is a strong desire; the heart pants and reaches after the supply, and this multiplies thoughts and cares.3. A third is palpable insufficiency; that a man cannot for his life compass his desires and supplies, and therefore like Ahab, who was impeached for Naboth's vineyard, he is dejected and grieved; all of which fall ordinarily into the life of unbelief.

But now to wheel about on the contrary, the life of faith is sweet and comfortable.Four things would make a man's life very comfortable:

1. One is if he were eased of all burdens.
2. Another, if he were secured from all prejudices.
3. A third, if what he had were very good and enough.
4. A fourth, if he were assured that whatever good he should need, he should be without fail supplied in a fit time.Now then the life of faith produces all these.

1. It relieves a man of all burdens: There are but two burdens which we can well think of. One is the sinful burden. The other is the earthly burden: The burden of guilt, and the burden of cares. But faith (if a man could live by it) takes them both off: It relies on Christ for the one, and on God's providence for the other. It sees a sufficiency and an accepted price in his

blood to remit our guilt, and it sees an all-sufficient, careful, faithful providence to remove our care. And I tell you, that the soul comes to great ease which is released from both these: Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee. Sin shall be discharged, therefore I am comfortable; cares are gone, therefore I am cheerful.

2. It secures against all prejudices, and why? Because it places the person in goodness itself, in him who is nothing but goodness, (that is) who is in respect of himself good, and who will order all things for good to the Believer, nay, and in his hands who is an absolute Lord. 'Tis true, that one change in our estate may be contrary to another, and because we esteem one of them to be good, therefore we judge the other to be evil: but then, though changes be opposite in sense, yet they are concordant in outcome; in the event all falls out for good. As sickness though opposite to health, yet it may result in the further preservation of life; sometimes the Christian is high, sometimes low; sometimes he is in a free state, sometimes in a clouded state; sometimes he is in conquest, sometimes he is in conflict; sometimes he is praised by the mouths of men, and sometimes maligned and torn to pieces, as if the tongues of Christians were the teeth of lions: (Paul gives a catalogue of his changes in these and similar cases;) yet in all and after all, the Christian's condition is not prejudiced. God still owns the person, watching over his safety; keeps all poison from the heart, and like a ship (sometimes by fair wind, sometimes by a rough storm) he still brings him safe to harbor. As Paul spoke even of his bonds that they fell out to the furtherance of the Gospel; so I say of the calamitous occurrences, the sense sees nothing but misery, yet faith can see the good end which God made with Job, and therefore to rejoice in troubles.

3. It makes the present condition good and enough. I will tell you one reason why the life of sense is uncomfortable; namely, because it is grounded on a short and empty good; that which a man can see with his eye and hold in his hand is not half of what he can desire with his heart. No worldly thing can ever be enough for an unbelieving heart. But faith makes the soul well pleased because it presents the soul with such a good as cannot only satisfy but also exceed it. God is an infinite goodness; he who can satisfy more than a world may well content one man's heart; and God's favor is a satisfying good, (I shall be satisfied with thy favor, said David); and to this does faith entitle, yea, this it does reveal to the soul. And I will tell you one thing, that he who cannot be contented with a God and his favor, with a Christ and his blood, with a Covenant and its fullness, will never be content with anything; if all-sufficiency is not enough for thee, when can emptiness and vanity please and satisfy thee? What if a man has but a little garden, yet if he has a large park and ten thousand acres of arables, and the King's royal favor to grace all this? I tell you this would sparkle his spirit; it would breathe a well-pleasedness in him. Thou complainest that thou hast but little of earthly things; I grant it, and a little may be enough: (enough depends more on quality than quantity) but then, though the garden be but small, yet the park is large; though thy portion in externals be not so great, yet this with a great and all-sufficient God, and a blessed Savior, and a heaven to boot, is enough and enough. If the wife says she has but a small jointure, yet if she has a rich and tender husband, she is to be blamed if she says she has not enough: Faith views the Christian's estate not as it is in its hand but as in her husband's hand, in Christ's, and then all is well enough.

4. It assures of universal and reasonable supplies: The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, so David, Psal. 23:1. Follow him a little in that Psalm, and you shall see what God has done for him; he made his pastures green and his waters still, verse 2. O what a freshness and what a calmness does faith make in the state; His soul is taken care of, and at the worst, when he was in the valley of the shadow of death, yet he was quieted from fear because his faith saw God there; yea, and found him there to uphold and comfort: That for what was past; Then for his present condition, see verse 5. His table is prepared for him as if he took no care (no anxious care) he needed not to trouble himself, (thou preparest a table for me) and not a mean table neither (my cup runneth over) nor yet a dull and uncheerful table, (thou anointest my head with oil); so that faith for the present finds food and cheer enough too; But then for the future condition, will this hold out? See what faith finds in reversion, verse 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; (Goodness) perhaps that respected his temporal estate, (Mercy!) perhaps that respected his spiritual, 1. One his body. 2. Another his soul, and both these (shall follow him) as the shadow that follows the body, they should be still at hand; but how long? not for a day only, but (all his days) not all the days of his dignities, abilities, health, but all the days of his life.

Nay, yet again, surely they shall follow me: It was not a speech of fancy, but of certainty; it was beyond all doubt and uncertainty. Surely mercy and goodness shall follow, etc. So in Psalm 84:11: The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the sun is the parent of light, so is God of all good. The sun is the cause of all fruitfulness and cheerfulness, so is God of all blessings: and He is a shield to a sun for doing good, and a shield to secure and protect from evil. The Lord will give grace and glory: Grace is the best thing a man can

have on earth, and glory is the highest thing a man can have in heaven. But these He will give; they shall not be bought, but freely bestowed. No good thing will He withhold, etc. As if He should say, if grace is not enough for earth, if glory is not enough for heaven; think then of any other good thing; there is not any other good thing which shall be withheld (that is) which shall not, like the rain (which ceases to be withheld), pour down upon you.

Will you hear the Prophet say a word to this; to this future supply for those who live by faith: then read Jeremiah 17:7: Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is. Here we find the believer at his work of trusting, or living by faith, and at his wages too: Blessed is the man that trusteth, etc. Indeed the Prophet speaks a great word, he is blessed; more cannot be said; but let's see how he proves that? Verse 8: For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river; and shall not see when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. If faith plants the tree in a springing soil, if it beholds the tree to spread, and grow, and bear in all weathers, though heat comes in all times, though drought comes, yet the leaf is green and fruitful, and ceases not to yield; does it not then assure us of supply for the future? Has it not a good storehouse, an ample treasury for the believer?

What should I say more! May not faith say that to the soul which God has said to faith? If so, then we may well rejoice for the present, and be void of care for the future; for God has said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, Hebrews 13:5. Thou hast mercy, and still shalt have mercy; thou hast grace, and shalt still have grace; thy part in Christ, and still shalt have it: supplies of all good, and still shalt have them.

3. The life of faith is the only getting and thriving life. What the Apostle spoke of godliness, that we may say of faith; it is great gain: for it has the promises of this life and of the life which is to come.

Profit is what most men look upon: it is the cry of most, who will show us any good? And faith has a singular art of getting. I observe that the good of a Christian in some respect hangs in the promises, as water does in the clouds: and look as the boisterous winds rather drive away the clouds and rain (though a few drops may slip down), but it is the sweet heat of the sun which makes the clouds open themselves and give out their store.

So the only way to drive away the promises, as it were, to remove them with their blessings, is not to believe, not to trust: and the only way to make them yield their precious treasures is to believe, to live by faith. Take a place for either, Jer. 17:5. Thus says the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. As the Lord of Samaria. Ver. 6. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. Psal. 37:39. The salvation of righteousness is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble, ver. 40. And the Lord shall keep them and deliver them, etc., and save them because they trust in him.

The soul oftentimes bitterly complains that as yet it hath not that good thing; it sticks yet in the hands of God, Christ can do it if he will. Why, but if ever thou wouldst speed, thou must trust; I dare not trust though, says the soul: how then canst thou speed? Why then dost thou complain? God and Christ undertake thy good; but then he requires this of thee: do but trust me for it and thou shalt speed, I will not fail thee, I have sworn by myself that I will not alter nor repent. The poor man comes to Christ and cries out for

help, Mark 9: O Lord, says he, if thou canst do anything, etc. Why; says Christ, I can do anything, I am able enough and willing enough, that's not the thing: this is it which will make thee speed; canst thou believe, darest thou to trust upon me? He answered, Lord I believe, I do trust, and you know that his son was presently healed. The child comes to the father, Father supply me, I will saith the father; but I will have it instantly; if he had asked and trusted his father, he might have sped, but because he doth ask and murmur with his father, he is therefore justly denied.

There are two things which mightily oblige a person to the doing of a kindness; one is his own promise, another is his friend's confidence, who hath upon the security of his word adventured; so here, besides the very inclination of the divine goodness to make good its own undertakings, this also adds not a little to our speed and furtherance that we rely only on God. It is a common complaint that we cannot be answered: I reply, it is a common fault that God nor Christ can be trusted. It is not how many wants thou feelest, nor how many promises thou readest, nor how many prayers thou makest; if with all this thou dost not ask in faith, think not (O man) to receive anything from the Lord.

I will give you three reasons why the life of faith is the only way to thrive.

First, because it puts a man upon the only way of blessings. As none can bless but God, and he can bless; so the blessings of God are to be expected only in the ways of God, and nothing so skillful in God's ways as faith.

Secondly, it makes all the promises yield: It is true, as God is infinitely above all, and his power is great; so faith (in a qualified sense) is above God himself; he is not able to stand against it: Be it to thee as thou wilt, said Christ to the believing woman: Thou shalt have the desires of thine heart, said David, Psal. 37:3-4.

Thirdly, God himself and Christ, and all become ours, if we dare to trust and live by faith: You want outward supplies, I require no more of you, says God, but to walk uprightly and diligently, and to trust in me, and you shall have it: You want spiritual supplies for your soul; I require no more of you but to come to me, to trust in me, and go to my ordinances; stand in my ways and you shall have them. Fourthly, it is the only steadfast and abiding life; when other lives are broken and crushed, they are gone down, yet this life by faith (like the stars which shine in the night) remains firm. I will clear it by argument; the stability of all sorts of lives is according to their principles and motives. The life which depends upon a failing cause is a fading life: and the life which depends upon a constant cause is a constant life. Now the life of faith is bred by a living principle, and is fed by constant and abiding motives; you know that the grounds of this life of faith are in God and Christ, and the promise; now all changes reach not to them, our changes are below in other things, but they are not in the promises, nor in God above: as changes are not in the heavens but in the air. Look upon things at hand, and so they appear with variety, and with much unlikeness but eye them in the covenant, in the promises, there you have the same faithful God still, tender father still all-sufficient Savior still, the promises are Yea and Amen, Christ is the everlasting father: the covenant of God, an everlasting covenant: God's love an immutable love: he is as able still, as willing still, his bow abides in strength, and underneath are his everlasting arms. Though David's father and mother forsake him, yet the Lord will take him up, and though all forsook Paul, yet God stood by him: so true is it that faith can cast a sure anchor in all states and in all changes; it can look upon the same God, and the same Christ, and the same promises. Though the mariners, when they put to sea, quickly lose sight of land, yet they never

lose sight of heaven; however far they sail, and in whatever tempest, yet still they may look upon the heaven, the same heaven. Faith never loses sight of its rock, of its salvation, of its helps; that which it eyes, it may eye forever, and that upon which it trusts, it may trust upon forever; you have friends, and this lifts up your spirit; your friends die, and now your spirits sink; you have parents and children; in these you rejoice and settle your confidence: both the one and the other embrace the dust, and your heart is utterly broken for help and comfort. O Lord what have I more! On the contrary, you have a God, and he is the same forever; a Christ, and he yesterday, today, and the same forever: promises, and they are a word settled forever in heaven; but when all sensibles fly off; yet if we live by faith we are at no degree of loss; what can he lack who has him who is all in all, and what can he lose who has him that knows no change at all? Fourthly, let us consider Jesus Christ himself; there are diverse things which should persuade us to live by faith upon him. There are nine things in him which may move us 1. The exceeding plentifulness of our supplies in him: You are not approaching a dry cistern but a full fountain; what may do you good, he has, and he has that in a most eminent fullness.

Is it the good and virtue of his redemption, which you need? Why, in him is plenteous redemption, and in him is strong salvation, and therefore his blood is called a precious blood, 1 Pet. 1:19. His blood would not have been able to discharge the least sin unless it had exceeded the merit of the greatest; indeed, it is as able to cancel many debts as any. Sins may be distinguished into great and little, into many and few, but the blood of Christ, the virtue of that is singular and infinite in its price and value.

Is it the good and virtue of his holiness which you need? Why, John 1:16. There is a fullness of grace in him. 3:34. He has the Spirit without measure.

Therefore, the holy virtues of Christ are styled unsearchable riches, Eph. 3:8. You cannot comprehend their depth; when you can easily reach the bottom of a thing, then it is not unsearchable; but where you sound and fathom and yet can feel no bottom, so here, etc. Yes, and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. 2:3. The Apostle has said all that needs to be said, Heb. 7:25. He is able to save them to the utmost who come unto God by him, (that is) if you need his intercession to plead acceptance of your persons or of your requests; why, there is none like him; come unto God by him, he is able to dispatch the greatest request.

Or is it sufficiency for duty which you need? Why, herein is Christ most able to supply you. If the duty is active, he can enable you to abundant fruitfulness, John 15:5. He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit. If the duty is passive, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, said Paul, Phil. 4:13. Be it that you yourself are weak, yet Christ is strong, and he has said My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in weakness, 2 Cor. 12:9.

2. The ordination of Christ to this very thing, namely, to supply the state of a believer.

God did purpose him and intend him, and sent him, and he came for this very end to do us good and to help us in time of need, Eph. 1:22. He gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, ver. 23. Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

The Head (you know) is a thing for office, and its offices are both dominion and influence; for these was Christ given to the Church to rule the Church and to supply the Church. 1 Cor. 1:30. He is made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Heb. 7:22. He was made a surety of a better Testament, John 6:27. Him has God the Father

sealed, Isa. 61:1. The Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, etc. Christ, you will grant that he is an able Priest, an able Prophet, and an able King; he is sufficient enough to pacify by his blood, to purify by his spirit, to conquer by his word; yes, but then consider yet further that he is ordained of God to be this and to do this for the believer. If the King commits a mighty stock to a man's hand and sets him in the place of a Treasurer and confirms him by seal, and all for this very end that he should supply such and such persons, would they not come unto him for their supplies?

You are never able to be righteous by yourself, you are never able to give grace to yourself, you are never able to give strength to yourself; but Christ is, and God is, even that God to whom you so earnestly cry. He has ordained his own Son for your help, even for your help. As if the King should say to a poor man petitioning: "Why, go to my Treasurer, I have given him orders for you," so the Lord says to the Believer: "Go to my Son, I have ordained him to give you grace, I have ordained him to plead your suits, to rule your heart, to conquer your sins and your temptations. I sent him into the world for that very end and purpose, that he might be all in all to you: I purposed his blood for you, and his righteousness, and his fullness, and his intercession, all for you."

3. His services, what he has done on behalf of a believer.

Allow me a little in this, and you shall see what reason we have then to trust in Christ.

First, though he was equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the

likeness of men, Phil. 2:6-7. He laid aside his glory as it were, and stooped down infinitely below himself into our nature to do service for us.

Secondly, he was made under the Law (obedient thereto in fulfilling all righteousness) to redeem those who were under the Law, that they might receive the adoption of sons, Gal. 4:4-6. He did in our stead, and as our surety, perfectly satisfy the whole Law in all its commands for us.

Thirdly, he laid down his life for us; he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, Phil. 2:8. He shed his heart's blood to make our peace and to reconcile us unto his Father: and have we not then reason to trust him and to believe that he will do us good? Why: single out a person who professes sincerity unto us, that he would lay out half his estate to do us good; we would repose some confidence in him. But if we knew that he did so heartily affect us that he would die for our good, oh say we, you may trust in him; you need not fear to go to him, to request him for this or that courtesy. Now then, Christ has not merely professed but has really acted this; he entered into bond, as it were, to satisfy for us; he shed his very blood and offered up his very life and soul for the believer. And yet will you not (for whom he has done and endured all this) yet will you not trust in him for merit, for righteousness, for grace, for strength, etc.?

4. His disposition. Though a person were very able to do us good, yet if he hated us, we should (I confess) have small encouragement to build our hopes upon him; for two persons are not to be trusted: namely, the professed enemy and the false friend. But far be the thought of these things in us regarding Jesus Christ; He is graciously and lovingly affected towards believers. Eph. 5:2: "Walk in love as Christ also has loved us and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling

savor." Ephes. 3:19: "To know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." Yes, Paul himself suggests unto us this love of Christ unto him as the singular ground why he did by faith live upon him, Gal. 2:20: "The life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Though I dare not trust an enemy, yet I dare to trust my friend; though I will not depend on him for help, yet on my friend I will: Why, a friend lives at all times, and love is the principle of bounty and of kindness: He that loves much will do much; beneficence and readiness to help, they grow in love as the branches in the root; and therefore Christ is ready to help, because exceeding in love to his members. Observe the Apostle to this very thing in another place. Heb. 4:16. Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. There is need in us of mercy, (for we sin daily) and need in us of grace, (for we are still weak) but in heaven there is a throne of grace, there is mercy enough, and grace enough to help.

Object. I confess there is so, says the believing person; but I am afraid to approach thereunto.

Sol. No, be not afraid, but come boldly unto the throne of grace, says the Apostle. There is a twofold boldness: There is a boldness of ignorance; of this the Apostle speaks not: There is a boldness of holy affiance; of this he speaks: Thus he comes boldly, who presents all his needs and requests in the Name of Jesus Christ, and confidently relies upon him for supply and acceptance.

Object. But, may the soul reply, what encouragement have I to raise this confident affiance?

Sol. See the Apostle, ver. 15. For we have not a high Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: As if he should say, I beseech you but to remember what your Christ is, and then you may boldly come; you are sensible; why; he is much more sensible of your infirmities; he knows your wants, yea, he feels them; feels them, how? there is a feeling by way of passion and change; so indeed he does not feel them; and there is a feeling by way of compassion: so he feels them (that is) he is tenderly sensible of them, he is very compassionately ready to help them: As a mother, she feels the want of bread, of heat, of clothes, of liberty, in her child, she is infinitely ready to relieve him; such a kind of feeling is there in Christ to his members in their need; Ergo, come boldly to him, crave of him, trust and rely on him for help.

Why else is he called a merciful High Priest? What is mercifulness? If you look upon it in man, it is the sounding of his bowels, it is a compassionate sympathy joined with a singular readiness to relieve. And if you look upon it in God or Christ, it is a most tender sense of man's infirmities and necessities, accompanied with an exceeding propensity or readiness to forgive the repenting soul, and to help and succor and comfort the Believer.

Objection. You are truly grieved and humbled for your sins, and yet you dare not live by faith upon Christ, that he will obtain pardon for you.

Solution. Why, O man; Christ is a merciful High Priest. Here am I, says Christ, I am very ready to offer up the virtue of my blood for you.

So, you are much distressed about the lack of grace, and the insolence of sin and Satan; why, says Christ, lo here I am, I am very willing, very ready to do you good; to give you more grace, to conquer your sins for you, and

Satan for you. I am a merciful High Priest, my bowels are troubled for you, I love you earnestly, I remember you still.

5. His conjunction and relation: I pray you consider this. How stands it 'twixt Christ and a believer? what union is there? what relation? hath Christ no reference unto him? or hath he none unto Christ, that he is afraid to live upon him? To trust, to depend on him for his supplies.

Two things I will briefly touch.

1. The nearness of their relations.

2. The ground for them to live by faith. First, there is a near relation between Christ and a believer: see Cant. 6:3. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. Why, this is a near relation indeed, a relation of mutual ownership, that Christ does say of a believer, Thou art mine, and the believer can reciprocally affirm of Christ, thou art mine; As Adam said of his wife, Gen. 2:23. Thou art bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, that same does the Apostle apply back from the Church to Christ, Eph. 5:30. we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Of all rational relations, none so near, so dear, so tender as that of a man and his wife, yet in such a relation do Christ and a believer stand. Again; he is the head of his body the Church, Ephes. 1:22. the whole Church is his body; every believer a member, Christ the Head. I spare the citation of more, as of the tree and the branches, the foundation and the building. Secondly, now this relation is the ground of reliance, a direct reason why we should live upon Christ by faith. For; First, does not special relation give special title: If a man becomes a husband, has not the wife hereupon a title to the benefits and comforts of his estate? His riches are for her good; and his houses are for her good, and his land for her good; It holds just so here; faith espouses a man to Christ, now Christ is mine, and I am his, and then the Apostle infers

the title presently, 1 Cor. 3:21. All things are yours, Ver. 22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours. Ver. 23. For ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Secondly, has not special relation a special obligation? Why, though a man be not bound but in a bond of charity to relieve and help a woman before he is married; yet when once he is married, then by virtue of that relation, there lies upon him the bond of plain and particular duty; he is bound to love his wife as himself, Eph. 5:28. and to nourish and cherish her, v. 29. Mark now how the Apostle states our matter, even here too; (Even as the Lord, the Church) as if Christ were the very pattern of this love, of this cherishing, and of this nourishing, of this supplying and helping. Thirdly, has not special relation a special affection? I will do much for my servant; I will do more for my child, but I will do most of all for my wife: Why? because she is nearer than all, she is my very self; Christ does much for professed enemies; he leaves not himself without some testimonies of much kindness even to them; What; will he do much for strangers, much for enemies, and nothing for believers, for his own members, for his own spouse? Will he heal the ear of one who came to take away his life, and will he not (think you) heal the heart of him who has accepted of him unto life? Would he pray for them that nailed his hands and pierced his heart (Father forgive them) & will he not do much more for thee, who grieves for thy sins, prizes him in thy judgment, embraces him with all thy heart, would serve him with all thy might? For thee, who art bone of his bone, will he not pray for thee? Father forgive him, Father supply him, Father comfort him; Father sanctify him; Father strengthen and preserve him.

6. His invitation. This adds to all the rest: Behold, he calls thee. Rev 3:18. Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see, Rev. 22:17. Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely, Heb. 10:22. Draw near in full assurance of faith. But this I have touched on heretofore, therefore I spare to insist, proposing only one thing; that the invitation of Christ is not only to faith, but to the life of faith; not only to acceptance, but to dependence also; not only to take his person but to trust, and rest upon his merit, and to serve ourselves of his fullness. As if Christ should say unto a believer, I am thine, and all that I have is thine; now I pray thee in all thy necessities, come unto me, live upon my stock, draw from my fountain; when guilt is upon thee, make use of my blood; when wants are upon thee, make use of my treasure; when temptations are upon thee, make use of my power; when infirmities are upon thee, make use of my intercession, &c.

7. His assurances. What is that will you say? Why; this it is; he doth assure the believer, that if he will make use of him, he will not fail him, but will be effectual unto him. See a place or two for this. Mark 11:24. What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. John 14:13. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that your Father may be glorified in the same. There be four things by which we may be persuaded that Christ will do us good if we will live upon him by faith.

First, his express promise, which you see in that place alleged. John 14:13. Whatsoever ye ask in my name, that I will do: Observe it well: he says not, ask one particular only, but whatsoever ye ask in my Name, be it mercy, or be it justification, or be it holiness, &c. again, I will do it, as if he

should say, ye shall not need to trouble yourselves; and do not you fear, by reason of your unworthiness; I will take the matter upon myself; I will see it done: now brethren, when he that can help says I will help; when he that can do all things promises us that he will do anything for us, have we not cause to trust?

Secondly, his sealing of the promises: The promises (you know) do plentifully undertake all the latitude of the soul's estate, and of the body's too: There is mercy for transgressions, grace for sinfulness, comfort for tears, peace for trouble, strength for weakness, victory for assault, &c. All which promises Christ hath sealed and ratified by his blood, and therefore his blood is styled the blood of the Covenant. See Heb. 9:15, 17; 13:20. The principal reason whereof is to settle the hearts of believers and to encourage their souls to live upon him for the performances of them, they being all in him Yea and Amen, 2 Cor. 1:20.

3. His actual impetration of all that good which now we do enjoy. Why O Christian, art thou afraid to live upon thy Saviour for more good? Who was it that procured unto thee that same heavenly condition which now thou dost enjoy? Hast thou any relation to God as thy God? Christ did procure it: Is any one sin subdued? Christ hath done it: Is any one sin got off and pardoned? Christ did procure it: Is there any melting in thy breast, any hatred of corruption, any desires of grace, any endeavor, any strength? Christ wrought them. Thou dost seek them, but Christ did work them.

Now this is to be learned, that what special thing Christ has done is a pledge and assurance that Christ is willing to do more. Every gracious fruit and work points us to him, the fountain and cause upon whom we are to trust, not only for the entrance but also for the progress and completion of our spiritual estate.

His personal donation: He has given himself unto you; and will he not do other things for you? Which is greater?

His offices: All of them call upon us to live upon Christ by faith. To what end was he Priest? Was it to satisfy for himself? He needed not to satisfy for his own sins, who was without all sin. Nor does he make his own peace, whom the Father did, and does ever love. Verily, his satisfactions were for transgressors; and if there be any scope and intention of the virtues of that satisfaction, assuredly they look directly upon penitent believers. So likewise his intercession (which is another part of that office); why? Is it, think you, for himself? Nay, in that he is a Mediator, and a Mediator is an agent between two persons; he has no wants to be supplied, he needs not to ingratiate himself. Assuredly, brethren, he ever lives to make intercession for us — for us, says the Scripture — and he ever lives to do that work. He is continually offering and presenting the efficacy of his merit, which, as a sweet incense, perfumes our continual sacrifices, making them acceptable, etc.

The like may be said of his Prophetical and Kingly offices: he was invested with them as our Mediator, and therefore for our good. Now say, what a blasphemous absurdity it would be to conceive of Jesus Christ as of an idol, which has eyes but sees not, which has ears but hears not, which has hands but handles not, which has feet but walks not. That he should be a Priest to offer for sin, and yet we will not trust upon him for the pardon of the least sin; that he should live to make intercession, and yet we will not deliver any one request into his hands or rely on him to obtain any one good thing which we need or crave; that he is a King, able to subdue all his enemies; a Prophet, and able to teach any man's heart; but we will not credit our souls upon him; we will not repose the victories of our corruptions upon

his mighty arm, nor the reforming and beautifying of our spirits upon his singular wisdom and holiness.

Why? What did you think or mean when you accepted him to be your Mediator? Did you conjecture that if once you gave your consent to take him, that never after you should need him? Or if so, would never make use of him? Well, no more. What the Apostle said in another case, that I say in this: if we will not live by faith upon Christ, we do what in us lies to make void the Redemption of Christ, the intercession of Christ, the holiness of Christ, the glory and power of all the Offices of Christ.

If all this will not move us to live by faith in Christ (that is, to trust upon him for the help and supply of our spiritual estate), then take one thing more: there is an impossibility of supplies for your soul any other way; go and think and act any other course to do your soul good besides this, and it shall be fruitless after many years' industry; as you are, so still shall you be.

Objection. You will say, I will never leave complaining of this nature till it is bettered.

Solution. Your nature is not bettered by complaint but by grace: and that is in Christ, and never had until we can trust.

Objection. You will say, I will never leave grieving, nor praying, nor hearing, nor reading, nor fasting, nor conferring, till, etc.

Sol. 'Tis true, these are means, but where is the cause? What if a man should say, I will stay here all my life at these conduit pipes, but I will have water, while in the meantime the fountain yields not forth? I confess the Christian must apply himself to the Ordinances, but then it is Christ who sends forth the help, and then do the Ordinances deliver us our helps from Christ, not presently when one hears, but when effectually they have enabled us to believe. If thou canst hear and believe, pray and believe,

mourn and believe, fast and believe, etc., then good shall come unto thy soul. Draw a thousand bonds, yet if none of them be sealed, nothing is yet legally and forcibly made over and conveyed; many prayers avail little or nothing till they are sealed with faith, and now God will acknowledge our demands as authentic, and Christ will deliver unto us our heart's desire. I had thought to have handled the opposites of the life of faith, with the evidence of a true living by faith, and also the means which might assist us to the life of faith: But I recall myself, I may not expatiate so far; sufficient has been touched for this Use; perhaps the subject may be more amply treated if ever I should come to set down before that I am directly and intentionally: I therefore proceed to another Use.

Chapter Eighteen

The improvement of faith to a full assurance

I will yet advance on to one more use; since faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved, therefore not only to labor for that faith but to exalt that faith. My meaning is to improve this faith also yet further to strength and comfort.

Divines observe a double act of faith.

One of adherence, by which it cleaves unto Christ and relies upon him alone for righteousness, pardon of sin, grace, and salvation.

Another is of evidence, by which it clears unto the soul its interest in Christ and his righteousness and merits.

In the former, the soul renounces all other cornerstones, all other rocks of salvation, and trusts only upon the Name of Jesus Christ, accepts him as the only Lord, and relies on him as the only Savior, casting or rolling its heavenly and eternal safety into his blessed arms. In the latter, the soul feels itself reciprocally embraced by Christ; I have accepted him to be my Lord, and he says, I am thy King.

I have relied on him to be my Savior, and he says, I am thy salvation; for pardon of sins, and he says unto me, Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Now to this part of faith do I desire to mount the soul of a true believer, viz. not only to apprehend Christ but to know himself to be apprehended by him: not only to believe but to know him whom he hath believed. To rise thus far by faith to an assurance that Christ is my Christ; my Redeemer liveth, who gave himself for me; my Lord and my God, that he is my righteousness, my redemption, my propitiation.

For the better settling and exciting of you in this particular, I will briefly touch on these things. 1. What the assurance of faith is. 2. It may be had. 3. It should be had. 4. The arguments to stir us up to labor for it (that is) to know our riches and know our possessions. 5. The means to get it.

SECT. I Quest. 1. What the assurance of faith is. Sol. It is a victorious conclusion against the strength of doubts, whereby the mind of a believing person is ascertained and persuaded, and upon good ground settled, concerning his personal interest in Christ and his benefits.

For the better opening of this description, be pleased to observe these subsequent propositions. 1. That the assurance of faith is the conclusion of an Evangelical Syllogism: The Syllogism is this: Whosoever repents and believes in Christ, Christ with his benefits are his, and he is Christ's; but I do truly repent and believe in Christ; therefore Christ and his benefits are mine, and I am his.

In this Syllogism there are three propositions. The first is a proposition of most infallible certainty, it being expressly the voice of Jesus Christ himself, and of it the mind hath no doubt but fully assents unto it as a principle of Divine truth, viz. That he who repents and believes in Christ is

his, and he is Christ's. And of this the mind of a believer may be abundantly persuaded without questionings and doubts, forasmuch as it is a part of the Word of God, to whose absolute truth it doth plentifully subscribe.

The second is a proposition carrying with it the direct act of faith, in which the believing soul doth accept of Christ or receive him and trust upon him, by virtue of which there arises a most real and true union 'twixt Christ and the believer.

The third and last, which is the conclusion or inference drawn from both the former, comprehends in it the formal assurance of a believing heart that therefore Christ is mine and I am his.

That he who believes in Christ hath Christ and shall be saved; this is not yet that subjective assurance of justifying faith, forasmuch as many a hypocrite may believe that truth and yet have no personal interest in Christ.

Again, that I do believe in Christ, neither is this essentially assurance, forasmuch as to believe is one thing, and to be assured is another thing; many a good heart may accept Christ upon all his terms and articles of peace and life, and may cast and repose itself on him as the only rock and hope of the soul, and yet it may be so far from assurance (even at that time when it does so earnestly cleave unto Christ) that instead of assurance, it may be both tossed and prevailed upon by doubtings, suspicions, and fears concerning its particular and personal propriety in Christ and in his merits. But the last of the propositions, I am Christ's, and Christ is mine, this is formal assurance: for this concludes the dispute of the heart, and has in it particular and personal evidence.

2. It is a victorious conclusion against the strength of doubting: you know that in the mind of man, there are three kinds of working about an object comprehending goodness and truth. One they call peremptory assenting,

and peremptory dissenting in which the mind does yield plainly, or else refuses to subscribe and grant the matter proposed to be true and good. Another they call doubtings, which are the wavering acts of the mind, wherein it does not absolutely grant or deny; it does not absolutely conclude that so it is; nor absolutely that so it is not; yet rather inclines (for want of further evidence in the soul) that it is not so, than that it is so. The third they call evidence or assurance, which is such a work of the mind, wherein, against all doubtings and suspicions, the mind sees clearly the thing to be so, or not to be so: And thus is it here in the assurance of faith; such a light the mind has that it is able to rise beyond, and against doubtings, and to convince the soul against all suspicions, that Christ indeed is mine, and I am his.

Where, by the way observe thus much; that assurance does presuppose some doubtings: for if the mind of a believer had not doubtings about its personal interest, it could not well be said to be now assured. Doubtings did verily, and do, and may work in a believing soul; yea, but am I sure that Christ is mine? Is it certain that my sins are pardoned? I trust they are, but I fear they are not. Now assurance comes and conquers these workings, and clears all the doubting arguments, and convinces the mind that of a truth Christ is mine, and my sins are pardoned.

There are two degrees of doubtings. One consists in the questioning of our believing proprieties: Is Christ mine? Is his righteousness mine? &c. Another exceeds this, and consists in dominion, when the soul is suppressed by the strength of these doubtings, to side with it, and still to hang in suspense. Now this latter degree (especially) is assurance opposite unto; namely, it conquers our doubting, answers our arguments, clears it unto the soul against the many suspicions which did arise, that Christ does indeed

own it, that he is the Saviour thereof, and therefore I call it a victorious conclusion.

3. Assurance of faith is an ascertaining or persuading act, and that is proper and inseparable from assurance; therefore is it so expressed in Rom. 8:38. I am persuaded that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come ver. 39. Nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Yea, and it is expressed by a word of personal certainty, 2 Tim. 1:12. I know whom I have believed: In knowledge there is always a certainty; for that is one of the main differences 'twixt it and opinion, that the one leaves the mind uncertain and wavering, and the other determines the mind with certainty and infallibility.

While the mind remains like a pair of indifferent scales which bend this way and that way, or like a boat in the river, now floating up, and then sinking down, now reeling to this side, by and by to that side, it cannot be said to be assured; perhaps Christ is mine, perhaps I am his; this is a plain uncertainty, for the mind is not persuaded. But in the assurance of faith, the mind is like a scale that weighs down, it is persuaded, and ascertained, there is a prevalent evidence of the thing. Not only in absolute terms, that Christ belongs to a believer, but in reflexive terms, that Christ belongs to me, he gave himself for me, and he is my redeemer, and this particular or personal persuasion is assurance.

4. Assurance is not all kinds of persuasion or ascertaining: there are two kinds of assurance or persuasion of the mind touching a man's personal interest in Christ.

One is imaginary and deluding: for as the heart of a man may deceive itself about the habit of faith (or any other grace) so it may delude him about the acts and degrees of the same: does the true believer believe in Christ? So thinks the hypocrite, that he does too: Has the true believer a persuasion of his personal propriety in Christ, which clears the mind of doubting? So has the hypocrite too, a most exalted confidence, an iron faith that would never bend nor bow by doubtings. It may be with him as with a poor man in a dream: what the rich man has by propriety and in possession, even that same thing may the poorest man have in a dreaming fancy and imagination.

But then ask the hypocrite by what grounds art thou thus confidently persuaded? What did incline thy mind hereto? What promise hast thou found that Christ is, and will be thine, whose heart was never humbled for sin, whose heart still retains the love of sin? Now, as the man who being demanded how he came without his wedding garment, he is speechless.

The fool (says Solomon, Prov. 14:16) rages and is confident: and so the presumptuous person, he sins, and yet is persuaded; he walks in his sins, and yet is assured.

I pray you remember that the assurance of faith is no such absolute and boisterous settling of the mind, that Christ is mine however, though I be never so ignorant and wicked, and though I live never so wretchedly and profanely; yet Christ is mine, and God is my merciful Father, and my sins are pardoned: O no, this is a diabolical assurance, it is no evangelical assurance.

Another is grounded and divinely rational, and it always follows sound repentance and faith: That assurance which goes before these is false; absolutely I am bound to repent and to believe, but I cannot be assured but

in a conditional order: If I should be assured that Christ were mine before I did believe: this were a lie: forasmuch as Christ is not mine until I do by faith accept of him; and if I should be assured that my sins were pardoned before I did repent, I did in this delude mine own heart, forasmuch as sin is not pardoned unless it be repented of. No, but I must repent of my sins, I must accept of Jesus Christ offered unto me in the Gospel, to be my Lord and Saviour, and now I labor to be assured, now I come to be persuaded, having subscribed to all the propositions and articles of the Gospel, that now Christ is mine, and I do by the Word convince my soul that so it must be. For thus I argue with my soul, whosoever repents and believes and endeavors to walk in Christ, assuredly Christ is his, and he is Christ's; but I do this; ergo, Christ is mine.

I cannot make so short a cut as the presumptuous person does. Christ died for sinners, therefore for me; God is merciful, therefore my sins are pardoned without any more ado. Oh no, there is an orderly progress in true assurance. It does not (*saltum facere*) stride over to extremes; as if a man should see a lease drawn, and presently conclude the houses are mine, the lands are mine; no, but he must hear, and understand, and weigh things, and subscribe, and seal to the conditions, and then he may safely and boldly say that they are his. So must the soul hearken to the tenor of the Gospel, understand both the precious offer and the peculiar conditions of Christ; then he must consent unto them and accept Christ to be Lord and Savior, and resolve to forsake every sin, and to yield up his heart and life to the obedience of Christ, and earnestly seek the Lord by his Spirit, to persuade him of his particular interest in Christ, and look up steadfastly, and wait upon the Lord in the use of the Ordinances, and other consecrated means;

thus is the assurance of faith wrought in the soul, and upon these grounds does it settle the mind.

5. Lastly, assurance of faith (concerning which we speak) directs man, even to a personal evidence of his particular interests in Christ and his benefits. There is you know a double evidence. One is real, and respects the thing, or object to be believed; another is personal, and respects the state of him who does believe. Now assurance of faith consists in the determining of the mind about the particular goodness of that thing which it assents unto in the general as most true, viz. That Jesus Christ is my Lord, and my God, that he is salvation for me; it opens the eyes as it were to see what Christ is to me, what he has done for me, and what he will do to me. And thus briefly have you had a short explication of the nature of this assurance: a most heavenly thing it is; and only believers have it, though all reach not yet unto it; I now proceed to another inquiry.

SECT. II

Quest. 2. Whether such an assurance of faith may be had?

Sol. The Papists will not hear of it by any means, (some of them) unless in an extraordinary way: They conceive that faith is not able to raise the mind beyond a moral hope and conjecture, and many lewd and lazy Protestants shake hands with them in that opinion. But I will clear it unto you, that every believer may come to this assurance: It is a possible thing: I dare not say that every believer *de facto* is assured, yet he may be assured of his particular interest, and this I will evidence easily.

1. The believing soul is not incapable of persuasion: They say that faith does not destroy but elevate the understanding; and that same is a truth; for it does new temper the understanding and the will, but not overthrow their substantial natures and abilities. Now this is undeniable, that the power of

reflection is natural to the understanding: It is such a faculty which is able to look upon its own actings, and its own state; yea, and persuasion by way of certainty, the understanding is capable of it; forasmuch as it is by knowledge, and sense, and experience made most assuredly certain about many objects and conclusions. Now because faith does not destroy but elevate the mind, it may by faith come to a persuasion and reflection.

2. Again, to urge things (as yet) in a rational way; faith can see as strong reason and argument to persuade and settle the mind, and assure it, as the philosopher can to raise the mind to a certainty of his conclusions: The mind's persuasion depending naturally upon strong evidence and the power of argument.

Now faith can bring strong arguments to convince and persuade the mind: for its arguments depend upon two strong testimonies, one of the infallible Word of God, the other on the voice of a renewed conscience; Ergo,

3. God would not promise that to a believer in this life, which is impossible for the believer to rise unto: Forasmuch as promises are of things as future, they are the undertaking of good things, which shall come to pass and be performed, now every future thing is a possible thing: that which shall be, we may confidently affirm of it that it may be; But this personal evidence or assurance, it is a thing which God hath promised: Ezek. 34:30. They shall know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel are my people, Hos. 2:19. I will betroth thee unto me forever, yea, I will, &c. Verse 23. I will say unto them, Thou art my people: and they shall say, Thou art our God.

4. I spare to add the strength of the divine Spirit in its reflections on the soul, as also that persuasive virtue in a renewed conscience; and the many experiences in many Christians who have attained unto this assurance; all

which do clearly evidence that it is a thing possible: That which the Spirit is able to force in a believing soul: that which many a believing soul hath attained unto; that same is a possible thing: But, &c. Ergo.

SECT. III

Quest. 3. Whether every Believer should strive for the assurance of faith?

Sol. I will premise only a thing or two.

One is, that some duties concern all men at all times, and immediately, as to repent and to believe.

Other duties concern some men, and those in an order and mediately: As to be assured of a man's particular interest in Christ, it is not an immediate duty, it does not concern a man merely as an absolute sinner: for a man who is unconverted, and yet unbelieving, is not bound to be persuaded that he is Christ's, and Christ is his, unless we will say that he is bound to be persuaded of a lie; no, but he must first be a believer, he must accept of Jesus Christ upon his own terms, and being a believer, I say, he is bound to labor for particular assurance: Not to let the real interest of Christ in him, and of his soul in Christ, to hang hovering and in dispute, but to determine them by particular and personal evidence.

Again, premise this; It is one thing to speak *de facto* what every believer hath; and it is another thing to speak *de jure*, what every believer should have: It is true, that everyone who hath Christ cannot be yet assured, and say, that Christ is mine: but then, as Christ is really his (as certainly he is thine, as thy husband is thy husband) so the Christian is obliged to assure his heart thereof.

Which I shall easily clear by Argument.

1. We are bound to draw near unto God in the full assurance of faith, Heb. 10:22. Which is, as I conceive, in a clear persuasion that we shall not fail,

but enjoy the good which he promises; now this cannot be, unless a man is assured and persuaded that God is his God, and Christ is his Christ; forasmuch as persuasion of audience does always arise from a presupposed persuasion of personal and mutual interest; I cannot by faith be persuaded that God will give such a good thing, or such, unless I am first persuaded that he is my God, that God is my God, or Christ is my Christ; It is a fundamental persuasion, upon which all others are built; for this gives life and settlement to my doubting soul; I many times doubt, but shall I have this thing which I ask? yes, says the believing heart. But how are you assured of it? I reply, because God is my God, he has given himself unto me, Ergo he will give this: but how do you know that God is your God? Upon good ground; why, says the believing soul, of that I am abundantly persuaded, I doubt it not: hereupon the soul raises itself to that other assurance, of acceptance and audience; why then I will not doubt of this, I will be confident that then the Lord will hear, for he is my God; and David goes this way very often.² We are bound (all our days) to give God thanks for his greatest mercies; now I think that the bestowing of Christ upon the soul is as great a mercy as ever poor sinners had.

Obj. It is so, but what of this?

Sol. But we cannot give God hearty thanks while we are doubtful of our particular interest in Christ; Can you go unto the Lord and say? O Lord, I bless thee from my soul for all the mercies which thou hast conferred on me; health I have and I know it, for which I do thank thee; riches I have, and friends, and this I know too, and for them I thank thee too; I thank thee also exceedingly from the bottom of my soul, for that thou hast given thy own Son to me, Jesus Christ; but truly, I know not whether thou hast given him to me, or no: I thank thee exceedingly for the pardon of my vile sins in

his blood, but verily I am not sure of this, I rather think they are not pardoned. Nay, this will not run smooth, and the reason is, because so much particular evidence as God gives a man of his personal interest in himself or Christ, or his merits, so much (and no greater) thankfulness will the soul be brought unto.

SECT. IV

Quest. 4. What Arguments to move believers to labor for the assurance of faith? Sol. There are many. 1. As he said to Job, Do the consolations of God seem small unto thee? That I say here, does assurance seem a small thing unto thee? Consider (seriously) the matters and things about which this assurance is conversant, and thou shalt find them of the greatest consequence in the world.

What do you think of Jesus Christ for a sinner? Can there be a more excellent good than Christ? I count all things but dross and dung for the excellency of Christ, said Paul, Phil. 3. Or can there be a more necessary good for you than Christ? Tell me in serious thoughts, that if you had all the pleasures of the world, and all the honors of the world, and all the riches of the world and yet were Christless, that is, you had no portion in Christ; why, what avails all this, as long as you are Christless? as Abraham said, seeing I am childless: In whom is God reconciled unto you but in Christ? And how will you stand before God if you have not Christ? By whom can you get salvation, but by Christ? And why then will you not force your soul to give all diligence to make your part in Christ sure to your soul, that you may come in all cases to that of Job, I know that my Redeemer lives: and with Paul, He loved me and gave himself for me.

Again, what do you think of the pardon of sins? Verily the time was once, even then when your spirit did roar all the night, and you found no quiet in

the day: when your moisture was turned into the drought of summer, and your soul was disquieted within you; I say in that time you could with many tears break out, and say, with David, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered: Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity. O what would you have given to have believed that your sins should be pardoned? You could then discover death in so unpardoned a state and life, then in a discharged and absolved condition. Why I pray you, is pardon of sin so precious a thing? And is the assured knowledge thereof a small thing? Is it not enough to have the pardon pass, not only the seal of the King but the eye also of the malefactor?

Yea, yet further, what do you think of eternal life? What is it? O, I cannot reach it by thoughts, much less by words; Life! no such thing on the earth as it; eternal life, what thing in heaven more than it? To see my God, my Christ, to be gloriously united to them, to be filled with the perfections of holiness, brightness of glory, to know him as we are known, to love him in the transcendency of love; I know not what I say; for I speak of eternal life: O! if the glimpse of divine favor here be the admiration of our souls, the perfection of our joys, the heaven on earth! Tell me, what is the fullness of his favor? What is the full evidence of his favor? What is the everlasting evidence of his favor? Now, eternal life is all this, all this; alas I have said nothing of it yet; Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared.

And is not this a matter to be determined and ascertained to our souls? What, to let eternal life hang in suspense! Verily, though until we do mount and rise to the assurance of faith, we leave (for our part, though the thing may be sure in itself) even this also our eternal life as a thing doubtful. You

will not hold the least portion of your land upon unevident and unsure terms: yet will you?

2. Assurance will marvelously settle and quiet the soul. David expresses so much, Psal. 4:6. Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us. Ver. 7. You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased. Ver. 8. I will lay me down and sleep. The ship at anchor is safe, but in a calm it is quiet: faith makes our state sure, and assurance peaceful.

Two effects he there delivers of this blessed assurance; one is a transcendent joy, and another is a complete peace: It gladdens the heart, and it pacifies the heart: It is most true that faith in its vital act (of acceptance) entitles us to both. Every believer has cause for great joy and sweet peace; but it is faith in this eminent act (of assurance) which replenishes the soul with actual joy and actual comfort: For now the believer sees and knows his happiness: He has a Christ and knows it; he has pardon of sin, and knows it; he stands in favor of God, and knows it: that which held up his soul is now opened; all the causes of his comfort shine, as it were, and clearly discover themselves in a way of well-grounded propriety. As David said concerning his enemies, Psal. 27:1. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? So the assured soul in this case can exult, God is my God, Christ is my Christ, they have pardoned my sins, accepted my person, what should trouble me? what should disquiet me? my soul does now rejoice in God my Savior. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifies: who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, Romans 8:34. Sin, that is pardoned; Justice, that is satisfied: my soul, that is reconciled: my person, that is justified; my prayers, they are answered; my heart, that is pacified: for God

is mine, and Christ is mine, and I am his. Before I am assured, I see my sins, look up to Christ, and venture my soul on him for pardon, I trust in him, yet I may fear; but when I am assured, I see my sins, look up to Christ, and my soul is quiet and rejoices. As it was with the Israelites when they were near the Red Sea, they looked back on their enemies and looked up to God, but yet they were exceedingly afraid: Afterwards, when they had passed through the Red Sea and stood upon the shore, they looked back upon the same enemies, but now as drowned, and then their sighs were turned into joys, and their fears into peace: They exceedingly rejoiced. Why, in assurance, though we look upon the same sins, yet not in the same manner: Now we look upon them as drowned enemies, as iniquities cast into depths of the Sea, as pardoned iniquities: Now, though sin does grieve the soul, yet sin pardoned does quiet and rejoice the soul.

3. Assurance does arm the heart against future temptations.

There are two sorts of temptations against both which the assurance of faith does arm the believer.

1. To sin: Though assurance be a kind of heaven upon earth, yet in this does the beatific vision differ from a believing assurance, that the one leaves no sin at all, but the other is a day of great comfort to a believing sinner; yet even an assured person has yet much of a sinning nature remaining in him.

Nevertheless, though assurance does not wholly cast off fear, yet it does exceedingly keep off sin: A believing person shall not easily sin while he is reading his pardon and looking his Christ in the face. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? If the mere respect of a God was so prevalent with Joseph; O how much more powerful is the propriety in a God? How can I do this great wickedness and sin against my God? Should

such a man as I flee! said Nehemiah: so the assured Christian, should such a man as I sin!

Nay, remember it: Sin is never more odious to the heart than when the heart is most assured: The great and rich mercy of God in Christ is the principal bane of a temptation. The man who formerly would have stepped out against the threats of justice, having now obtained mercy, trembles at the very thoughts of sinning.

2. To despair; it is possible for an assured person to sin, and then it is probable, (and more than so) that new sins will quickly cloud old assurance. Though a believer does not lose his life, yet he may lose his health; and though he still has a Father, yet by sinning he loses the sight of that Father and is hereupon exceedingly humbled and repents, and yet perhaps cannot read his former evidences. He fears that he is cast off forever and shall be remembered no more. But yet an ancient assurance well-grounded may assist the soul and preserve the soul against despairing throes, that God will not cast off the soul, Jer. 31:3. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Ver. 4. Again, I will build thee, and thou shalt be built. So Psal. 89:30. If his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments. Ver. 31. If they break my statutes and keep not my commandments. Ver. 32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Ver. 33. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Ver. 34. My covenant will I not break, &c. Sure mercies of David, Isaiah 55:3. So for Christ, John 13:1. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.

4. Assurance by faith sweetens all other blessings to us: Job speaking of many outward mercies, in his children, in his plenty, his honors, Job 29:5, 6,

7. and ver. 3. he recounts one which overshadowed all of them, (his candle shined upon my head.) As if the evidence of God's favor were like the light which gives life and beauty to all the colors in the room, and without which all our blessings lay dead and dark. O what an enlivening matter is this to all that I enjoy! And God is my God too, and Christ is my Christ too, and my sins are pardoned too: here is a dear and loving husband; yea, and God is my God too; here are tender and observing children; yea, and Christ is my Christ too; here is plenty of food, and raiment, and friends, yea, and my sins are pardoned too. But the want of this may check all our blessings and is able to mar the very comfort of our comforts; I am exceedingly rich, yea, but I cannot yet say that God is my God; I am greatly honored by man; yea, but I cannot yet say that Christ is my Redeemer; I have health and marrow in my bones and want not for any outward mercy; yea, but I cannot yet say that my sins are pardoned: for aught I know that may yet stand upon record, which may lose my soul forever.

5. Nay, again, it is able to sweeten all our crosses: a cross is more or less heavy (to the Christian) by how much the more or the less God appears to the soul: The disciples may even in a storm rejoice if Christ be in the ship.

It was an excellent speech, that of Job 29:3. By his light I walked through darkness: and David answers him in Psalm 23:4. 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. How triumphant is Paul, and beyond both himself and all crosses, and all because of his assurance and persuasion? Romans 8:35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Verse 37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Verse 38. For I am persuaded that

neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Verse 39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Can more be said? Need we to add? See him again in Romans 5:2. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Objection. Who would not, may some reply, in so great a good?

Solution 3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: and who can do this but he who hath some measure of assurance? Indeed faith can make the soul submit in a cross, but it is assurance which makes the soul rejoice and triumph.

What the Apostle spoke of death, that is true of all afflictions, the sting of them is sin: where the conscience is wounded, and the sight of heaven is darkened, there the cross is heavy and bitter; A man hath a burden on his shoulders, and a burden on his conscience, and yet a burden that he cannot see any to smile on him, and comfort him;

But now when the spirit of a man is sound, and the evidence of faith is clear, when a man feels all to be right within, all to be peace abroad, that all stands fair 'twixt him and his God: Nay, and he can see God as his God; the strength of this assurance doth not only allay a burden but raiseth the heart exceedingly above it: yet God is good to Israel; and though I see the olive to fail, and the fields not to yield, and the flocks to be cut off, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, Habakkuk 3:17-18.

Sixthly, it makes all kinds of duty to flow and to rise. I will instance briefly in some.

1. In the Active.
2. In the Passive.

1. Active.1. Praise and thankfulness, Psalm 103:1. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name. Verse 2. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Verse 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: Nay, he is at it again, Psalm 116:12. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me! I will take up the cup of salvation, &c? O the evidence and apprehension of so great a mercy and salvation! It fills every vein of the heart, &c. Music is highest and sweetest in the fairest weather. He who disputes his mercy can hardly bless for it.

Now I see much forgiven, and therefore I bless much: What! and all this forgiven to me, and so freely, and so fully also, so many transgressions, yet to cover all, yet to be reconciled, yet to put down the gracious pardon before mine eyes.

2. Prayers: There are two properties in these which will surely arise out of assurance.

One is confidence and boldness; a man will come boldly to the throne of grace who is once assured by faith: Now that of John comes in indeed, 1 John 5:14. This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us: Christ (I remember) teaches his disciples, (and in them all believers) to pray for many excellent things, both for soul and for body, but then he preferred, he sets this in the front, Our Father, as if he had clearly suggested this unto us, that the assurance of God as our Father is that which gives unto the heart a strong confidence in all petitions: Why, who will not come freely and confidently to a Father, to his Father, to his reconciled Father?

Another is quickness and life in the affections, Psalm 63:1. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee. Observe it, I will seek thee, there is now

diligence; early will I seek thee, there is quickness of affection: and why, I will seek thee early? because O God, thou art my God.

3. Ordinances: Now a man will flee to them, as the doves to the windows (it is the Prophet Isaiah's expression); a man has a heart to bow the knee when he knows that my God will help him: A man has a heart to hear the Word when he knows my God will teach him to profit and will speak peace unto him: A man will with cheerfulness address himself to the Sacrament when he knows this is the blood which was shed for the remission of his sins, and his salvation is there sealed. The Apostle has an apt passage in 1 Pet. 2:2. As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, and surely that is with much delight and with much earnestness, (for so do babes desire the milk of the breasts) But what might stir up this? Ver. 3. If so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious; a taste of God, of God as gracious, yea, this is it which whets the appetite, this sets on the heart to the Ordinances indeed.

4. All obedience, actuating the whole kinds of duty. Why, assurance in the soul makes all duty both cheerful and steadfast, Psalm 26:3. Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes (therefore) have I walked in thy truth. Why is duty to good hearts sometimes so wearisome, so slack, so troublesome? Verily, faith is weak, doubts are strong, fears are many; could they once see God to be their God, Christ to be their Lord and Savior, sins pardoned in his blood, and all this to them: Now even the lame would walk, and the weary would run, the heart would set upon obedience with all its strength and all its care.

2. The like may be said for passive obedience: assurance enables it exceedingly: The love of Christ constrains us, said Paul, 2 Corinthians 5. I remember the Apostle has a notable passage, Romans 5:7. For a good man

some will even dare to die: That is, for a bountiful man: a man of eminent and singular good to preserve him, for his sake, a private man would lay down his life: If the goodness and kindness of a man have sometimes such a force with us, what influence then has the goodness of a God upon a believing heart! The kindness, the blood of Christ upon a believing and an assured heart? Who would not suffer reproach for Christ, who suffered death for him? Who would not kiss the stake to bring him honor, who shed his blood to get his pardon and to crown him with eternal glory? Believe it, assurance will make thy life more fruitful and thy heart more suffering. Faith will make holy duties to be no burden, and assurance will make it a delight: Faith will make a man bear the Cross, and assurance will make a man triumph under it: We are more than conquerors, said persuaded Paul.

Seventhly, Assurance of faith is a refreshing spring to all our graces: Shall I provide some examples?

1. The mourning heart greatly depends upon the assured mind: No man ever did, or ever shall, take God by the hand as reconciled to him, or look on Christ as redeeming him, or read his pardon with assurance, without his heart being full of joy and his eyes full of tears. They shall look on him whom they have pierced and shall mourn as a man mourns for his only child, Zech. 12:10. Nothing softens the heart so well as faith, and nothing melts it so much as assurance. The powers of the greatest kindness and most gracious love open the fountain of godly sorrow within the soul.

2. Love kindles in the heart upon assurance. To whom much is forgiven, the same will love much, said Christ, Luke 7:47. We love him because he loved us first, said John. The love of God to us is the cause of our love to him again and again, and the more that love is revealed to us, the more our love is rekindled to him; goodness is a cause of love, here it is;

bountifulness is a cause of love, here it is; knowledge of both is a special provocation of love; in assurance here it is.

What a thing is this! That God should give his Covenant to me, his Son to me, his Mercies to me, his loving-kindness to me, his glory in heaven unto me! I love a man who defends my name, I love a man who gives me a book, I love a man who gives me my ransom, I love a man who gives me a meal's meat; Ah! poor things in comparison: how do I then infinitely exceed in love to my God, who I know has pardoned, has justified, has accepted, will save me forever?

More might be said of all particular graces whatsoever.

8. Assurance by faith eases us of the world and elevates the soul above it.

1. It eases us of the world: How can he walk with cares who is indeed persuaded that God is his Father? He that gave him Christ will give him all other things freely: God will not withhold a little earth when he has bountifully given a whole heaven; and he will surely find me food and raiment for my body, who found mercy and the blood of his own Son for my soul.

2. Nay, it elevates us above the world; they observe that these lower things grow smaller by how much higher a man is seated: If a man could be elevated to one of the celestial orbs, the whole world would seem but a narrow spot of ground unto him. In one point this is most true: the nearer God draws unto the soul, the more nothing does this world appear.

O the blessed favor of God! The evidences of our union with Christ! This is like the light of the Sun, which puts out the light of ten thousand candles: Thou wouldst never complain of too little in the world if thou hadst so much as made up a true assurance of heaven.

9. Lastly, Assurance will breed comfort in life and confidence in death.

Object. Why! Are God's people afraid many times to die? They cannot say with Christ, I will go to my Father.

They have the bond but see not the seal: They are not assured of Reconciliation, of pardon, of salvation.

But if they could with Simeon take Christ into their arms: if once they could be assured, Now lettest thou thy Servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

He who with assurance looks Christ in the face may with cheerful confidence look death in the face: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ," said Paul, Phil. 1:23. How so? Verse 21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." But how does he know that? 2 Tim. 1:12: "For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." So 2 Cor. 5:1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

SECT. V

Quest. 1. Now I come to the last inquiry, by what means may the soul attain this assurance?

Sol. I shall only prescribe such rules as apply to a believing person. Therefore thus,

1. If you are a believer and would be assured, then preserve the sense of your own natural wretchedness and of the darkness of your soul's state without assurance. Christ came to Mary when she was weeping; and the Great God looks down upon the broken spirit. The highest mountain has the first sight of the sun; but the lowest Christian has the first sight of God. When the people of God were mourning, then says God, "Comfort, comfort ye my people, and say unto them Your sins are pardoned."

You shall find this: That the truly sensible heart has three properties in it, which invite the Lord much to gratify it with assurance; namely,

One that is very humble.

Another that greatly values God's love and mercy.

And a third, that is exceedingly thirsty for a good look from God, after some taste of Christ, and God will satisfy all these.

2. Be no strangers to the ordinances: you shall find this, that the ripening of faith belongs to them as well as the seeds of it.

The word you know is the soul of faith: it was that which inclined the heart to yield, which made it accept Christ, and it is that also which can make us know our possessions: 1 John 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." So 1 John 1:4: "These things we write unto you that your joy may be full." More plainly: "In whom, after you heard the word of truth, ye believed; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," Ephesians 1:13.

For, just as the Word has promises which draw the soul to Christ, so it has promises to clarify the soul in its interest in Christ, to answer all doubts and fears, and to address the fear about acceptance; so it removes doubts which strive against evidence and propriety.

The Sacrament, you know, is the seal of righteousness which is by faith, Rom. 4:11. Just as a seal distinguishes, confirms, and settles the mind, so is the Sacrament ordained to satisfy and persuade the heart of a believer. God appointed this ordinance, as for other ends, so for this: That the matter might be out of doubt, out of controversy, that Christ is ours, and sin is pardoned in his blood.

3. Be much in prayer: If a man would gain assurance, he must be much in prayers to persuade and assure the heart: David found marvelous loving-kindness, but then he cried in supplications, Psalm 31:21-22.

You must pray earnestly for mercy, earnestly for pardon, and most earnestly for Christ.

And you must use diligence. Remember this: that in all your endeavors for assurance, you must use diligence; a cold hearing, a cold reading, a cold praying will not bring the soul to it. No, you must be most diligent and fervent in them; and so on.

4. Again, with all these there must be joined strong upright care to please God.

This know that sin separates, but uprightness gathers God and the soul together. To him that orders his conversation aright, I will show the salvation of the Lord, Psalm 50:23. Why? Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart, Psalm 97:11. See that of the Prophet, Isaiah 64:5. You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness, those that remember you in your ways. Unevenness of heart or way is a flaw, and it is that which cuts us off after many prayers; it renews our doubts again, and we are as far to seek as at the first. But if the heart is plain, if it is sincerely set for God, desirous to please him in all things, this is a compendious way of assurance: the Word falls in directly to settle and confirm such a soul: The steps of the Word direct us to the sight of our God.

Lastly, you must be much in the exercise of faith. There are two parts of it which you must improve. One is, you must, against all sense and feeling, and against all the contradictions of reason and unbelief, cast the soul on God in Christ, and rest on him to be your God, and on Christ to be your Lord and Savior, and that your sins shall be pardoned.

Then you must wait; you must not limit God, but seek still; I will hearken, said David, what God the Lord will speak for he will speak peace to his Saints, Psalm 85:8. See Isaiah 64:4. Since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what he has prepared for him that waits for Him. The Lord will wait that he may be gracious; blessed are they that wait for him, Isaiah 30:18. So Isaiah 25:9. It shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, etc. This is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For Psalm 147:11. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

So that this is the sum of all: walk with all uprightness, and with a humble, penitent, and believing soul, cast your sins upon God in Christ, trusting in him alone for the favor of God, pardon of sins, and eternal salvation, and wait upon God for all this in the use of the means, and constant diligence in prayer; you shall at length have your heart's desire; you shall hear from God thus much; I am your salvation; and from Christ as much: Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.

FINIS.