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BUNYAN'S PRACTICAL WORKS VOLUME 2

by John Bunyan

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THE JERUSALEM SINNER SAVED

OR

GOOD NEWS FOR THE VILEST OF MEN

Being A Help For Despairing Souls, Showing That Jesus Christ Would Have Mercy In The First Place Offered To The Biggest Sinners.

THE THIRD EDITION

In Which Is Added, An Answer To Those Grand Objections That Lie In The Way Of The Them That Would Believe: For The Comfort Of Them That Fear They Have Sinned Against The Holy Ghost.

BY

JOHN BUNYAN

ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR

That Bunyan, who considered himself one of the most notorious of Jerusalem sinners, should write with the deepest earnestness upon this subject, is not surprising. He had preached upon it with very peculiar pleasure, and, doubtless, from many texts; and, as he says, ‘through God’s grace, with great success.’ It is not probable that, with his characteristic intensity of feeling, and holy fervor in preaching, he ever delivered the same sermon twice; but this was a subject so in unison with his own feelings and experience, that he must have dilated upon it with even unusual interest and earnestness. The marrow of all these exercises he concentrated in this treatise; and when his judgment was, by severe internal conflicts, fully matured — upon the eve of the close of his earthly pilgrimage, in the last year of his life, 1688 — he published it in a pocket volume of eight sheets. It was soon translated into several languages, and became so popular as to pass through ten editions in English by 1728. Like other favorite books, it was *ornamented* with some very inferior wood-cuts.

The object of the author is fully explained in the title to his book. It is to display the riches of Divine grace and mercy to the greatest sinners — even to those whose conduct entitled them to be called ‘Satan’s colonels, and captains, the leaders of his people; and to such as most stoutly make head against the Son of God.’ It is to those who feel themselves to be such, and who make a proper estimate of their own characters, as in the sight of God, that the gracious proclamations of the gospel are peculiarly directed. They to whom much is forgiven, love much; and the same native energies which had been misdirected to promote evil, when sanctified and divinely guided, become a great blessing to the church, and to society at large.

Bunyan does not stoop to any attempt to reconcile the humbling doctrines of grace to the self-righteous pride of those who, considering themselves but little sinners, would feel contaminated by the company of those who had been such great sinners, although they were pardoned and sanctified by God. His great effort was directed to relieve the distress and despair of those who were suffering under deep convictions; still, his whole treatise

shows that the doctrine of salvation by grace, of free gift, is no encouragement to sin that grace may abound, as some have blasphemously asserted. It is degrading to the pride of those who have not drunk so deeply of sin, to be placed upon a level with great sinners. But the disease is the same — in breaking one commandment, the whole law is violated; and, however in some the moral leprosy does not make such fearful ravages as in others, the slightest taint conveys moral, spiritual, and eternal death. ALL, whether young or old, great or small, must be saved by grace, or fall into perdition. The difference between the taint of sin, and its awfully developed leprosy, is given. Who so ready to fly to the physician as those who feel their case to be desperate? and, when cured, they must love the Savior most.

Comparatively little sins before conviction, when seen in the glass of God's law, and in his holy presence, become great ones. Those who feel themselves to be great sinners, are peculiarly invited to the arms of the Savior, who saves to the uttermost ALL that come unto him; and it is thus that peculiar consolation is poured in, and the broken heart is bound up. We are then called by name, as Bunyan forcibly describes it, as men called by name before a court. 'Who first cry out, "Here, Sir"; and then shoulder and crowd, and say, "Pray give way, I am called into the court." This is thy case, wherefore say, "Stand away, devil, Christ calls me; stand away, unbelief, Christ calls me; stand away, all ye my discouraging apprehensions, for my Savior calls me to him to receive of his mercy."' 'Wherefore, since Christ says come, let the angels make a lane, and let all men give place, that the Jerusalem sinner may come to Jesus Christ for mercy.' How characteristic is this of the peculiarly striking style of Bunyan! How solemn his warnings! 'The invitations of the gospel will be, to those who refuse them, the hottest coals in hell.' His reasonings against despair are equally forcible: ''Tis a sin to begin to despair before one sets his foot over the threshold of hell gate. What! despair of bread in a land that is full of corn! despair of mercy, when our God is full of mercy! when he goes about by his ministers, beseeching of sinners to be reconciled unto him! Thou scrupulous fool, where canst thou find that God was ever false to his promise, or that he ever deceived the soul that ventured itself upon him?' This whole treatise abounds with strong consolation to those who are beset with fears, and who, because of these, are ready to give way to

despair; it ought to be put into the hands of all such, let them belong to what party they may; for, like our author's other books, nothing of a sectarian nature can be traced in it, except we so call the distinguishing truths of evangelical religion. There are some very interesting references to Bunyan's experience and life, and one rather singular idea, in which I heartily concur; it is, that the glorified saints will become part of the heavenly hierarchy of angels, and take the places of those who fell from that exalted state (Revelation 22:8, 9).

To those whose souls are invaded by despair, or who fear that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost — to all who pant to have their faith strengthened, and hopes brightened, this little work is most earnestly and affectionately commended.

GEORGE OFFOR.

TO THE READER

COURTEOUS READER,

One reason which moved me to write and print this little book was, because, though there are many excellent heart-affecting discourses in the world that tend to convert the sinner, yet I had a desire to try this simple method of mine; wherefore I make bold thus to invite and encourage the worst to come to Christ for life.

I have been vile myself, but have obtained mercy; and I would have my companions in sin partake of mercy too: and, therefore, I have writ this little book.

The nation doth swarm with vile ones *now*, as ever it did since it was a nation. My little book, in some places, can scarce go from house to house, but it will find a suitable subject to spend itself upon. Now, since Christ Jesus is willing to save the vilest, why should they not, by name, be somewhat acquainted with it, and bid come to him under that name?

A great sinner, when converted, seems a *booty* to Jesus Christ; he *gets* by saving such an one; why then should both Jesus lose his glory and the sinner lose his soul at once, and that for want of an invitation?

I have found, through God's grace, good success in preaching upon this subject, and perhaps, so I may by my writing upon it too. [f1] I have, as you see, let down this net for a draught. The Lord catch some great fishes by it, for the magnifying of his truth. There are some most vile in all men's eyes, and some are so in their own eyes too; but some have their paintings, to shroud their vileness under; yet they are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do; and for all these, God hath sent a Savior, Jesus; and to all these the door is opened.

Wherefore, prithee, profane man, give this little book the reading. Come; pardon, and a part in heaven and glory, cannot be hurtful to thee. Let not thy lusts and folly drive thee beyond the door of mercy, since it is not locked nor bolted up against thee. Manasseh was a bad man, and

Magdalene a bad woman, to say nothing of the thief upon the cross, or of the murderers of Christ; yet they obtained mercy; Christ willingly received them.

And dost thou think that those, once so bad, now they are in heaven, repent them there because they left their sins for Christ when they were in the world? I cannot believe, but that thou thinkest they have verily got the best on't. Why, sinner, do thou likewise. Christ, at heaven gates, says to thee, Come hither; and the devil, at the gates of hell, does call thee to come to him. Sinner, what sayest thou? Whither wilt thou go? Don't go into the fire; there thou wilt be burned! Don't let Jesus lose his longing, since it is for thy salvation, but come to him and live.

One word more, and so I have done. Sinner, here thou dost hear of love; prithee, do not provoke it, by turning it into wantonness. He that dies for slighting love, sinks deepest into hell, and will there be tormented by the remembrance of that evil, more than by the deepest cogitation of all his other sins. Take heed, therefore; do not make love thy tormentor, sinner. Farewell.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE VILEST OF MEN

OR,

A HELP FOR DESPAIRING SOULS

‘Beginning at Jerusalem.’ — [42447]Luke 14:47.

The whole verse runs thus: ‘And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, ‘beginning at Jerusalem.’ The words were spoken by Christ, after he rose from the dead, and they are here rehearsed after an historical manner, but do contain in them a formal commission, with a special clause therein. The commission is, as you see, for the preaching of the gospel, and is very distinctly inserted in the holy record by Matthew and Mark. ‘Go - teach all nations,’ etc. ([40809]Matthew 28:19)

‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ ([41665]Mark 16:15).

Only this clause is in special mentioned by Luke, who saith, that as Christ would have the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins preached in his name among all nations, so he would have the people of Jerusalem to have the first proffer thereof. Preach it, saith Christ, in all nations, but begin at Jerusalem.

The apostles, then, though they had a commission so large as to give them warrant to go and preach the gospel in all the world, yet by this clause they were limited as to the beginning of their ministry; they were to begin this work at Jerusalem. “Beginning at Jerusalem.’

Before I proceed to an observation upon the words, I must, but briefly, touch upon two things: namely,

First, Show you what Jerusalem now was.

Second, Show you what it was to preach the gospel to them.

First, Jerusalem is to be considered either,

First, With respect to the descent of her people; or,

Second, With respect to her preference and exaltation; or,

Third, With respect to her present state, as to her decays.

First, As to her descent, she was from Abraham, [by] the sons of Jacob, a people that God singled out from the rest of the nations, to set his love upon them.

Secondly, As to her preference or exaltation, she was the place of God's worship, and that which had in and with her the special tokens and signs of God's favor and presence, above any other people in the world. Hence, the tribes went up to Jerusalem to worship; there was God's house, God's high-priest, God's sacrifices accepted, and God's eye, and God's heart perpetually (<19601>Psalm 76:1, 2, 122; <11003>1 Kings 9:3). But,

Thirdly, We are to consider Jerusalem also in her decays; for, as she is so considered, she is the proper object of our text, as will be further showed by and by.

Jerusalem, as I told you, was the place and seat of God's worship, but now decayed, degenerated, and apostatized. [f2] The Word, the rule of worship, was rejected of them, and in its place they had put and set up their own traditions: they had rejected, also, the most weighty ordinances, and put in the room thereof their own little things (<40150>Matthew 15; <41007>Mark 7). Jerusalem was therefore now greatly backslidden, and become the place where the truth and true religion were much defaced.

It was also now become the very sink of sin and seat of hypocrisy, and gulf where true religion was drowned. Here also now reigned presumption, and groundless confidence in God, which is the bane of souls. Amongst its rulers, doctors, and leaders, envy, malice, and blasphemy vented itself against the power of godliness, in all places where it was espied; as also against the promoters of it; yea, their Lord and Maker could not escape them.

In a word, Jerusalem was now become the shambles, the very slaughter-shop for saints. This was the place wherein the prophets, Christ, and his

people, were most horribly persecuted and murdered. Yea, so hardened at this time was this Jerusalem in her sins, that she feared not to commit the biggest, and to bind herself, by wish, under the guilt and damning evil of it; saying, when she had murdered the Son of God, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' And though Jesus Christ did, both by doctrine, miracles, and holiness of life, seek to put a stop to their villanies, yet they shut their eyes, stopped their ears, and rested not, till, as was hinted before, they had driven him out of the world. Yea, that they might, if possible, have extinguished his name, and exploded his doctrine out of the world, they, against all argument, and in despite of heaven, its mighty hand, and undeniable proof of his resurrection, did hire soldiers to invent a lie, saying, his disciples stole him away from the grave; on purpose that men might not count him the Savior of the world, nor trust in him for the remission of sins.

They were, saith Paul, contrary to all men: for they did not only shut up the door of life against themselves, but forbade that it should be opened to any else. 'Forbidding us,' saith he, 'to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway' (<5024>1 Thessalonians 2:14-16; <4023>Matthew 23:35; <4015>Matthew 15:7-9; <4006>Mark 7:6-8; <4003>Matthew 3:7-9; <4033>John 8:33, 41; <4027>Matthew 27:18; <4030>Mark 3:30; <4023>Matthew 23:37; <4233>Luke 13:33, 34; <4025>Matthew 27:25; <4001>Matthew 20:11-16).

This is the city, and these are the people; this is their character, and these are their sins: nor can there be produced their parallel in all this world. Nay, what world, what people, what nation, for sin and transgression, could or can be compared to Jerusalem? especially if you join to the matter of fact the light they sinned against, and the patience which they abused. Infinite was the wickedness upon this account which they committed.

After all their abusings of wise men, and prophets, God sent unto them John Baptist, to reduce them, and then his Son, to redeem them; but they would be neither reduced nor redeemed, but persecuted both to the death. Nor did they, as I said, stop here; the holy apostles they afterwards persecuted also to death, even so many as they could; the rest they drove from them unto the utmost corners.

SECOND, I come not to show you what it was to preach the gospel to them. It was, saith Luke, to preach to them 'repentance and remission of

sins' in Christ's name; or, as Mark has it, to bid them 'repent and believe the gospel' (<4001015>Mark 1:15). Not that repentance is a cause of remission, but a sign of our hearty reception thereof. Repentance is therefore here put to intimate, that no pretended faith of the gospel is good that is not accompanied with it; and this he doth on purpose, because he would not have them deceive themselves: for with what faith can he expect remission of sins in the name of Christ, that is not heartily sorry for them? Or how shall a man be able to give to others a satisfactory account of his unfeigned subjection to the gospel, that yet abides in his impenitency?

Wherefore repentance is here joined with faith, in the way of receiving the gospel. Faith is that without which it cannot be received at all; and repentance that without which it cannot be received unfeignedly. When, therefore, Christ says, he would have a repentance and remission of sins preached in his name among all nations, it is as much as to say, I will that all men everywhere be sorry for their sins, and accept of mercy at God's hand through me, lest they fall under his wrath in the judgment; for, as I have said, without repentance, what pretense soever men have of faith, they cannot escape the wrath to come. Wherefore Paul said, God commands 'all men everywhere to repent,' (in order to their salvation):

'because he hath appointed a day, in the which he shall judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained' (<441731>Acts 17:31).

And now, to come to this clause, 'Beginning at Jerusalem'; that is, that Christ would have Jerusalem have the first offer of the gospel.

1. This cannot be so commanded because they had now any more right, of themselves, thereto, than had any of the nations of the world; for their sins had divested them of all self-deservings.

2. Nor yet because they stood upon the advance-ground with the worst of the sinners of the nations; nay, rather, the sinners of the nations had the advance-ground of them: for Jerusalem was, long before she had added this iniquity to her sin, worse than the very nations that God cast out before the children of Israel (<143300>2 Chronicles 33).

3. It must, therefore, follow, that this cause, 'Beginning at Jerusalem,' was put into this commission of mere grace and compassion, even from the

overflowings of the bowels of mercy; for indeed they were the worst, and so in the most deplorable condition of any people under the heavens. [f3]

Whatever, therefore, their relation was to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob — however they formerly had been the people among whom God had placed his name and worship, they were now degenerated from God, more than the nations were from their idols, and were become guilty of the highest sins which the people of the world were capable of committing. Nay, none can be capable of committing of such *pardonable* sins as they committed against their God, when they slew his Son, and persecuted his name and Word.

DOCTRINE

From these words, therefore, thus explained, we gain this observation: — *That Jesus Christ. would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners*

That these Jerusalem sinners were the biggest sinners that ever were in the world, I think none will deny, that believes that Christ was the best man that ever was in the world, and also was their Lord God. And that they were to have the first offer of his grace, the text is as clear as the sun; for it saith, 'Beginning at Jerusalem.' 'Preach,' saith he, 'repentance and remission of sins' to the Jerusalem sinners: to the Jerusalem sinners in the *first* place. One would a-thought, since the Jerusalem sinners were the worst and greatest sinners, Christ's greatest enemies, and those that not only despised his person, doctrine, and miracles, but that, a little before, had had their hands up to the elbows in his heart's blood, that he should rather have said, Go into all the world, and preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations; and, *after* that, offer the same to Jerusalem; yea, it had been infinite grace if he had said so. But what grace is this, or what name shall we give it, when he commands that this repentance and remission of sins, which is designed to be preached in all nations, should first be offered to Jerusalem; in the first place to the worst of sinners!

Nor was this the first time that the grace, which was in the heart of Christ, thus showed itself to the world. For while he was yet alive, even while he was yet in Jerusalem, and perceived, even among these Jerusalem sinners, which was the most vile among them, he still, in his preaching, did signify that he had a desire that the worst of these worst should, in the first place, come unto him. The which he showeth, where he saith to the better sort of them,

> ‘The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you’ (Matthew 21:31).

Also when he compared Jerusalem with the sinners of the nations, then he commands that the Jerusalem sinners should have the gospel at present confined to them.

> ‘Go not,’ saith he, ‘into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* of the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Matthew 10:5, 6; Matthew 23:37).

But go rather to them, for they were in the most fearful plight. These, therefore, must have the cream of the gospel, namely, the first offer thereof, in his lifetime; yea, when he departed out of the world, he left this as part of his last will with his preachers, that they also should offer it first to Jerusalem. He had a mind, a careful mind, as it seems, to privilege the worst of sinners with the fist offer of mercy, and to take from among them a people, to be the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

The 15th of Luke also is famous for this, where the Lord Jesus takes more care, as appears there by three parables, for the lost sheep, lost groat, and the prodigal son, than for the other sheep, the other pence, or for the son that said he had never transgressed; yea, he shows that there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, at the repentance of one sinner, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. After this manner, therefore, the mind of Christ was set on the salvation of the biggest sinners in his lifetime. But join to this, this clause, which he carefully put into the apostles’ commission to preach, when he departed hence to the Father, and then you shall see that his heart was vehemently set upon it; for these were part of his last words with them, Preach my gospel to all nations, but that you begin at Jerusalem.

Nor did the apostles overlook this clause when their Lord was gone into heaven; they went first to them of Jerusalem, and preached Christ’s gospel to them; they abode also there for a season and time, and preached it to nobody else, for they had regard to the commandment of their Lord. And it is to be observed, namely, that the first sermon which they preached after the ascension of Christ, it was preached to the very worst of these

Jerusalem sinners, even to those that were the murderers of Jesus Christ (<4023>Acts 2:23), for these are part of the sermon: ‘Ye took him, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain him.’ Yea, the next sermon, and the next, and also the next to that, was preached to the self-same murderers, to the end they might be saved (<4034>Acts 3:14-16; <4040>Acts 4:10, 11; <4050>Acts 5:30; <4052>Acts 7:52).

But we will return to the first sermon that was preached to these Jerusalem sinners, by which will be manifest more than great grace, if it be duly considered. For after that Peter, and the rest of the apostles, had, in their exhortation, persuaded these wretches to believe that they had killed the Prince of life; and after they had duly fallen under the guilt of their murder, saying, ‘Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ he replies, by an universal tender to them all in general, considering them as Christ’s killers, that if they were sorry for what they had done, and would be baptized for the remission of their sins in his name, they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (<4037>Acts 2:37, 38).

This he said to them all, though he knew that they were such sinners. Yea, he said it without the least stick or stop, or pause of spirit, as to whether he had best to say so or no. Nay, so far off was Peter from making an objection against one of them, that, by a particular clause in his exhortation, he endeavors, that not one of them may escape the salvation offered. ‘Repent,’ saith he, ‘and be baptized every one of you.’ I shut out never an one of you; for I am commanded by my Lord to deal with you, as it were, one by one, by the word of his salvation. But why speaks he so particularly? Oh! there were reasons for it. The people with whom the apostles were now to deal, as they were murderers of our Lord, and to be charged in the general with his blood, so they had their various and particular acts of villany in the guilt thereof, now lying upon their consciences. And the guilt of these, their various and particular acts of wickedness, could not, perhaps, be reached to a removal thereof but by this particular application. Repent, every one of you; be baptized, every one of you, in his name, for the remission of sins, and you shall, every one of you, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Objector. ‘But I was one of them that plotted to take away his life. May I be saved by him?’

Peter. Every one of you.

Objector. 'But I was one of them that bare false witness against him. Is there grace for me?'

Peter. For every one of you.

Objector. 'But I was one of them that cried out, Crucify him, crucify him; and desired that Barabbas, the murderer, might live, rather than him. What will become of me, think you?'

Peter. I am to preach repentance and remission of sins to every one of you, says Peter.

Objector. 'But I was one of them that did spit in his face when he stood before his accusers. I also was one that mocked him, when in anguish he hanged bleeding on the tree. Is there room for me?'

Peter. For every one of you, says Peter.

Objector. 'But I was one of them that, in his extremity, said, Give him gall and vinegar to drink. Why may not I expect the same when anguish and guilt is upon me?' [f4]

Peter. Repent of these your wickednesses, and here is remission of sins for every one of you.

Objector. 'But I railed on him, I reviled him, I hated him, I rejoiced to see him mocked at by others. Can there be hope for me?'

Peter. There is, for every one of you. 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' Oh! what a blessed 'Every one of you,' is here! How willing was Peter, and the Lord Jesus, by his ministry, to catch these murderers with the word of the gospel, that they might be made monuments of the grace of God! How unwilling, I say, was he, that any of these should escape the hand of mercy! Yea, what an amazing wonder is it to think, that above all the world, and above everybody in it, these should have the first offer of mercy! 'Beginning at Jerusalem.'

But was there not something of moment in this clause of the commission? Did not Peter, think you, see a great deal in it, that he should thus begin with these men, and thus offer, so particularly, this grace to each particular man of them?

But, as I told you, this is not all; these Jerusalem sinners must have this offer again and again; every one of them must be offered it over and over. Christ would not take their first rejection for a denial, nor their second repulse for a denial; but he will have grace offered once, and twice, and thrice, to these Jerusalem sinners. Is not this amazing grace? Christ will not be put off. These are the sinners that are sinners indeed. They are sinners of the biggest sort; consequently, such as Christ can, if they convert and be saved, best serve his ends and designs upon. Of which more anon.

But what a pitch of grace is this! Christ is minded to amaze the world, and to show that he acteth not like the children of men. This is that which he said of old,

> 'I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man' (Hosea 11:9).[f5]

This is not the manner of men; men are shorter winded; men are soon moved to take vengeance, and to right themselves in a way of wrath and indignation. But God is full of grace, full of patience, ready to forgive, and one that delights in mercy. All this is seen in our text. The biggest sinners must first be offered mercy; they must, I say, have the cream of the gospel offered unto them.

But we will a little proceed. In the third chapter we find, that they who escaped converting by the first sermon, are called upon again to accept of grace and forgiveness, for their murder committed upon the Son of God. You have killed, yea, 'ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life.' Mark, he falls again upon the very men that actually were, as you have it in the chapters following, his very betrayers and murderers (Acts 3:14, 15), as being loath that they should escape the mercy of forgiveness: and exhorts

them again to repent, that their sins might ‘be blotted out’ (<4019>Acts 3:19, 20).

Again, in the fourth chapter, he charges them afresh with this murder (verse 10), but withal tells them salvation is in no other. Then, like a heavenly decoy, he puts himself also among them, to draw them the better under the net of the gospel; saying,

> ‘There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved’ (<4012>Acts 3:12).

In the fifth chapter, you find them railing at him, because he continued preaching among them salvation in the name of Jesus. But he tells them, that that very Jesus whom they had slain and hanged on a tree, him God had raised up, and exalted ‘*to be* a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins’ (<4029>Acts 3:29-31). Still insinuating, that though they had killed him, and to this day rejected him, yet his business was to bestow upon them repentance and forgiveness of sins.

‘Tis true, after they began to kill again, and when nothing but killing would serve their turn, then they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Yet even some of them so hankered after the conversion of the Jews, that they preached the gospel only to them. Also the apostles still made their abode at Jerusalem, in hopes that they might let down their net for another draught of these Jerusalem sinners. Neither did Paul and Barnabas, who were the ministers of God to the Gentiles, but offer the gospel, in the first place, to those of them that, for their wickedness, were scattered, like vagabonds, among the nations; yea, and when they rendered rebellion and blasphemy for their service and love, they replied it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to them (<4108>Acts 1:8; <4046>Acts 13:46, 47).

Nor was this their preaching unsuccessful among these people: but the Lord Jesus so wrought with the word thus spoken, that thousands of them came flocking to him for mercy. Three thousand of them closed with him at the first; and, afterwards, two thousand more; for now they were in number about five thousand; whereas, before sermons were preached to these murderers, the number of the disciples was not above ‘a hundred and twenty’ (<4115>Acts 1:15; <4241>Acts 2:41; <4004>Acts 4:4).

Also among these people that thus flocked to him for mercy, there was a ‘great company of the priests’ (Acts 6:7). Now, the priests were they that were the greatest of these biggest sinners; they were the ringleaders, they were the inventors and ringleaders in the mischief. It was they that set the people against the Lord Jesus, and that were the cause why the uproar increased, until Pilate had given sentence upon him.

> ‘The chief priests and elders,’ says the text, ‘persuaded (the people) the multitude, that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus’ (Matthew 27:20).

And yet, behold the priests, yea, a great company of the priests, became obedient to the faith. [f6]

Oh, the greatness of the grace of Christ, that he should be thus in love with the souls of Jerusalem sinners! that he should be thus delighted with the salvation of the Jerusalem sinners! that he should not only will that his gospel should be offered them, but that it should be offered unto them first, and before other sinners were admitted to a hearing of it. ‘Begin at Jerusalem.’

Was this doctrine well believed, where would there be a place for a doubt, or a fear of the damnation of the soul, if the sinner be penitent, how bad a life soever he has lived, how many soever in number are his sins? But this grace is hid from the eyes of men; the devil hides it from them; for he knows it is alluring, he knows it has an attracting virtue in it; for this is it that, above all arguments, can draw the soul to God. I cannot help it, but must let drop another word. The first church, the Jerusalem church, from whence the gospel was to be sent into all the world, was a church made up of Jerusalem sinners. These great sinners were here the most shining monuments of the exceeding grace of God.

Thus, you see, I have proved the doctrine; and that not only by showing you that this was the practice of the Lord Jesus Christ in his lifetime, but his last will when he went up to God; saying, Begin to preach at Jerusalem. Yea, it is yet further manifested, in that when his ministers first began to preach there, he joined his power to the word, to the converting of thousands of his betrayers and murderers, and also many of the ringleading priests, to the faith.

I shall now proceed, and shall show you,

First, The reasons of the point.

Second, And then make some application of the whole.

THE REASONS OF THE POINT.

The observation, you know, is this: Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, to the Jerusalem sinners: 'Preach repentance, and remission of sins, in my name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'

The reasons of the point are: —

First, Because *the biggest sinners have most need thereof.*

He that has most need, reason says, should be helped first. I mean, when a helping hand is offered, and now it is; for the gospel of the grace of God is sent to help the world (Acts 16:9). But the biggest sinner has most need. Therefore, in reason, when mercy is sent down from heaven to men, the worst of men should have the first offer of it. 'Begin at Jerusalem.' This is the reason which the Lord Christ himself renders, why, in his lifetime, he left the best, and turned him to the worst; why he sat so loose from the righteous, and stuck so close to the wicked.

> 'The whole,' saith he, 'have no need of the physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance' (Mark 2:15-17). [f7]

Above, you read that the scribes and Pharisees said to his disciples, 'How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?' Alas! they did not know the reason; but the Lord renders them one, and such an one as is both natural and cogent, saying, These have need, most need. Their great necessity requires that I should be most friendly, and show my grace first to them.

Not that the other were sinless, and so had no need of a Savior; but the publicans and their companions were the biggest sinners; they were, as to view, worse than the scribes; and, therefore, in reason, should be helped first, because they had most need of a Savior.

Men that are at the point to die, have more need of the physician than they that are but now and then troubled with a heart-fainting qualm. The publicans and sinners were, as it were, in the mouth of death; death was swallowing of them down: [f8] and, therefore, the Lord Jesus receives them first; offers them mercy first. 'The whole have no need of the physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance.' The sick, as I said, is the biggest sinner, whether he sees his disease or not. He is stained from head to foot, from heart to life and conversation. This man, in every man's judgment, has the most need of mercy. There is nothing attends him from bed to board, and from board to bed again, but the visible characters, and obvious symptoms, of eternal damnation. This, therefore, is the man that has need, most need; and, therefore, in reason, should be helped in the first place. Thus it was with the people concerned in the text; they were the worst of sinners, Jerusalem sinners, sinners of the biggest size; and, therefore, such as had the greatest need; wherefore they must have mercy offered to them, before it be offered to anywhere else in the world. 'Begin at Jerusalem,' offer mercy first to a Jerusalem sinner. This man has most need, he is furthest from God, nearest to hell, and so one that has most need. This man's sins are in number the most, in cry the loudest, in weight the heaviest, and, consequently, will sink him soonest; wherefore he has most need of mercy. This man is shut up in Satan's hand, fastest bound in the cords of his sins: one that justice is whetting his sword to cut off; and, therefore, has most need, not only of mercy, but that it should be extended to him in the first place.

But a little further to show you the true nature of this reason, to wit, That Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners.

First, Mercy ariseth from the bowels and compassion, from pity, and from a feeling of the condition of those in misery. 'In his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them.' And again, 'The Lord is pitiful, very pitiful, and of tender mercy' (<23639>Isaiah 63:9; <59511>James 5:11).

Now, where pity and compassion is, there is yearning of bowels; and where there is that, there is a readiness to help. And, I say again, the more deplorable and dreadful the condition is, the more directly doth bowels and

compassion turn themselves to such, and offer help and deliverance. All this flows from our first scripture proof, I came to call them that have need; to call them first, while the rest look on and murmur.

‘How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?’ Ephraim was a revolter from God, a man that had given himself up to devilism; a company of men, the ten tribes that worshipped devils, while Judah kept with his God. But ‘how shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *How* shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? *How* shall I set thee as Zeboim? [and yet thou art worse than they, nor has Samaria committed half thy sins (Ezekiel 16:46-51)] Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together’ (Hosea 11:8).

But where do you find that ever the Lord did thus rowl [f9] in his bowels for and after any self-righteous man? No, no; they are the publicans and harlots, idolaters and Jerusalem sinners, for whom his bowels thus yearn and tumble about within him: for, alas! poor worms, they have most need of mercy.

> Had not the good Samaritan more compassion for that man that fell among thieves (though that fall was occasioned by his going from the place where they worshipped God, to Jericho, the cursed city), than we read he had for any other besides? His wine was for him, his oil was for him, his beast for him; his penny, his care, and his swaddling bands for him; for, alas! wretch, he had most need (Luke 10:30-35).
>
> Zaccheus the publican, the chief of the publicans, one that had made himself the richer by wronging of others; the Lord at that time singled him out from all the rest of his brother publicans, and that in the face of many Pharisees, and proclaimed in the audience of them all, that that day salvation was come to his house (Luke 19:1-8).
>
> The woman, also, that had been bound down by Satan for eighteen years together, his compassions putting him upon it, he loosed her, though those that stood by snarled at him for so doing (Luke 13:11-13).
>
> And why the woman of Sarepta, and why Naaman the Syrian, rather than widows and lepers of Israel, but because their conditions were more deplorable; for that they were most forlorn, and furthest from help (Luke 4:25, 27).

But I say, why all these, thus named? Why have we not a catalogue of some holy men that were so in their own eyes, and in the judgment of the world? Alas! if, at any time, any of them are mentioned, how seemingly coldly doth the record of scripture present them to us? Nicodemus, a night professor, and Simon the Pharisee, with his fifty pence, and their great ignorance of the methods of grace, we have now and then touched upon.

Mercy seems to be out of its proper channel when it deals with self-righteous men; but then it runs with a full stream when it extends itself to the biggest sinners. As God’s mercy is not regulated by man’s goodness, nor obtained by man’s worthiness, so not much set out by saving of any such. But more of this anon.

And here let me ask my reader a question: Suppose that, as thou art walking by some pond side, thou shouldst espy in it four or five children,

all in danger of drowning, and one in more danger than all the rest; judge which has most need to be helped out first? I know thou wilt say, he that is nearest drowning. Why, this is the case; the bigger sinner, the nearer drowning; therefore, the bigger sinner, the more need of mercy; yea, of help, by mercy, in the first place. And to this our text agrees, when it saith, 'Beginning at Jerusalem.' Let the Jerusalem sinner, says Christ, have the first offer, the first invitation, the first tender of my grace and mercy; for he is the biggest sinner, and so has most need thereof.

> **Second**, Christ Jesus would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, because *when they, any of them, receive it, it redounds most to the fame of his name.*

Christ Jesus, as you may perceive, has put himself under the term of a physician, a doctor for curing of diseases; and you know that applause and fame are things that physicians much desire. That is it that helps them to patients; and that, also, that will help their patients to commit themselves to their skill, for cure, with the more confidence and repose of spirit. And the best way for a doctor or physician to get himself a name, is, in the first place, to take in hand, and cure, some such as all others have given up for lost and dead. Physicians get neither name nor fame by pricking of wheals, [f10] or picking out thistles, or by laying of plasters to the scratch of a pin; every old woman can do this. But if they would have a name and a fame, if they will have it quickly, they must, as I said, do some great and desperate cures. Let them fetch one to life that was dead; let them recover one to his wits that was mad; let them make one that was born blind to see; or let them give ripe wits to a fool: these are notable cures, and he that can do thus, and if he doth thus first, he shall have the name and fame he desires; he may lie a-bed till noon.

Why, Christ Jesus forgiveth sins for a name, and so begets for himself a good report in the hearts of the children of men. And, therefore, in reason he must be willing, as, also, he did command, that his mercy should be offered first to the biggest sinners. I will forgive their sins, iniquities, and transgressions, says he,

‘And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor, before all the nations of the earth’ (²⁴Jeremiah 33:8, 9).

And hence it is, that, at his first appearing, he took upon him to do such mighty works; he got a fame thereby, he got a name thereby (⁴⁰Matthew 4:23, 24).

When Christ had cast the legion of devils out of the man of whom you read (⁴¹Mark 5), he bid him go home to his friends, and tell it.

‘Go home,’ saith he, ‘to thy friends, and tell them how great things God hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee’ (⁴¹Mark 5:19).

Christ Jesus seeks a name, and desireth a fame in the world; and, therefore, or the better to obtain that, he commands that mercy should first be proffered to the biggest sinners; because, by the saving of one of them, he makes all men marvel. As it is said of the man last mentioned, whom Christ cured towards the beginning of the ministry.

‘And he departed,’ says the text, ‘and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all *men* did marvel’ (⁴¹Mark 5:20).

When John told Christ, that they saw one casting out devils in his name, and they forbade him, because he followed not with them, what is the answer of Christ?

‘Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me’ (⁴¹Mark 9:39).

No; they will rather cause his praise to be heard, and his name to be magnified, and so put glory on the head of Christ.

But we will follow, a little, our metaphor. Christ, as I said, has put himself under the term of a physician; consequently, he desireth that his fame, as to the salvation of sinners, may spread abroad, that the world may see what he can do. And to this end, has not only commanded that the biggest sinners should have the first offer of his mercy, but has, as physicians do, [f11] put out his bills, and published his doings, that things may be read and talked of. Yea, he has, moreover, in these, his blessed bills, the holy

scriptures I mean, inserted the very names of persons, the places of their abode, and the great cures that, by the means of his salvation, he has wrought upon them to this very end. Here is, *Item*, such an one, by my grace and redeeming blood, was made a monument of everlasting life; and such an one, by my perfect obedience, became an heir of glory. And then he produceth their names. *Item*, I saved Lot from the guilt and damnation that he had procured for himself by his incest. *Item*, I saved David from the vengeance that belonged to him for committing of adultery and murder. Here is, also, Solomon, Manasseh, Peter, Magdalene, and many others, made mention of in this book. Yea, here are their names, their sins, and their salvations recorded together, that you may read and know what a Savior he is, and do him honor in the world. For why are these things thus recorded, but to show to sinners what he can do, to the praise and glory of his grace? And it is observable, as I said before, we have but very little of the salvation of little sinners mentioned in God's book, because that would not have answered the design, to wit, to bring glory and fame to the name of the Son of God.

What should be the reason, think you, why Christ should so easily take a denial of the great ones that were the grandeur of the world, and struggle so hard for hedge-creepers [f12] and highwaymen, as that parable seems to import he doth, but to show forth the riches of the glory of his grace, to his praise? (Luke 14). This, I say, is one reason, to be sure. They that had their grounds, their yoke of oxen, and their marriage joys, were invited to come; but they made the excuse, and that served the turn. But when he comes to deal with the worst, he saith to his servants, Go ye out and bring them in hither. 'Go out quickly - and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind.' And they did so. And he said again,

> 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled' (Luke 14:18, 19, 23).

These poor, lame, maimed, blind, hedge-creepers, and highwaymen, must come in, must be forced in. These, if saved, will make his merit shine.

When Christ was crucified, and hanged up between the earth and heavens, there were two thieves crucified with him; and, behold, he lays hold of one of them, and will have him away with him to glory. Was not this a strange act, and a display of unthought-of grace? Were there none but thieves

there, or were the rest of that company out of his reach? Could he not, think you, have stooped from the cross to the ground, and have laid hold on some honester man, if he would? Yes, doubtless. Oh! but then he would not have displayed his grace, nor so have pursued his own designs, namely, to get to himself a praise and a name; but now he has done it to purpose. For who that shall read this story, but must confess, that the Son of God is full of grace; for a proof of the riches thereof, he left behind him, when, upon the cross, he took the thief away with him to glory. Nor can this one act of his be buried; it will be talked of, to the end of the world, to his praise.

> ‘*Men* shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness — They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom’ (<19>Psalm 145:6-12).

When the Word of God came among the conjurors and those soothsayers, that you read of (<44>Acts 19), and had prevailed with some of them to accept of the grace of Christ, the Holy Ghost records it with a boast, for that it would redound to his praise, saying,

> ‘Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed’ (<44>Acts 19:19, 20).

It wrenched out of the clutches of Satan some of those of whom he thought himself most sure. ‘So mightily grew the Word of God.’ It grew mightily, it encroached upon the kingdom of the devil. It pursued him, and took the prey; it forced him to let go his hold! It brought away captive, as prisoners taken by force of arms, some of the most valiant of his army. It fetched back from, as it were, the confines of hell, some of those that were his most trusty, and that, with hell, had been at an agreement. It made them come and confess their deeds, and burn their books before all men. ‘So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed.’ Thus, therefore, you see why Christ will have offered mercy, in the first place, to the biggest

sinners; they have most need thereof; and this is the most ready way to extol his name ‘that rideth upon the heavens’ to our help. But,

> **Third**, Christ Jesus would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, because, *by their forgiveness and salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for life*.

For the physician, by curing the most desperate at the first, doth not only get himself a name, but begets encouragement in the minds of other diseased folk to come to him for help. Hence you read of our Lord, that after, through his tender mercy, he had cured many of great diseases, his fame was spread abroad:

> ‘They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and *from* beyond Jordan’ (Matthew 4:24, 25).

See here, he first, by working, gets himself a fame, a name, and renown; and now men take encouragement, and bring, from all quarters, their diseased to him, being helped, by what they had heard, to believe that their diseased should be healed.

Now, as he did with those outward cures, so he does in the proffers of his grace and mercy; he proffers that, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, that others may take heart to come to him to be saved. I will give you a scripture or two. I mean to show you that Christ, by commanding that his mercy should, in the first place, be offered to the biggest of sinners, has a design thereby to encourage and provoke others to come also to him for mercy. ‘God,’ said Paul, ‘who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised *us* up together, and made us sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.’ But why did he do all this?

‘That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness towards us through Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 2:4-7).

See, here is a design; God lets out his mercy to Ephesus of design, even to show to the ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness to them through Christ Jesus. And why, to show, by these, the exceeding riches of his grace to the ages to come, through Christ Jesus? But to allure them, and their children also to come to him, and to partake the same grace through Christ Jesus? [f13]

But what was Paul, and the Ephesian sinners? (of Paul we will speak anon.) These Ephesian sinners, they were men dead in sins; men that walked according to the dictates and motions of the devil; worshippers of Diana, that effeminate goddess; men far off from God, aliens and strangers to all good things; such as were far off from that, as I said, and, consequently, in a most deplorable condition. As the Jerusalem sinners were of the highest sort among the Jews, so these Ephesian sinners were of the highest sort among the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:1-3, 11, 12; Acts 19:35). Wherefore, as by the Jerusalem sinners, in saving them first, he had a design to provoke others to come to him for mercy, so the same design is here set on foot again, in his calling and converting the Ephesian sinners, ‘That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace,’ says he, ‘in *his* kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.’ There is yet one hint behind. It is said that God saved these ‘for his great love’; that is, as I think, for the setting forth, for the commendation of his love, for the advance of his love, in the hearts and minds of them that should come after. As who should say, God has had mercy upon, and been gracious to you, that he might show to others, for their encouragement, that they have ground to come to him to be saved. When God saves one great sinner, it is to encourage another great sinner to come to him for mercy.

He saved the thief, to encourage thieves to come to him for mercy; he saved Magdalene, to encourage other Magdalenes to come to him for mercy; he saved Saul, to encourage Sauls to come to him for mercy; and this Paul himself doth say, ‘For this cause,’ saith he,

‘I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long- suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting’ (1 Timothy 1:16).

How plain are the words! Christ, in saving of me, has given to the world a pattern of his grace, that they might see, and believe, and come, and be saved; that they that are to be born hereafter might believe on Jesus Christ to life everlasting.

But what was Paul? Why, he tells you himself; I am, says he, the chief of sinners. I was, says he, a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person; but I obtained mercy (1 Timothy 1:13, 14). Ay, that is well for you, Paul; but what advantage have we thereby? Oh, very much, saith he; for, ‘for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting’ (1 Timothy 1:16). Thus, therefore, you see that this third reason is of strength; namely, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, because, by their forgiveness and salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for mercy. It may well, therefore, be said to God, Thou delightest in mercy, and mercy pleases thee (Micah 7:18).

But who believes that this was God’s design in showing mercy of old — namely, that we that come after might take courage to come to him for mercy; or that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, to stir up others to come to him for life? This is not the manner of men, O God! But David saw this betimes; therefore he makes this one argument with God, that he would blot out his transgressions, that he would forgive his adultery, his murders, and horrible hypocrisy. Do it, O Lord, saith he, do it, and ‘*then* will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee’ (Psalm 2:7-13). He knew that the conversion of sinners would be a work highly pleasing to God, as being that which he had designed before he made mountain or hill: wherefore he comes, and he saith, Save me, O Lord; if thou wilt but save me, I will fall in with thy design; I will help to bring what sinners to thee I can. And, Lord, I am willing to be made a preacher myself, for that I have been a horrible sinner; wherefore, if thou

shalt forgive my great transgressions, I shall be a fit man to tell of thy wondrous grace to others. Yea, Lord, I dare promise, that if thou wilt have mercy upon me, it shall tend to the glory of thy grace, and also to the increase of thy kingdom; for I will tell it, and sinners will hear on't. And there is nothing so suiteth with the hearing sinner as mercy; and to be informed that God is willing to bestow it upon him. 'I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.'

Nor will Christ Jesus miss of his design in proffering of mercy, in the first place, to the biggest sinners. You know what work the Lord, by laying hold of the woman of Samaria, made among the people there. They knew that she was a town sinner, an adulteress; yea, one that, after the most audacious manner, lived in uncleanness with a man that was not her husband. But when she, from a turn upon her heart, went into the city, and said to her neighbors, 'Come,' Oh, how they came! how they flocked out of the city to Jesus Christ! 'Then they went out of the city, and came to him.'

> 'And many of the Samaritans of that city (people, perhaps, as bad as herself) believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did' (John 4:39).

That word, 'He told me all that ever I did,' was a great argument with them; for by that they gathered, that though he knew her to be vile, yet he did not despise her, nor refuse to show how willing he was to communicate his grace unto her; and this fetched over, first her, then them.

This woman, as I said, was a Samaritan sinner, a sinner of the worst complexion; for the Jews abhorred to have ought to do with them (John 4:9), wherefore none more fit than she to be made one of the decoys of heaven, to bring others of these Samaritan wild-fowls under the net of the grace of Christ; and she did the work to purpose. Many, and many more of the Samaritans believed on him (John 4:40-42). The heart of man, though set on sin, will, when it comes once to a persuasion that God is willing to have mercy upon us, incline to come to Jesus Christ for life. Witness those turn-aways from God that you also read of in Jeremiah; for after they had heard, three or four times over, that God had mercy for backsliders, they broke out, and said,

‘Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the Lord our God.’ (Jeremiah 3:22);

or, as those in Hosea did,

‘For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy’ (Hosea 14:1-3).

Mercy, and the revelation thereof, is the only antidote against sin. ‘Tis of a thawing nature; ‘twill loose the heart that is frozen up in sin; yea, ‘twill make the unwilling willing to come to Jesus Christ for life. Wherefore, do you think, was it that Jesus Christ told the adulterous woman, and that before so many sinners, that he had not condemned her, but to allure her, with them there present, to hope to find favor at his hands? As he also saith, in another place, ‘I came not to judge, but to save the world.’ For might they not thence most rationally conclude, that if Jesus Christ had rather save than damn an harlot, there was encouragement for them [although great sinners] to come to him for mercy.

I heard once a story from a soldier, who, with his company, had laid siege against a fort, that so long as the besieged were persuaded their foes would show them no favor, they fought like madmen; but when they saw one of their fellows taken, and received to favor, they all came tumbling down from their fortress, and delivered themselves into their enemies’ hands. I am persuaded, did men believe that there is that grace and willingness in the heart of Christ to save sinners, as the Word imports there is, they would come tumbling into his arms: but Satan has blinded their minds that they cannot see this thing. Howbeit, the Lord Jesus has, as I said, that others might take heart and come to him, given out a commandment, that mercy should, in the first place, be offered to the biggest sinners. ‘Begin,’ saith he, ‘at Jerusalem’; and thus I end the third reason.

> **Fourth**, Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to biggest sinners, because *that is the way, if they receive it, most to weaken the kingdom of Satan, and to keep it lowest in every age of the world.*

The biggest sinners, they are Satan’s colonels and captains, the leaders of his people, and they that most stoutly make head against the Son of God. Wherefore, let these first be conquered, and his kingdom will be weak. When Ishbosheth had lost his Abner, the kingdom was made weak, nor did

he sit but tottering then upon his throne. So, when Satan loseth his strong men, them that are mighty to work iniquity, and dexterous to manage others in the same, then is his kingdom weak (2 Samuel 3). Therefore, I say, Christ, and doth offer mercy, in the first place, to such, the more to weaken his kingdom. Christ Jesus was glad to see Satan fall like lightning from heaven; that is, suddenly, or head-long; and it was, surely, by casting of him out of strong possession, and by recovering of some notorious sinners out of his clutches (Luke 10:17-19).

Samson, when he would pull down the Philistines' temple, took hold of the two main pillars of it, and, breaking them, down came the house. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and to destroy by converting grace, as well as by redeeming blood. Now, sin swarms, and lieth by legions, and whole armies, in the souls of the biggest sinners, as in garrisons; [f14] wherefore, the way, the most direct way, to destroy it, is first to deal with such sinners by the word of his gospel, and by the merits of his passion.

For example, though I shall give you but a homely one; suppose a family to be very lousy, and one or two of the family to be in chief the breeders, the way, the quickest way, to clean that family, or at least to weaken the so swarming of those vermin, is, in the first place, to sweeten the skin, head, and clothes of the chief breeders; and then, though all the family should be apt to breed them, the number of them, and so the greatness of that plague there, will be the more impaired. Why, there are some people that are in chief the devil's sin-breeders in the towns and places where they live. The place, town, or family where they live, must needs be horribly lousy, and, as it were, eaten up with vermin. Now, let the Lord Jesus, in the first place, cleanse these great breeders, and there will be given a nip to those swarms of sins that used to be committed in such places throughout the town, house, or family, where such sin-breeding persons used to be.

I speak by experience. I was one of these lousy ones, one of these great sin-breeders; I infected all the youth of the town where I was born, with all manner of youthful vanities. The neighbors counted me so; my practice proved me so: wherefore Christ Jesus took me first; and taking me first, the contagion was much allayed all the town over. When God made me

sigh, they would hearken, and inquiringly say, What's the matter with John? They also gave their various opinions of me; but, as I said, sin cooled, and failed, as to his full career. When I went out to seek the bread of life, some of them would follow, and the rest be put into a muse [f15] at home. Yea, almost the town, at first, at times would go out to hear at the place where I found good; yea, young and old for a while had some reformation on them; also some of them, perceiving that God had mercy upon me, came crying to him for mercy too.

But what need I give you an instance of poor I; I will come to Manasseh the king. So long as he was a ringleading sinner, the great idolater, and chief for devilism, the whole land flowed with wickedness; for he made them to sin (2 Chronicles 33), and do worse than the heathen that dwelt round about them, or that was cast out from before them: but when God converted him, the whole land was reformed. Down went the groves, the idols, and altars of Baal, and up went true religion in much of the power and purity of it. You will say, The king reformed by power. I answer, doubtless, and by example too; for people observe their leaders; as their fathers did, so did they (2 Kings 17:41). This, therefore, is another reason why Jesus would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, because that is the best way, if they receive it, most to weaken the kingdom of Satan, and to keep it poor and low.

And do you not think now, that if God would but take hold of the hearts of some of the most notorious in your town, in your family, or country, that this thing would be verified before your faces? It would, it would, to the joy of you that are godly, to the making of hell to sigh, to the great suppressing of sin, the glory of Christ, and the joy of the angels of God. [f16] And ministers, should, therefore, that this work might go on, take advantages to persuade with the biggest sinners to come into Christ, according to my text, and their commission, 'Beginning at Jerusalem.'

> **Fifth**, Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, because *such, when converted, are usually the best helps in the church against temptations, and fittest for the support of the feeble-minded there.*

Hence, usually, you have some such in the first plantation of churches, or quickly upon it. Churches would do but sorrily, if Christ Jesus did not put

such converts among them; they are the monuments and mirrors of mercy. The very sight of such a sinner in God's house, yea, the very thought of him, where the sight of him cannot be had, is ofttimes greatly for the help of the faith of the feeble.

When the churches, saith Paul, that were in Judea, heard this concerning me, that he which persecuted them in time past, now preached the faith which once he destroyed, 'they glorified God in me' (Galatians 1:20-24). 'Glorified God.' How is that? Why, they praised him, and took courage to believe the more in the mercy of God; for that he had had mercy on such a great sinner as he. They glorified God 'in me'; they wondered that grace should be so rich, as to take hold of such a wretch as I was; and for my sake believed in Christ the more.

There are two things that great sinners are acquainted with, when they come to divulge them to the saints, that are a great relief to their faith.

1. The contests that they usually have with the devil at their parting with him.

2. Their knowledge of his secrets in his workings.

1. For first, The biggest sinners [f17] have usually great contests with the devil at their partings; and this is an help to saints: for ordinary saints find afterwards what the vile ones find at first, but when, at the opening of hearts, the one finds himself to be as the other — the one is a comfort to the other. The lesser sort of sinners find but little of this, till after they have been some time in profession; but the vile man meets with his at the beginning. Wherefore he, when the other is down, is ready to tell that he has met with the same before; for, I say, he has had it before. Satan is loath to part with a great sinner. 'What, my true servant,' quoth he, 'my old servant, wilt thou forsake me now? Having so often sold thyself to me to work wickedness, wilt thou forsake me now? Thou horrible wretch, dost not know, that thou has sinned thyself beyond the reach of grace, and dost thou think to find mercy now? Art not thou a murderer, a thief, a harlot, a witch, a sinner of the greatest size, and dost thou look for mercy now? Dost thou think that Christ will foul his fingers with thee? It is enough to make angels *blush*, saith Satan, to see so vile an one knock at heaven-gates for mercy, and wilt thou be so abominably bold to do it?' [f18] Thus Satan

dealt with me, says the great sinner, when at first I came to Jesus Christ. And what did you reply? saith the tempted. Why, I granted the while charge to be true, says the other. And what, did you despair, or how? No, saith he, I said, I am Magdalene, I am Zaccheus, I am the thief, I am the harlot, I am the publican, I am the prodigal, and one of Christ's murderers; yea, worse than any of these; and yet God was so far off from rejecting of me, as I found afterwards, that there was music and dancing in his house for me, and for joy that I was come home unto him. O blessed be God for grace (says the other), for then, I hope, there is favor for me. Yea, as I told you, such an one is a continual spectacle in the church, for every one by to behold God's grace and wonder by.

2. And as for the secrets of Satan, such as are suggestions to question the being of God, the truth of his Word, and to be annoyed with devilish blasphemies; none more acquainted with these than the biggest sinners at their conversion; wherefore thus also they are prepared to be helps in the church to relieve and comfort the other.

I might also here tell you of the contests and battles that such are engaged in, wherein they find the buffetings of Satan, above any other of the saints. At which time Satan assaults the soul with darkness, fears, frightful thoughts of apparitions; now they sweat, pant, cry out, and struggle for life. The angels now come down to behold the sight, and rejoice to see a bit of dust and ashes to overcome principalities and powers, and might, and dominions. But, as I said, when these come a little to be settled, they are prepared for helps for others, and are great comforts unto them. Their great sins give encouragement to the devil to assault them; and by these temptations Christ takes advantage to make them the more helpful to the churches.

The biggest sinner, when he is converted, and comes into the church, says to them all, by his very coming in, Behold me, all you that are men and women of a low and timorous spirit, you whose hearts are narrow, for that you never had the advantage to know, because your sins are few, the largeness of the grace of God. Behold, I say, in me, the exceeding riches of his grace! I am a pattern set forth before your faces, on whom you may look and take heart. This, I say, the great sinner can say, to the exceeding comfort of all the rest. Wherefore, as I have hinted before, when God

intends to stock a place with saints, and to make that place excellently to flourish with the riches of his grace, he usually begins with the conversion of some of the most notorious thereabouts, and lays them, as an example, to allure others, and to build up when they are converted. It was Paul that must go to the Gentiles, because Paul was the most outrageous of all the apostles, in the time of his unregeneracy. Yea, Peter must be he, that after his horrible fall, was thought fittest, when recovered again, to comfort and strengthen his brethren (See <4022>Luke 22:31, 32).

Some must be pillars in God's house; and if they be pillars of cedar, they must stand while they are stout and sturdy sticks in the forest, before they are cut down, and planted or placed there. No man, when he buildeth his house, makes the principal parts thereof of weak or feeble timber; for how could such bear up the rest? but of great and able wood. Christ Jesus also goeth this way to work; he makes of the biggest sinners bearers and supporters to the rest. This, then, may serve for another reason, why Jesus Christ gives out in commandment, that mercy should, in the first place, be offered to the biggest sinners, because such, when converted, are usually the best helps in the church against temptations, and fittest for the support of the feeble-minded there.

> **Sixth**, Another reason why Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, is, because *they, when converted, are apt to love him most.*

This agrees both with scripture and reason. Scripture says so. To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. 'To whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little' (<4047>Luke 7:47). Reason says so: for as it would be the unreasonablest thing in the world to render hatred for love, and contempt for forgiveness; so it would be as ridiculous to think, that the reception of a little kindness should lay the same obligations upon the heart to love as the reception of a great deal. I would not disparage the love of Christ; I know the least drachm of it, when it reaches to forgiveness, is great above all the world; but comparatively, there are greater extensions of the love of Christ to one than to another. He that has most sin, if. forgiven, is partaker of the greatest love, of the greatest forgiveness.

I know also, that there are some, that from this very doctrine say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'; and that turn the grace of our God into

lasciviousness. But I speak not of these; these will neither be ruled by grace nor reason. Grace would teach them, if they knew it, to deny ungodly courses; and so would reason too, if it could truly sense the love of God (<56211>Titus 2:11, 12; <45601>Romans 12:1).

Doth it look like what hath any coherence with reason or mercy, for a man to abuse his friend? Because Christ died for me, shall I therefore spit in his face? The bread and water that was given by Elisha to his enemies, that came into the land of Israel to take him, had so much influence upon their minds, though heathens, that they returned to their homes without hurting him; yea, it kept them from coming again in a hostile manner into the coasts of Israel (<120619>2 Kings 6:19-23).

But to forbear to illustrate, till anon. One reason why Christ Jesus shows mercy to sinners, is, that he might obtain their love, that he may remove their base affections from base objects to himself. Now, if he loves to be loved a little, he loves to be loved much; but there is not any that are capable of loving much, save those that have much forgiven them. Hence it is said of Paul, that he labored more than them all; to wit, with a labor of love, because he had been by sin more vile against Christ than they all (<46150>1 Corinthians 15). He it was that 'persecuted the church of God, and wasted it' (<48113>Galatians 1:13). He of them all was the only raving bedlam against the saints. 'And being exceeding mad,' says he, 'against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities' (<44611>Acts 26:11). This raving bedlam, that once was so, is he that now says, I labored more than them all, more for Christ than them all. But Paul, what moved thee thus to do? The love of Christ, says he. It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. As who should say, O grace! It was such grace to save me! It was such marvelous grace for God to look down from heaven upon me, and that secured me from the wrath to come, that I am captivated with the sense of the riches of it. Hence I act, hence I labor; for how can I otherwise do, since God not only separated me from my sins and companions, but separated all the powers of my soul and body to his service? I am, therefore, prompted on by this exceeding love to labor as I have done; yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Oh! I shall never forget his love, nor the circumstances under which I was, when his love laid hold upon me. I was going to Damascus with letters from the high-priest, to make havoc of God's people there, as I had made havoc of them in other places. These

bloody letters were not imposed upon me. I went to the high-priest and desired them of him, and yet he saved me! (<4401>Acts 9:1, 2). I was one of the men, of the chief men, that had a hand in the blood of his martyr Stephen; yet he had mercy upon me! When I was at Damascus, I stunk [f19] so horribly like a blood-sucker, that I became a terror to all thereabout. Yea, Ananias, good man, made intercession to my Lord against me; yet he would have mercy upon me, yea, joined mercy to mercy, until he had made me a monument of grace. He made a saint of me, and persuaded me that my transgressions were forgiven me.

When I began to preach, those that heard me were amazed, and said, 'Is not this he that destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound to the high-priest?' Hell doth know that I was a sinner; heaven doth know that I was a sinner; the world also knows that I was a sinner, a sinner of the greatest size; but I obtained mercy (<4401>Acts 9:20, 21). Shall not this lay obligation upon me? Is not love of the greatest force to oblige? Is it not strong as death, cruel as the grave, and hotter than the coals of juniper? Hath it not a most vehement flame? Can the waters quench it? can the floods drown it? I am under the force of it, and this is my continual cry, What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon me?

Aye, Paul! this is something; thou speakest like a man, like a man affected, and carried away with the love and grace of God. Now, this sense, and this affection, and this labor, giveth to Christ the love that he looks for. But he might have converted twenty little sinners, and yet not found, for grace bestowed, so much love in them all. I wonder how far a man might go among the converted sinners of the smaller size, before he could find one that so much as looked anything this way ward. Where is he that is thus under pangs of love for the grace bestowed upon him by Jesus Christ? Excepting only some few, you may walk to the world's end, and find none. But, as I said, some there are, and so there have been in every age of the church, great sinners, that have had much forgiven them; and they love much upon this account. Jesus Christ, therefore, knows what he doth, when he lays hold on the hearts of sinners of the biggest size. He knows that such an one will love more than many that have not sinned half their sins.

I will tell you a story that I have read of Martha and Mary; the name of the book I have forgot; I mean of the book in which I found the relation; but the thing was thus: —

Martha, saith my author, was a very holy woman, much like Lazarus, her brother; but Mary was a loose and wanton creature; Martha did seldom miss good sermons and lectures, when she could come at them in Jerusalem; but Mary would frequent the house of sports, and the company of the vilest of men for lust. And though Martha had often desired that her sister would go with her to hear her preachers, yea, had often entreated her with tears to do it, yet could she never prevail; for still Mary would make her excuse, or reject her with disdain, for her zeal and preciseness in religion.

After Martha had waited long, tried many ways to bring her sister to good, and all proved ineffectual, at last she comes upon her thus: 'Sister,' quoth she, 'I pray thee go with me to the temple today, to hear one preach a sermon.' 'What kind of preacher is he?' said she. Martha replied, 'It is one Jesus of Nazareth; he is the handsomest man that ever you saw with your eyes. Oh! he shines in beauty, and is a most excellent preacher.'

Now, what does Mary, after a little pause, but goes up into her chamber, and, with her pins and her clouts, [f20] decks up herself as fine as her fingers could make her. This done, away she goes, not with her sister Martha, but as much unobserved as she could, to the sermon, or rather to see the preacher.

The hour and preacher being come, and she having observed whereabouts the preacher would stand, goes and sets herself so in the temple, that she might be sure to have the full view of this excellent person. So he comes in, and she looks, and the first glimpse of his person pleased her. Well, Jesus addresseth himself to his sermon, and she looks earnestly on him.

Now, at that time, saith my author, Jesus preached about the lost sheep, the lost groat, and the prodigal child. And when he came to show what care the shepherd took for one lost sheep, and how the woman swept to find her piece which was lost, and what joy there was at their finding, she began to be taken by the ears, and forgot what she came about, musing what the preacher would make of it. But when he came to the application,

and showed, that by the lost sheep, was meant a great sinner; by the shepherd's care, was meant God's love for great sinners; and that by the joy of the neighbors, was showed what joy there was among the angels in heaven over one great sinner that repenteth; she began to be taken by the heart. And as he spake these last words, she thought he pitched his innocent eyes just upon her, and looked as if he spake what was now said to her: wherefore her heart began to tremble, being shaken with affection and fear; then her eyes ran down with tears apace; wherefore she was forced to hide her face with her handkerchief, and so sat sobbing and crying all the rest of the sermon.

Sermon being done, up she gets, and away she goes, and withal inquired where this Jesus the preacher dined that day? and one told her, At the house of Simon the Pharisee. So away goes she, first to her chamber, and there strips herself of her wanton attire; then falls upon her knees to ask God forgiveness for all her wicked life. This done, in a modest dress she goes to Simon's house, where she finds Jesus sat at dinner. So she gets behind him, and weeps, and drops her tears upon his feet like rain, and washes them, and wipes them with the hair of her head. She also kissed his feet with her lips, and anointed them with ointment. When Simon the Pharisee perceived what the woman did, and being ignorant of what it was to be forgiven much (for he never was forgiven more than fifty pence), he began to think within himself, that he had been mistaken about Jesus Christ, because he suffered such a sinner as this woman was, to touch him. Surely, quoth he, this man, if he were a prophet, would not let this woman come near him, for she is a town-sinner; so ignorant are all self-righteous men of the way of Christ with sinners. But, lest Mary should be discouraged with some clownish carriage of this Pharisee, and so desert her good beginnings, and her new steps which she now had begun to take towards eternal life, Jesus began thus with Simon:

> 'Simon,' saith he, 'I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was,' said Jesus, 'a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered, and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to

> the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto her, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven' (<4007>Luke 7:36-48).

Thus you have the story. If I come short in any circumstance, I beg pardon of those that can correct me. It is three or four and twenty years since I saw the book; yet I have, as far as my memory will admit, given you the relation of the matter. However, Luke, as you see, doth here present you with the substance of the whole. [f21]

Alas! Christ Jesus has but little thanks for the saving of little sinners. 'To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' He gets not water for his feet, by his saving of such sinners. There are abundance of dry-eyed Christians in the world, and abundance of dry-eyed duties too; duties that never were wetted with the tears of contrition and repentance, nor ever sweetened with the great sinner's box of ointment. And the reason is, such sinners have not great sins to be saved from; or, if they have, they look upon them in the diminishing glass of the holy law of God. [f22] But, I rather believe, that the professors of our days want a due sense of what they are; for, verily, for the generality of them, both before and since conversion, they have been sinners of a lusty size. But if their eyes be holden, if convictions are not shown, if their knowledge of their sins is but like to the eye-sight in twilight; the heart cannot be affected with that grace that has laid hold on the man; and so Christ Jesus sows much, and has little coming in. Wherefore his way is ofttimes to step out of the way, to Jericho, to Samaria, to the country of the Gadarenes, to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and also to Mount Calvary, that he may lay hold of such kind of sinners as will love him to his liking (<4290>Luke 19:1-11; <4003>John 4:3-11; <4105>Mark 5:1-20; <4015>Matthew 15:21-29; <4233>Luke 23:33-43).

But thus much for the sixth reason, why Christ Jesus would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, to wit, because such sinners, when converted, are apt to love him most. The Jerusalem sinners were they that outstripped, when they were converted, in some things, all the churches of the Gentiles. They 'were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that aught of the things which he possessed was his own.' 'Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid *them* down at the apostles' feet,' etc. (Acts 4:32, 35). Now, show me such another pattern, if you can. But why did these do thus? Oh! they were Jerusalem sinners. These were the men that, but a little before, had killed the Prince of life; and those to whom he did, that notwithstanding, send the first offer of grace and mercy. And the sense of this took them up betwixt the earth and the heaven, and carried them on in such ways and methods as could never be trodden by any since. They talk of the church of Rome, and set her, in her primitive state, as a pattern and mother of churches; when the truth is, they were the Jerusalem sinners, when converts, that out-did all the churches that ever were.

> **Seventh**, Christ Jesus would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, because *grace, when it is received by such, finds matter to kindle upon more freely than it finds in other sinners.*

Great sinners are like the dry wood, or like great candles, which burn best and shine with biggest light. I lay not this down, as I did those reasons before, to show, that when great sinners are converted, they will be encouragement to others, though that is true; but to show, that Christ has a delight to see grace, the grace we receive, to shine. We love to see things that bear a good gloss; yea, we choose to buy such kind of matter to work upon, as will, if wrought up to what we intend, cast that luster that we desire. Candles that burn not bright, we like not; wood that is green will rather smother, and sputter, and smoke, and crack, and flounce, than cast a brave light and a pleasant heat; wherefore great folks care not much, not so much, for such kind of things, as for them that will better answer their ends.

Hence Christ desires the biggest sinner; in him there is matter to work by, to wit, a great deal of sin; for as by the tallow of the candle, the first takes occasion to burn the brighter; so, by the sin of the soul, grace takes occasion to shine the clearer. Little candles shine but little, for there wanteth matter for the fire to work upon; but in the great sinner, here is more matter for grace to work by. Faith shines, when it worketh towards Christ, through the sides of many and great transgressions, and so does love, for that much is forgiven. And what matter can be found in the soul for humility to work by so well, as by a sight that I have been and am an abominable sinner? And the same is to be said of patience, meekness, gentleness, self-denial, or of any other grace. Grace takes occasion, by the vileness of the man, to shine the more; even as by the ruggedness of a very strong distemper or disease, the virtue of the medicine is best made manifest. ‘Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound’ (Romans 5:20). A black string makes the neck look whiter; great sins make grace burn clear. Some say, when grace and a good nature meet together, they do make shining Christians; but I say, when grace and a great sinner meet, and when grace shall subdue that great sinner to itself, and shall operate after its kind in the soul of that great sinner, then we have a shining Christian; witness all those of whom mention was made before.

Abraham was among the idolaters when in the land of Assyria, and served idols, with his kindred, on the other side of the flood (Joshua 24:2; Genesis 11:31). But who, when called, was there in the world, in whom grace shone so bright as in him? The Thessalonians were idolaters before the Word of God came to them; but when they had received it, they became examples to all that did believe in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, are for having things seen; for having the Word of life held forth. They light not a candle that it might be put under a bushel, or under a bed, but on a candlestick, that all that come in may see the light (Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; Luke 11:33). and, I say, as I said before, in whom is it, light, like so to shine, as in the souls of great sinners?

When the Jewish Pharisees dallied with the gospel, Christ threatened to take it from them, and to give it to the barbarous heathens and idolaters.

Why so? For they, saith he, will bring forth the fruits thereof in their season. [f23]

> ‘Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof’ (<4043>Matthew 21:43).

I have often marveled at our youth, and said in my heart, What should be the reason that they should be so generally at this day debauched as they are? For they are now profane to amazement; and sometimes I have thought one thing, and sometimes another; that is, why God should suffer it so to be? At last I have thought of this: How if the God, whose ways are past finding out, should suffer it so to be now, that he might make of some of them the more glorious saints hereafter. I know sin is of the devil, but it cannot work in the world without permission: and if it happens to be as I have thought, it will not be the first time that God the Lord hath caught Satan in his own design. For my part, I believe that the time is at hand, that we shall see better saints in the world than has been seen in it this many a day. And this vileness, that at present does so much swallow up our youth, is one cause of my thinking so; for out of them, for from among them, when God sets to his hand, as of old, you shall see what penitent ones, what trembling ones, and what admirers of grace, will be found to profess the gospel to the glory of God by Christ.

Alas! we are a company of worn-out Christians; our moon is in the wane; we are much more black than white, more dark than light; we shine but a little; grace in the most of us is decayed. But I say, when they of these debauched ones that are to be saved shall be brought in — when these that look more like devils than men shall be converted to Christ (and I believe several of them will), then will Christ be exalted, grace adored, the Word prized, Zion’s path better trodden, and men in the pursuit of their own salvation, to the amazement of them that are left behind.

Just before Christ came into the flesh, the world was degenerated as it is now: the generality of the men in Jerusalem were become either high and famous for hypocrisy, or filthy, base in their lives. The devil also was broke loose in hideous manner, and had taken possession of many: yea, I believe, that there was never generation before nor since, that could produce so many possessed with devils, deformed, lame, blind, and

infected with monstrous diseases, as that generation could. But what was the reason thereof, I mean the reason from God? Why, one — and we may sum up more in that answer that Christ gave to his disciples concerning him that was born blind — was, that ‘the works of God should be made manifest’ in them, and ‘that the Son of God might be glorified thereby’ (⁴⁸⁰²John 9:2, 3; ⁴⁸⁰⁴John 11:4).

Now, if these devils and diseases, as they possessed men then, were to make way and work for an approaching to Christ in person, and for the declaring of his power, why may we not think that now, even now also, he is ready to come, by his Spirit in the gospel, to heal many of the debaucheries of our age? I cannot believe that grace will take them all, for there are but few that are saved; but yet it will take some, even some of the worst of men, and make blessed ones of them. But, O how these ringleaders in vice will then shine in virtue! They will be the very pillars in churches, they will be as an ensign in the land.

> ‘The Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for *they shall be as* the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land’ (³⁸⁰⁶Zechariah 9:16).

But who are these? Even idolatrous Ephraim, and backsliding Judah (³⁸⁰³Zechariah 9:13).

I know there is ground to fear, that the iniquity of this generation will be pursued with heavy judgments; but that will not hinder that we have supposed. God took him a glorious church out of bloody Jerusalem, yea, out of the chief of the sinners there, and left the rest to be taken and spoiled, and sold, thirty for a penny, in the nations where they were captives. The gospel working gloriously in a place, to the seizing upon many of the ringleading sinners thereof, promiseth no security to the rest, but rather threateneth them with the heaviest and smartest judgments; as in the instance now given, we have a full demonstration; but in defending, the Lord will defend his people; and in saving, he will save his inheritance.

Nor does this speak any great comfort to a decayed and backsliding sort of Christian; for the next time God rides post with his gospel, he will leave such Christians behind him. But, I say, Christ is resolved to set up his light in the world; yea, he is delighted to see his graces shine; and therefore

he commands that his gospel should, to that end, be offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners; for by great sins it shineth most; therefore he saith, ‘Begin at Jerusalem.’

> **Eighth**, and lastly, Christ Jesus will have mercy to be offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, *for that by that means the impenitent that are left behind will be, at the judgment, the more left without excuse.*

God’s Word has two edges; it can cut back-stroke and fore-stroke. If it doth thee no good, it will do thee hurt; it is ‘the savor of life unto life’ to those that receive it, but of ‘death unto death’ to them that refuse it (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16). But this is not all; the tender of grace to the biggest sinners, in the first place, will not only leave the rest, or those that refuse it, in a deplorable condition, but will also stop their mouths, and cut off all pretense to excuse at that day. ‘If I had not come and spoken unto them,’ saith Christ,’ saith Christ, ‘they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin’ — for their sin of persevering in impenitence (John 15:22). But what did he speak to them? Why, even that which I have told you; to wit, That he has in special a delight in saving the biggest sinners. He spake this in the way of his doctrine; he spake this in the way of his practice, even to the pouring out of his last breath before them (Luke 23:34).

Now, since this is so, what can the condemned at the judgment say for themselves, why sentence of death should not be passed upon them? I say, what excuse can they make for themselves, when they shall be asked why they did not in the day of salvation come to Christ to be saved? Will they have ground to say to the Lord, Thou wast only for saving of little sinners; and, therefore, because they were great ones, they durst not come unto him; or that thou hadst not compassion for the biggest sinners, therefore I died in despair? Will these be excuses for them, as the case now standeth with them? Is there not everywhere in God’s Book a flat contradiction to this, in multitudes of promises, of invitations, of examples, and the like? Alas! alas! there will then be there millions of souls to confute this plea; ready, I say, to stand up, and say, ‘O! deceived world, heaven swarms with such as were, when they were in the world, to

the full as bad as you!' Now, this will kill all plea or excuse, why they should not perish in their sins; yea, the text says they shall see them there.

> 'There shall be weeping - when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of heaven, and you *yourselves* thrust out. And they shall come *from* the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God' (<42 13:28>Luke 13:28, 29).

Out of which company, it is easy to pick such as sometimes were as bad people as any [that] now breathe on the face of [the] earth. What think you of the first man, by whose sins there are millions now in hell? And so I may say, What think you of ten thousand more besides?

But if the Word will not stifle and gag them up — I speak now for amplification's sake — the view of those who are saved shall. There comes an incestuous person to the bar, and pleads, That the bigness of his sins was a bar to his receiving the promise. But will not his mouth be stopped as to that, when Lot, and the incestuous Corinthians, shall be set before him (<01 19:33>Genesis 19:33-37; <46 05:01>1 Corinthians 5:1, 2).

There comes a thief, and says, Lord, my sin of thefts, I thought, was such as could not be pardoned by thee! But when he shall see the thief that was saved on the cross stand by, as clothed with beauteous glory, what further can he be able to object? Yea, the Lord will produce ten thousand of his saints at his coming, who shall after this manner

> 'execute judgment upon all, and so convince all that are ungodly among them - of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him' (<65 01:15>Jude 15).

And these are hard speeches against him, to say that he was not able or willing to save men, because of the greatness of their sins, or to say that they were discouraged by his Word from repentance, because of the heinousness of their offenses. These things, I say, shall then be confuted. He comes with ten thousand of his saints to confute them, and to stop their mouths from making objections against their own eternal damnation.

Here is Adam, the destroyer of the world; here is Lot, that lay with both his daughters; here is Abraham, that was sometime an idolater; and Jacob,

that was a supplanter; and Reuben, that lay with his father's concubine; and Judah, that lay with his daughter-in-law; and Levi and Simeon, that wickedly slew the Shechemites; and Aaron, that made an idol to be worshipped, and that proclaimed a religious feast unto it. Here is also Rahab the harlot, and Bathsheba, that bare a bastard to David. Here is Solomon, that great backslider; and Manasseh, that man of blood and a witch. Time would fail to tell you of the woman of Canaan's daughter, of Mary Magdalene, of Matthew the publican, and of Gideon and Samson, and many thousands more.

Alas! alas! I say, what will these sinners do, that have, through their unbelief, eclipsed the glorious largeness of the mercy of God, and gave way to despair of salvation, because of the bigness of their sins? For all these, though now glorious saints in light, were sometimes sinners of the biggest size, who had sins that were of a notorious hue; yet now, I say, they are in their shining and heavenly robes before the throne of God and of the Lamb, blessing for ever and ever that Son of God for their salvation, who died for them upon the tree; admiring that ever it should come into their hearts once to think of coming to God by Christ; but above all, blessing God for granting of them light to see those encouragement's in his Testament; without which, without doubt, they had been daunted, and sunk down under guilt of sin and despair, as their fellow-sinners have done. But now they also are witnesses for God, and for his grace, against an unbelieving world; for, as I said, they shall come to convince the world of their speeches, their hard and unbelieving words, that they have spoken concerning the mercy of God, and the merits of the passion of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ.

But will it not, think you, strangely put to silence all such thoughts, and words, and reasons of the ungodly before the bar of God? Doubtless it will; yea, and will send them away from his presence also, with the greatest guilt that possibly can fasten upon the consciences of men.

For what will sting like this? — 'I have, through mine own foolish, narrow, unworthy, undervaluing thoughts, of the love and ability of Christ to save me, brought myself to everlasting ruin. It is true, I was a horrible sinner; not one in a hundred did live so vile a life as I. But this should not have kept me from closing with Jesus Christ. I see now that there are

abundance in glory that once were as bad as I have been; but they were saved by faith, and I am damned by unbelief.

> Wretch that I am! why did not I give glory to the redeeming blood of Jesus? Why did I not humbly cast my soul at his blessed footstool for mercy? Why did I judge of his ability to save me by the voice of my shallow reason, and the voice of a guilty conscience? Why betook not I myself to the holy Word of God? Why did I not read and pray that I might understand, since now I perceive that God said then, He giveth liberally to them that pray, and upbraideth not' (<5 9 0 1 0 5 James 1:5).

It is rational to think, that by such cogitations as these, the unbelieving world will be torn in pieces before the judgment of Christ; especially those that have lived where they did or might have heard the gospel of the grace of God. Oh! that saying, 'It shall be more tolerable for Sodom at the judgment than for them,' will be better understood (<4 2 1 0 8 Luke 10:8-12). This reason, therefore, standeth fast; namely, that Christ, by offering mercy, in the first place, to the biggest sinners now, will stop all the mouths of the impenitent at the day of judgment, and cut off all excuse that shall be attempted to be made, from the thoughts of the greatness of their sins, why they came not to him.

I have often thought of the day of judgment, and how God will deal with sinners at that day; and I believe it will be managed with that sweetness, with that equitableness, with that excellent righteousness, as to every sin, and circumstance and aggravation thereof, that men that are damned, shall, before the judgment is over, receive such conviction of the righteous judgment of God upon them, and of their deserts of hell-fire, that they shall in themselves conclude, that there is all the reason in the world that they should be shut out of heaven, and go to hell-fire: 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment' (<4 0 2 5 4 6 Matthew 25:46). [f24]

Only this will tear [them,] that they have missed of mercy and glory, and obtained everlasting damnation, through their unbelief; but it will tear but themselves, but their own souls; they will gnash upon themselves, for that mercy was offered to the chief of them in the first place, and yet they were damned for rejecting of it; they were damned for forsaking what they had a propriety in; for forsaking their own mercy.

And thus much for the reasons. *Second,* I will conclude with a word of application.

THE APPLICATION.

First, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? Then *this shows us how to make a right judgment of the heart of Christ to men*. Indeed, we have advantage to guess at the goodness of his heart by many things; as by his taking our nature upon him, his dying for us, his sending his Word and ministers to us, and all that we might be saved. But this of beginning to offer mercy to Jerusalem, is that which heightens all the rest; for this doth not only confirm to us, that love was the use of his dying for us, but it shows us yet more the depth of that love. He might have died for us, and yet have extended the benefit of his death to a few, as one might call them, of the best-conditioned sinners, to those who, though they were weak, and so could not but sin, yet made not a trade of sinning; to those that sinned not lavishingly. There are in the world, as one may call them, the moderate sinners; the sinners that mix righteousness with their pollutions; the sinners that, though they be sinners, do what on their part lies — some that are blind would think so — that they might be saved. I say, it had been love, great love, if he had died for none but such, and sent his love to such; but that he should send out conditions of peace to the biggest of sinners; yea, that they should be offered to them first of all; (for so he means when he says, 'Begin at Jerusalem';) this is wonderful! this shows his heart to purpose, as also the heart of God his Father, who sent him to do thus.

There is nothing more incident to men that are awake in their souls, than to have wrong thoughts of God — thoughts that are narrow, and that pinch and pen up his mercy to scanty and beggarly conclusions, and rigid legal conditions; supposing that it is rude, and an intrenching upon his majesty to come ourselves, or to invite others, until we have scraped and washed, and rubbed off as much of our dirt from us as we think is convenient, to make us somewhat orderly and handsome in his sight. [f25] Such never knew what these words meant, 'Begin at Jerusalem.' Yea, such in their hearts have compared the Father and his Son to niggardly rich men, whose money comes from them like drops of blood. True, say such, God has mercy, but he is loath to part with it; you must please him well, if you get any from

him; he is not so free as many suppose, nor is he so willing to save as some pretended gospelers imagine. But I ask such, if the Father and Son be not unspeakably free to show mercy, why was this clause put into our commission to preach the gospel? Yea, why did he say, 'Begin at Jerusalem': for when men, through the weakness of their wits, have attempted to show other reasons why they would have the first proffer of mercy; yet I can prove, by many undeniable reasons, that they of Jerusalem, to whom the apostles made the first offer, according as they were commanded, were the biggest sinners that ever did breathe upon the face of God's earth (set the unpardonable sin aside); upon which [fact] my doctrine stands like a rock, that Jesus the Son of God would have mercy, in the first place, offered to the biggest sinners. And if this doth not show the heart of the Father and the Son to be infinitely free in bestowing forgiveness of sins, I confess myself mistaken.

Neither is there, set this aside, another argument like it, to show us the willingness of Christ to save sinners; for, as was said before, all the rest of the signs of Christ's mercifulness might have been limited to sinners that are so and so qualified; but when he says, 'Begin at Jerusalem,' the line is stretched out to the utmost; no man can imagine beyond it; and it is folly here to pinch and spare, to narrow, and seek to bring it within scanty bounds; for he plainly saith, 'Begin at Jerusalem,' the biggest sinner is the biggest sinner; the biggest is the Jerusalem sinner.

It is true, he saith, that repentance and remission of sins must go together, but yet remission is sent to the chief, the Jerusalem sinner; nor doth repentance lessen at all the Jerusalem sinner's crimes; it diminisheth none of his sins, nor causes that there should be so much as half an one the fewer; it only puts a stop to the Jerusalem sinner's course, and makes him willing to be saved freely by grace; and for time to come to be governed by that blessed word that has brought the tidings of good things to him. Besides, no man shows himself willing to be saved that repenteth not of his deeds; for he that goes on still in his trespasses, declares that he is resolved to pursue his own damnation further.

Learn then to judge of the largeness of God's heart, and of the heart of his Son Jesus Christ, by the Word; judge not thereof by feeling, nor by the reports of thy conscience; conscience is ofttimes here befooled, and made

to go quite beside the Word. It was judging without the Word that made David say, I am cast off from God's eyes, and 'shall perish one day by the hand of Saul' (<19B122>Psalm 31:22; <091701>1 Samuel 27:1). The Word had told him another thing; namely, that he should be king in his stead. Our text says also, that Jesus Christ bids preachers, in their preaching repentance and remission of sins, begin first at Jerusalem; thereby declaring most truly the infinite largeness of the merciful heart of God and his Son, to the sinful children of men. Judge thou, I say, therefore, of the goodness of the heart of God and his Son, by this text, and by others of the same import; so shalt thou not dishonor the grace of God, nor needlessly fright thyself, nor give away thy faith, nor gratify the devil, nor lose the benefit of God's Word. I speak now to weak believers.

Second, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, to the Jerusalem sinners? Then, *by this also, you must learn to judge of the sufficiency of the merits of Christ*; not that the merits of Christ can be comprehended, for that they are beyond the conceptions of the whole world, being called 'the unsearchable riches of Christ'; but yet they may be apprehended to a considerable degree. Now, the way to apprehend them most, is, to consider what offers, after his resurrection, he makes of his grace to sinners; for to be sure he will not offer beyond the virtue of his merits; because, as grace is the cause of his merits, so his merits are the basis and bounds upon and by which his grace stands good, and is let out to sinners. Doth he then command that his mercy should be offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? It declares, that there is a sufficiency in his blood to save the biggest sinners. 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' And again,

> 'Be it known unto you, therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man [this man's merits] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses' (<441338>Acts 13:38).

Observe, then, thy rule to make judgment of the sufficiency of the blessed merits of thy Savior. If he had not been able to have reconciled the biggest sinners to his Father by his blood, he would not have sent to them, have sent to them in the first place, the doctrine of remission of sins; for

remission of sins is through faith in his blood. We are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in the blood of Christ. Upon the square, as I may call it, of the worthiness of the blood of Christ, grace acts, and offers forgiveness of sin to men (<49107 Ephesians 1:7; <49213 2:13, 14; <51020 Colossians 1:20-22). Hence, therefore, we must gather, that the blood of Christ is of infinite value, for that he offereth mercy to the biggest of sinners. Nay, further, since he offereth mercy, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, considering also, that this first act of his is that which the world will take notice of, and expect it should be continued unto the end. Also it is a disparagement to a man that seeks his own glory in what he undertakes, to do that for a spurt, which he cannot continue and hold out in. This is our Lord's own argument, He began to build, saith he, but was not able to finish (<42140 Luke 14:30).

Shouldst thou hear a man say, I am resolved to be kind to the poor, and should begin with giving handfuls of guineas, you would conclude, that either he is wonderful rich, or must straiten his hand, or will soon be at the bottom of his riches. Why, this is the case: Christ, at his resurrection, gave it out that he would be good to the world; and first sends to the biggest sinners, with an intent to have mercy on them. Now, the biggest sinners cannot be saved but by abundance of grace; it is not a little that will save great sinners (<45517 Romans 5:17). And I say again, since the Lord Jesus mounts thus high at the first, and sends to the Jerusalem sinners, that they may come first to partake of his mercy, it follows, that either he has unsearchable riches of grace and worth in himself, or else he must straiten his hand, or his grace and merits will be spent before the world is at an end. But let it be believed, as surely as spoken, he is still as full as ever. He is not a jot the poorer for all the forgiveness that he has given away to great sinners. Also he is still as free as at first; for he never yet called back this word, Begin at the Jerusalem sinners. And, as I said, since his grace is extended according to the worth of his merits. I conclude, that there is the same virtue in his merits to save now, as there was at the very beginning, Oh! the riches of the grace of Christ! Oh! the riches of the blood of Christ!

Third, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners? Then *here is encouragement for you that think, for wicked hearts and lives, you have not your fellows in the world, yet to come to him.*

There is a people that therefore fear lest they should be rejected of Jesus Christ, because of the greatness of their sins; when, as you see here, such are sent to, sent to by Jesus Christ, to come to him for mercy: ‘Begin at Jerusalem.’ Never did one thing answer another more fitly in this world, than this text fitteth such a kind of sinners. As face answereth face in a glass, so this text answereth the necessities of such sinners. What can a man say more, but that he stands in the rank of the biggest sinners? let him stretch himself whither he can, and think of himself to the utmost, he can but conclude himself to be one of the biggest sinners. And what then? Why, the text meets him in the very face, and saith, Christ offereth mercy to the biggest sinners, to the very Jerusalem sinners. What more can be objected? Nay, he doth not only offer to such his mercy, but to them it is commanded to be offered in the first place: ‘Begin at Jerusalem.’ ‘Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations: beginning at Jerusalem.’ Is not here encouragement for those that think, for wicked hearts and lives, they have not their fellows in the world?

Objection. But I have a heart as hard as a rock.

Answer. Well, but this doth but prove thee a biggest sinner.

Objection. But my heart continually frets against the Lord.

Answer. Well, this doth but prove thee a biggest sinner.

Objection. But I have been desperate in sinful courses.

Answer. Well, stand thou with the number of the biggest sinners.

Objection. But my gray head is found in the way of wickedness.

Answer. Well, thou art in the rank of the biggest sinners.

Objection. But I have not only a base heart, but I have lived a debauched life.

Answer. Stand thou also among those that are called the biggest sinners. And what then? Why, the text swoops you all; you cannot object yourselves beyond the text. It has a particular message to the biggest sinners. I say, it swoops you all. [f26]

Objection. But I am a reprobate.

Answer. Now thou talkest like a fool, and meddlest with what thou understandest not: no sin, but the sin of final impenitence, can prove a man a reprobate; and I am sure thou hast not arrived as yet unto that; therefore thou understandest not what thou sayest, and makest groundless conclusions against thyself. Say thou art a sinner, and I will hold with thee; say thou art a great sinner, and I will say so too; yea, say thou art one of the biggest sinners, and spare not; for the text yet is beyond thee, is yet betwixt hell and thee; 'Begin at Jerusalem' has yet a smile upon thee; and thou talkest as if thou wast a reprobate, and that the greatness of thy sins do prove thee so to be, when yet they of Jerusalem were not such, whose sins, I dare say, were such, both for bigness and heinousness, as thou art not capable of committing beyond them; unless now, after thou hast received conviction that the Lord Jesus is the only Savior of the world, thou shouldst wickedly and despitefully turn thyself from him, and conclude he is not to be trusted to for life, and so crucify him for a cheat afresh. This, I must confess, will bring a man under the black rod, and set him in danger of eternal damnation (Hebrews 6:7, 8; Hebrews 10:8, 9). This is trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting his blood an unholy thing. This did they of Jerusalem; but they did it ignorantly in unbelief, and so were yet capable of mercy; but to do this against professed light, and to stand to it, puts a man beyond the text indeed (Acts 3:14-17; 1 Timothy 1:13).

But I say, what is this to him that would fain be saved by Christ? His sins did, as to greatness, never yet reach to the nature of the sins that the sinners intended by the text had made themselves guilty of. He that would be saved by Christ, has an honorable esteem of him; but they of Jerusalem preferred a murderer before him; and as for him, they cried, Away, away with him, it is not fit that he should live. Perhaps thou wilt object, That thyself hast a thousand times preferred a stinking lust before him: I answer, Be it so; it is but what is common to men to do; nor doth the Lord Jesus make such a foolish life a bar to thee, to forbid thy coming to him, or a bond to his grace, that it might be kept from thee; but admits of thy repentance, and offereth himself unto thee freely, as thou standest among the Jerusalem sinners.

Take therefore encouragement, man; mercy is, by the text, held forth to the biggest sinners; yea, put thyself into the number of the worst, by reckoning that thou mayest be one of the first, and mayest not be put off till the biggest sinners are served; for the biggest sinners are first invited; consequently, if they come, they are like to be the first that shall be served. It was so with Jerusalem; Jerusalem sinners were they that were first invited, and those of them that came first — and there came three thousand of them the first day they were invited; how many came afterwards none can tell — they were first served.

Put in thy name, man, among the biggest, lest thou art made to wait till they are served. You have some men that think themselves very cunning, because they put up their names in their prayers among them that feign it, saying, God, I thank thee I am not so bad as the worst. But believe it, if they be saved at all, they shall be saved in the last place. The first in their own eyes shall be served last; and the last or worst shall be first. The text insinuates it, 'Begin at Jerusalem'; and reason backs it, for they have most need. Behold ye, therefore, how God's ways are above ours; we are for serving the worst last, God is for serving the worst first. The man at the pool, that to my thinking was longest in his disease, and most helpless as to his cure, was first healed; yea, he only was healed; for we read that Christ healed him, but we read not then that he healed one more there! (John 5:1-10). Wherefore, if thou wouldst soonest be served, put in thy name among the very worst of sinners. Say, when thou art upon thy knees, Lord, here is a Jerusalem sinner! a sinner of the biggest size! one whose burden is of the greatest bulk and heaviest weight! one that cannot stand long without sinking into hell, without thy supporting hand!

'Be not thou far from me, O Lord! O my strength,
haste thee to help me!' (Psalm 22:19).

I say, put in thy name with Magdalene, with Manasseh, that thou mayest fare as the Magdalene and the Manasseh sinners do. The man in the gospel made the desperate condition of his child an argument with Christ to haste his cure: 'Sire, come down,' saith he, 'ere my child die' (John 4:49), and Christ regarded his haste, saying, 'Go thy way; thy son liveth' (John 4:50). Haste requires haste. David was for speed; 'Deliver me speedily'; 'Hear me speedily'; 'Answer me speedily' (Psalm 31:2; Psalm 69:17;

(19A102)Psalm 102:2). But why speedily? I am in ‘the net’; ‘I am in trouble’; ‘My days are consumed like smoke’ ((19A104)Psalm 31:4; (19A107)Psalm 69:17; (19A103)Psalm 102:3). Deep calleth unto deep, necessity calls for help; great necessity for present help. Wherefore, I say, be ruled by me in this matter; feign not thyself another man, if thou hast been a filthy sinner, but go in thy colors to Jesus Christ, and put thyself among the most vile, and let him alone to ‘put thee among the children’ ((24B39)Jeremiah 3:19). Confess all that thou knowest of thyself; I know thou wilt find it hard work to do thus: especially if thy mind be legal; but do it, lest thou stay and be deferred with the little sinners, until the great ones have had their alms. What do you think David intended when he said, his wounds stunk and were corrupted, but to hasten God to have mercy upon him, and not to defer his cure? ‘Lord,’ says he, ‘I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.’ ‘I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart’ ((19B08)Psalm 38:3-8). David knew what he did by all this; he knew that his making the worst of his case, was the way to speedy help, and that a feigning and dissembling the matter with God, was the next way to a demur as to his forgiveness.

I have one thing more to offer for thy encouragement, who deemest thyself one of the biggest sinners; and that is, thou art as it were called by thy name, in the first place, to come in for mercy. Thou man of Jerusalem, hearken to thy call; men do so in courts of judicature, and presently cry out, ‘Here, Sire’; and then they shoulder and crowd, and say, ‘Pray give way, I am called into the court.’ Why, this is thy case, thou great, thou Jerusalem sinner; be of good cheer, he calleth thee ((41B06)Mark 10:46-49). Why sittest thou still? arise: why standest thou still? come, man, thy call should give thee authority to come. ‘Begin at Jerusalem,’ is thy call and authority to come; wherefore up and shoulder it, man; say, ‘Stand away, devil, Christ calls me; stand away unbelief, Christ calls me; stand away, all ye my discouraging apprehensions, for my Savior calls me to him to receive of his mercy.’ Men will do thus, as I said, in courts below; and why shouldst not thou approach thus to the court above? The Jerusalem sinner is first in thought, first in commission, first in the record of names; and therefore should give attendance, with the expectation that he is first to receive mercy of God.

Is not this an encouragement to the biggest sinners to make their application to Christ for mercy? ‘Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,’ doth also confirm this thing; that is, that the biggest sinner, and he that has the biggest burden, is he who is first invited. Christ pointeth over the heads of thousands, as he sits on the throne of grace, directly to such a man; and says, ‘Bring in hither the maimed, the halt, and the blind; let the Jerusalem sinner that stands there behind come to me.’ Wherefore, since Christ says, ‘Come,’ to thee, let the angels make a lane, and let all men give place, that the Jerusalem sinner may come to Jesus Christ for mercy.

Fourth, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? Then *come, thou profane wretch, and let me a little enter into an argument with thee*. Why wilt thou not come to Jesus Christ, since thou art a Jerusalem sinner? How canst thou find in thy heart to set thyself against grace, against such grace as offereth mercy to thee? What spirit possesseth thee, and holds thee back from a sincere closure with thy Savior? Behold, God groaningly complains of thee, saying, ‘But Israel would none of me.’ ‘When I called, none did answer’ (Psalm 81:11; Isaiah 66:4).

Shall God enter this complaint against thee? Why dost thou put him off? Why dost thou stop thine ear? Canst thou defend thyself? When thou art called to an account for thy neglects of so great salvation, what canst thou answer? or dost thou think that thou shalt escape the judgment? (Hebrews 2:3). No more such Christs! There will be no more such Christs, sinner! Oh, put not the day, the day of grace, away from thee! if it be once gone, it will never come again, sinner.

But what is it that has got thy heart, and that keeps it from thy Savior?

> ‘Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?’ (Psalm 89:6).

Hast thou, thinkest thou, found anything so good as Jesus Christ? Is there any among thy sins, thy companions, and foolish delights, that, like Christ, can help thee in the day of thy distress? Behold, the greatness of

thy sins cannot hinder; let not the stubbornness of thy heart hinder thee, sinner.

Objection. I am ashamed.

Answer. Oh! don't be ashamed to be saved, sinner.

Objection. But my old companions will mock me.

Answer. Oh! don't be mocked out of eternal life, sinner.

Thy stubbornness affects, afflicts the heart of thy Savior. Carest thou not for this? Of old, 'he beheld the city, and wept over it.' Canst thou hear this, and not be concerned? (⁴²Luke 19:41, 42). Shall Christ weep to see thy soul going on to destruction, and will though sport thyself in that way? Yea, shall Christ, that can be eternally happy without thee, be more afflicted at the thoughts of the loss of thy soul, than thyself, who art certainly eternally miserable if thou neglectest to come to him. Those things that keep thee and thy Savior, on thy part, asunder, are but bubbles; the least prick of an affliction will let out, as to thee, what now thou thinkest is worth the venture of heaven to enjoy.

Hast thou not reason? Canst thou not so much as once soberly think of thy dying hour, or of whither thy sinful life will drive thee then? Hast thou no conscience? or having one, is it rocked so fast asleep by sin, or made so weary with an unsuccessful calling upon thee, that it is laid down, and cares for thee no more? Poor man! thy state is to be lamented. Hast no judgment? Art not able to conclude, that to be saved is better than to burn in hell? and that eternal life with God's favor, is better than a temporal life in God's displeasure? Hast no affection but what is brutish? what, none at all? No affection for the God that made thee? What! none for his loving Son that has showed his love, and died for thee? Is not heaven worth thy affection? O poor man! which is strongest, thinkest thou, God or thee? If thou art not able to overcome him, thou art a fool for standing out against him (⁴⁰Matthew 5:25, 26).

‘*It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God’ (Hebrews 10:29-31).

He will gripe hard; his fist is stronger than a lion’s paw; take heed of him, he will be angry if you despise his Son; and will you stand guilty in your trespasses, when he offereth you his grace and favor? (Exodus 34:6, 7).

Now we come to the text, ‘Beginning at Jerusalem.’ This text, though it be now one of the brightest stars that shineth in the Bible, because there is in it, as full, if not the fullest offer of grace that can be imagined, to the sons of men; yet, to them that shall perish from under this word, even this text will be to such one of the hottest coals in hell. This text, therefore, will save thee or sink thee: there is no shifting of it; if it saves thee, it will set thee high; if it sinks thee, it will set thee low.

But, I say, why so unconcerned? Hast no soul? or dost think thou mayest lose thy soul, and save thyself? Is it not pity, had it otherwise been the will of God, that ever thou wast made a man, for that thou settest so little by thy soul? Sinner, take the invitation; thou art called upon to come to Christ: nor art thou called upon but by order from the Son of God, though thou shouldst happen to come of the biggest sinners; for he has bid us offer mercy, as to all the world in general, so, in the first place, to the sinners of Jerusalem, or to the biggest sinners.

Fifth, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? Then, *this shows how unreasonable a thing it is for men to despair of mercy*; for those that presume, I shall say something to them afterward.

I now speak to them that despair. There are four sorts of despair. There is the despair of devils; there is the despair of souls in hell; there is the despair that is grounded upon men’s deficiency; and there is the despair that they are perplexed with that are willing to be saved, but are too strongly borne down with the burden of their sins.

The despair of devils, the damned’s despair, and that despair that a man has of attaining of life because of his own deficiency, are all reasonable. Why should not devils and damned souls despair? yea, why should not man despair of getting to heaven by his own abilities? I, therefore, am concerned only with the fourth sort of despair, to wit, with the despair of

those that would be saved, but are too strongly borne down with the burden of their sins. I say, therefore, to thee that art thus, And why despair? Thy despair, if it was reasonable, should flow from thee, because found in the land that is beyond the grave; or because thou certainly knowest that Christ will not, or cannot save thee.

But, for the first, thou art yet in the land of the living; and, for the second, thou hast ground to believe the quite contrary; Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him; and if he were not willing, he would not have commanded that mercy, in the first place, should be offered to the biggest sinners. Besides, he hath said, 'And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely'; that is, *with all my heart*. What ground now is here for despair? If thou sayest, The number and burden of my sins; I answer, Nay; that is rather a ground for faith; because such an one, above all others, is invited by Christ to come unto him, yea, promised rest and forgiveness if they come (<4011 28>Matthew 11:28). What ground then to despair? Verily, none at all. Thy despair, then, is a thing unreasonable, and without footing in the Word.

But I have no experience of God's love; God hath given me no comfort, or ground of hope, though I have waited upon him for it many a day. Thou hast experience of God's love, for that he has opened thine eyes to see thy sins: and for that he has given thee desires to be saved by Jesus Christ. For by thy sense of sin thou art made to see thy poverty of spirit, and that has laid under thee a sure ground to hope that heaven shall be thine hereafter.

Also thy desires to be saved by Christ, has put thee under another promise, so there is two to hold thee up in hope, though thy present burden be never so heavy (<4005 3>Matthew 5:3, 6). As for what thou sayest as to God's silence to thee, perhaps he has spoken to thee once or twice already, but thou hast not perceived it (<1833 14>Job 33:14, 15). However, thou hast Christ crucified set forth before thine eyes in the Bible, and an invitation to come unto him, though thou be a Jerusalem sinner, though thou be a biggest sinner; and so no ground to despair. What if God will be silent to thee, is that ground of despair? Not at all, so long as there is a promise in the Bible, that God will in no wise cast away the coming

sinner, and so long as he invites the Jerusalem sinner to come unto him (<4637>John 6:37).

Build not, therefore, despair upon these things; they are no sufficient foundation for it, such plenty of promises being in the Bible, and such a discovery of his mercy to great sinners of old; especially since we have withal a clause in the commission given to ministers to preach, that they should begin with the Jerusalem sinners in their offering of mercy to the world. Besides, God says, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew *their* strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles'; but, perhaps, it may be long first. I waited long, saith David, and did seek the Lord; and, at length, his cry was heard: wherefore he bids his soul wait on God, and says, For it is good so to do before thy saints (<1901>Psalm 40:1; <1905>Psalm 62:5; <1909>Psalm 52:9).

And what if thou waitest upon God all thy days? Is it below thee? And what if God will cross his book, and blot out the handwriting that is against thee, and not let thee know it as yet? Is it fit to say unto God, Thou art hard-hearted? Despair not; thou hast no ground to despair, so long as thou livest in this world. 'Tis a sin to begin to despair before one sets his foot over the threshold of hell-gates. For them that are there, let them despair and spare not; but as for thee, thou hast no ground to do it. What! despair of bread in a land that is full of corn! despair of mercy when our God is full of mercy! despair of mercy, when God goes about, by his ministers, beseeching of sinners to be reconciled unto him! (<4705>2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Thou scrupulous fool, where canst thou find that God was ever false to his promise, or that he ever deceived the soul that ventured itself upon him? He often calls upon sinners to trust him, though they walk in darkness, and have no light (<2810>Isaiah 50:10). They have his promise and oath for their salvation, that flee for refuge to the hope set before them (<5806>Hebrews 6:17, 18).

Despair! when we have a God of mercy, and a redeeming Christ alive! For shame, forbear; let them despair that dwell where there is no God, and that are confined to those chambers of death which can be reached by no redemption. A living man despair when he is chid for murmuring and complaining! (<2439>Lamentations 3:39). Oh! so long as we are where promises swarm, where mercy is proclaimed, where grace reigns, and

where Jerusalem sinners are privileged with the first offer of mercy, it is a base thing to despair. Despair undervalues the promise, undervalues the invitation, undervalues the proffer of grace. Despair undervalues the ability of God the Father, and the redeeming blood of Christ his Son. Oh unreasonable despair! Despair makes man God's judge; it is a controller of the promise, a contradictor of Christ in his large offers of mercy: and one that undertakes to make unbelief the great manager of our reason and judgment, in determining about what God can and will do for sinners. Despair! It is the devil's fellow, the devil's master; yea, the chains with which he is captivated and held under darkness for ever: and to give way thereto in a land, in a state and time that flows with milk and honey, is an uncomely thing.

I would say to my soul, 'O my soul! this is not the place of despair; this is not the time to despair in; as long as mine eyes can find a promise in the Bible, as long as there is the least mention of grace, as long as there is a moment left me of breath or life in this world, so long will I wait or look for mercy, so long will I fight against unbelief and despair.' This is the way to honor God and Christ; this is the way to set the crown on the promise; this is the way to welcome the invitation and inviter; and this is the way to thrust thyself under the shelter and protection of the word of grace. Never despair so long as our text is alive, for that doth sound it out — that mercy by Christ is offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinner.

Despair is an unprofitable thing; it will make a man weary of waiting upon God (2 Kings 6:33). It will make a man forsake God, and seek his heaven in the good things of this world (Genesis 4:13-18). It will make a man his own tormentor, and flounce and fling like 'a wild bull in a net' (Isaiah 51:20). Despair! it drives a man to the study of his own ruin, and brings him at last to be his own executioner (2 Samuel 17:23; Matthew 27:3-5).

Besides, I am persuaded also, that despair is the cause that there are so many that would fain be Atheists in the world. For, because, they have entertained a conceit that God will never be merciful to them, therefore they labor to persuade themselves that there is no God at all, as if their misbelief would kill God, or cause him to cease to be. A poor shift for an immortal soul, for a soul who liketh not to retain God in its knowledge! If

this be the best that despair can do, let it go, man, and betake thyself to faith, to prayer, to wait for God, and to hope, in despite of ten thousand doubts. And for thy encouragement, take yet, as an addition to what has already been said, the following Scripture: ‘The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy’ (<19711>Psalm 147:11). Whence note, They fear not God, that hope not in his mercy; also, God is angry with them that hope not in his mercy; for he only taketh pleasure in them that hope. ‘He that believeth,’ or ‘hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true’ (<43333>John 3:33). But he that receiveth it not, ‘hath made him a liar,’ and that is a very unworthy thing (<62510>1 John 5:10, 11). ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly’ multiply ‘pardon’ (<235507>Isaiah 55:7). Perhaps thou art weary of thy ways, but art not weary of thy thoughts; of thy unbelieving and despairing thoughts; now, God also would have thee cast away these thoughts, as such which he deserveth not at thy hands; for ‘he will have mercy upon thee, and he will abundantly pardon.’

‘O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!’ (<422425>Luke 24:25).

Mark you, here, slowness to believe is a piece of folly. Ay! but sayest thou, I do believe some, and I believe what can make against me. Ay, but sinner, Christ Jesus here calls thee fool for not believing all. Believe all, and despair if thou canst! He that believes all, believes that text that saith, Christ would have mercy preached first to the Jerusalem sinners. He that believeth all, believeth all the promises and consolations of the Word; and the promises and consolations of the Word weigh heavier than do all the curses and threatenings of the law; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Wherefore believe all, and mercy will, to thy conscience, weigh judgment down, and so minister comfort to thy soul. The Lord take the yoke from off thy jaws, since he has set meat before thee (<281104>Hosea 11:4). And help thee to remember that he is pleased, in the first place, to offer mercy to the biggest sinners.

Sixth, Since Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, *let souls see that they lay* right *hold thereof, lest they*,

notwithstanding, indeed, come short thereof. Faith only knows how to deal with mercy; wherefore, put not in the place thereof presumption. I have observed, that, as there are herbs and flowers in our gardens, so there are their counterfeits in the field; only they are distinguished from the other by the name of wild ones. Why, there is faith, and wild faith; and wild faith is this presumption. I call it wild faith, because God never placed it in his garden — his church; 'tis only to be found in the field — the world. I also call it wild faith, because it only grows up and is nourished where other wild notions abound. Wherefore, take heed of this, and all may be well; for this presumptuousness is a very heinous thing in the eyes of God. 'The soul,' saith he,

> 'that doeth *ought* presumptuously, *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people' (Numbers 15:30).

The thoughts of this made David tremble, and pray that God would hold him back from presumptuous sins, and not suffer them to have dominion over him (Psalm 19:13). Now, this presumption, then, puts itself in the place of faith, when it tampereth with the promise for life, while the soul is a stranger to repentance. Wherefore, you have in the text, to prevent doing thus, both repentance and remission of sins to be offered to Jerusalem; not remission without repentance, for all that repent not shall perish, let them presume on grace and the promise while they will (Luke 13:1-3).

Presumption, then, is that which severeth faith and repentance; concluding that the soul shall be saved by grace, though the man was never made sorry for his sins, nor the love of the heart turned therefrom. This is to be self-willed, as Peter has it; and this is a despising the Word of the Lord, for that has put repentance and faith together (Mark 1:15). And

> 'because he hath despised the Word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off: his iniquity *shall be* upon him' (Numbers 15:31).

Let such, therefore, look to it who yet are, and abide, in their sins; for such, if they hope, as they are, to be saved, presume upon the grace of

God. [f27] Wherefore, presumption and not hearkening to God's Word are put together (Deuteronomy 17:12).

Again, THEN men presume, when they are resolved to abide in their sins, and yet expect to be saved by God's grace through Christ. This is as much as to say, God liketh of sin as well as I do, and careth not how men live, if so be they lean upon his Son. Of this sort are they

> 'that build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity'; that 'judge for reward, and — teach for hire, and — divine for money, and lean upon the Lord' (Micah 3:10, 11).

This is doing things, with an high hand, against the Lord our God, and a taking him, as it were, at the catch. [f28] This is, as we say among men, to seek to put a trick upon God; as if he had not sufficiently fortified his proposals of grace, by his holy Word, against all such kind of fools as these. But look to it! Such will be found at the day of God, not among that great company of Jerusalem sinners that shall be saved by grace, but among those that have been the great abusers of the grace of God in the world. Those that say, Let us sin that grace may abound, and let us do evil that good may come, their damnation is just. And if so, they are a great way off of that salvation that is, by Jesus Christ, presented to the Jerusalem sinners.

I have, therefore, these things to propound to that Jerusalem sinner that would know, if he may be so bold [as] to venture himself upon this grace.

1. Dost thou see thy sins?

2. Art thou weary of them?

3. Wouldst thou, with all thy heart, be saved by Jesus Christ?

I dare say no less; I dare say no more. But if it be truly thus with thee, how great soever thy sins have been, how bad soever thou feelest thy heart, how far soever thou art from thinking that God has mercy for thee, thou art the man, the Jerusalem sinner, that the Word of God has conquered, and to whom it offereth free remission of sins, by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

When the jailor cried out, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ the answer was, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ He that sees his sins aright, is brought to his wit’s end by them; and he that is so, is willing to part from them, and to be saved by the grace of God. If this be thy case, fear not, give no way to despair; thou presumest not, if thou believest to life everlasting in Jesus Christ; yea, Christ is prepared for such as thou art. Therefore, take good courage, and believe. The design of Satan is, to tell the presumptuous that their presuming on mercy is good; but to persuade the believer, that his believing is impudent, bold dealing with God. I never heard a presumptuous man, in my life, say that he was afraid that he presumed; but I have heard many an honest humble soul say, that they have been afraid that their faith has been presumption. Why should Satan molest those whose ways he knows will bring them to him? And who can think that he should be quiet, when men take the right course to escape his hellish snares? This, therefore, is the reason why the truly humbled is opposed, while the presumptuous goes on by wind and tide. The truly humble, Satan hates; but he laughs to see the foolery of the other.

Does thy hand and heart tremble? Upon thee the promise smiles. ‘To this *man* will I look,’ says God, ‘*even* to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word’ (Isaiah 66:2). What, therefore, I have said of presumption, concerns not the humble in spirit at all. I therefore am for gathering up the stones, and for taking the stumbling-blocks out of the way of God’s people; and forewarning of them, that they lay the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their faces; and [of those] that are for presuming upon God’s mercy; and let them look to themselves (Ezekiel 14:6-8).

Also, our text stands firm as ever it did, and our observation is still of force, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners. So them, let none despair, let none presume; let none despair that are sorry for their sins, and would be saved by Jesus Christ; let none presume that abide in the liking of their sins, though they seem to know the exceeding grace of Christ; for though the door stands wide open for the reception of the penitent, yet it is fast [f29] enough barred and bolted against the presumptuous sinner. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man sows, that he shall reap. It cannot be that God should

be wheedled out of his mercy, or prevailed upon by lips of dissimulation; he knows them that trust on him, and that sincerely come to him, by Christ, for mercy (<34107>Nahum 1:7).

It is, then, not the abundance of sins committed, but the not coming heartily to God, by Christ, for mercy, that shuts men out of doors. And though their not coming heartily may be said to be but a sin, yet it is such a sin as causeth that all thy other sins abide upon thee unforgiven. God complains of this. 'They have not cried unto me with their heart — they return, *but* not to the most High.' They turned 'feignedly' (<24310>Jeremiah 3:10; <28714>Hosea 7:14, 16). Thus doing, his soul hates [them]; but the penitent, humble, broken-hearted sinner, be his transgressions red as scarlet, red like crimson, in number as the sand; though his transgressions cry to heaven against him for vengeance, and seem there to cry louder than do his prayers, or tears, or groans for mercy; yet he is safe. To this man God will look (<23118>Isaiah 1:18; <23602>Isaiah 66:2).

Seventh, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? Then *here is ground for those that, as to practice, have not been such, to come to him for mercy.*

Although there is no sin little of itself, because it is a contradiction of the nature and majesty of God, yet we must admit of divers numbers, and, also, of aggravations. Two sins are not so many as three; nor are three that are done in ignorance so big as one that is done against light, against knowledge and conscience. Also, there is the child in sin, and a man in sin that has his hairs gray and his skin wrinkled for very age. And we must put a difference betwixt these sinners also; for can it be that a child of seven, or ten, or sixteen years old, should be such a sinner — a sinner so vile in the eyes of the law as he is who has walked according to the course of this world, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years? Now, the youth, this stripling, though he is a sinner, is but a little sinner, when compared with such. Now, I say, if there be room for the first sort, for those of the biggest size, certainly there is room for the lesser size. If there be a door wide enough for a giant to go in at, there is certainly room for a dwarf. If Christ Jesus has grace enough to save great sinners, he has surely grace enough to save little ones. If he can forgive five hundred pence, for certain he can forgive fifty (<42741>Luke 7:41, 42).

But you said before, that the little sinners must stand by until the great ones have received their grace, and that is discouraging! I answer, there are two sorts of little sinners — such as are so, and such as feign themselves so. There are those that feign themselves so, that I intended there, and not those that are, indeed, comparatively so. Such as feign themselves so, may wait long enough before they obtain forgiveness.

But again, a sinner may be comparatively a little sinner, and sensibly a great one. There are, then, two sorts of greatness in sin — greatness by reason of number; greatness by reason of thoroughness of conviction of the horrible nature of sin. In this last sense, he that has but one sin, if such an one could be found, may, in his own eyes, find himself the biggest sinner in the world. Let this man or this child, therefore, put himself among the great sinners, and plead with God as great sinners do, and expect to be saved with the great sinners, and as soon and as heartily as they. Yea, a little sinner, that, comparatively, is truly so, if he shall graciously give way to conviction, and shall, in God's light, diligently weigh the horrible nature of his own sin, may yet sooner obtain forgiveness for them at the hands of the heavenly Father, than he that has ten times his sins, and so cause to cry ten times harder to God for mercy.

For the grievousness of the cry is a great thing with God; for if he will hear the widow, if she cries at all, how much more if she cries most grievously? (Exodus 22:22, 23). It is not the number, but the true sense of the abominable nature of sin, that makes the cry for pardon lamentable. [f30] He, as I said, that has many sins, may not cry so loud in the ears of God as he that has far fewer; he, in our present sense, that is in his own eyes the biggest sinner, is he that soonest findeth mercy. The offer, then, is to the biggest sinner; to the biggest sinner first, and the mercy is first obtained by him that first confesseth himself to be such an one.

There are men that strive at the throne of grace for mercy, by pleading the greatness of their necessity. Now their plea, as to the prevalency of it, lieth not in their counting up of the number, but in the sense of the greatness of their sins, and in the vehemency of their cry for pardon. And it is observable, that though the birthright was Reuben's, and, for his foolishness, given to the sons of Joseph, yet Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the Messiah (1 Chronicles 5:1, 2). There is a

heavenly subtilty to be managed in this matter. ‘Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.’ The blessing belonged to Esau, but Jacob by his diligence made it his own (Genesis 27:35). The offer is to the biggest sinner, to the biggest sinner first; but if he forbear to cry, the sinner that is a sinner less by far than he, both as to number and the nature of transgression, may get the blessing first, if he shall have grace to bestir himself well; for the loudest cry is heard furthest, and the most lamentable pierces soonest.

I therefore urge this head, not because I would have little sinners go and tell God that they are little sinners, thereby to think to obtain his mercy; for, verily, so they are never like to have it; for such words declare, that such an one hath no true sense at all of the nature of his sins. Sin, as I said, in the nature of it, is horrible, though it be but one single sin as to act; yea, though it be but a sinful thought; and so worthily calls for the damnation of the soul. The comparison, then, of little and great sinners, is to go for good sense among men. But to plead the fewness of thy sins, or the comparative harmlessness of their quantity before God, argueth no sound knowledge of the nature of thy sin, and so no true sense of the nature or need of mercy.

Little sinner! when therefore thou goest to God, though thou knowest in thy conscience that thou, as to acts, art no thief, no murderer, no whore, no liar, no false swearer, or the like, and in reason must needs understand that thus thou art not so profanely vile as others; yet when thou goest to God for mercy, know no man’s sins but thine own, make mention of no man’s sins but thine own. Also labor not to lessen thy own, but magnify and greaten them by all just circumstances, and be as if there was never a sinner in the world but thyself. Also cry out, as if thou wast but the only undone man; and that is the way to obtain God’s mercy.

It is one of the comeliest sights in the world to see a little sinner commenting upon the greatness of his sins, multiplying and multiplying them to himself, till he makes them in his own eyes bigger and higher than he seeth any other man’s sins to be in the world; and as base a thing it is to see a man do otherwise, and as basely will come on it (Luke 18:10-14). As, therefore, I said to the great sinner before, let him take heed lest he presume; I say now to the little sinner, let him take heed that he do not

dissemble; for there is as great an aptness in the little sinner to dissemble, as there is in the great one. ‘He that hideth his sins shall not prosper,’ [f31] be he a sinner little or great (Proverbs 28:13).

Eighth, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? Then *this shows the true cause why Satan makes such head as he doth against him.*

The Father and the Holy Spirit are well spoken of by all deluders and deceived persons; Christ only is the rock of offense. ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence’ (Romans 9:33). Not that Satan careth for the Father or the Spirit more than he careth for the Son; but he can let men alone with their notions of the Father and the Spirit, for he knows they shall never enjoy the Father or the Spirit, if indeed they receive not the merits of the Son. ‘He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,’ however they may boast themselves of the Father and the Spirit (1 John 5:12). Again,

> ‘Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son’ (2 John 1:9).

Christ, and Christ only, is he that can make us capable to enjoy God with life and joy to all eternity. Hence he calls himself the way to the Father, the true and living way (John 14:6). For we cannot come to the Father but by him (Hebrews 10:19, 20). Satan knows this, therefore he hates him. Deluded persons are ignorant of this, and therefore, they are so led up and down by Satan by the nose as they are.

There are many things by which Satan has taken occasion to greaten his rage against Jesus Christ. As, first, His love to man, and then, the many expressions of that love. He hath taken man’s nature upon him; he hath in that nature fulfilled the law to bring in righteousness for man; and hath spilt his blood for the reconciling of man to God; he hath broke the neck of death, put away sin, destroyed the works of the devil, and got into his own hands the keys of death; and all these are heinous things to Satan. He cannot abide Christ for this. Besides, He hath eternal life in himself, and that to bestow upon us; and we in all likelihood are to possess the very places from which the Satans by transgression fell, if not places more

glorious. Wherefore he must needs be angry. And is it not a vexatious thing to him, that we should be admitted to the throne of grace by Christ, while he stands bound over in chains of darkness, to answer for his rebellions against God and his Son, at the terrible day of judgment. Yea, we poor dust and ashes must become his judges, and triumph over him for ever: and all this long [f32] of Jesus Christ; for he is the meritorious cause of all this.

Now though Satan seeks to be revenged for this, yet he knows it is in vain to attack the person of Christ; He [Christ] has overcome him; therefore he [Satan] tampers with a company of silly men; that he may vilify him by them. And they, bold fools as they are, will not spare to spit in his face. They will rail at his person, and deny the very being of it; they will rail at his blood, and deny the merit and worth of it. They will deny the very end why he accomplished the law, and by jigs, and tricks, and quirks, which he helpeth them to, they set up fond names and images in his place, and give the glory of a Savior to them. Thus Satan worketh under the name of Christ; and his ministers under the name of the ministers of righteousness.

And by his wiles and stratagems he undoes a world of men; but there is a seed, and they shall serve him, and it shall be counted to the Lord for a generation. These shall see their sins, and that Christ is the way to happiness. These shall venture themselves, both body and soul, upon his worthiness. All this Satan knows, and therefore his rage is kindled the more. Wherefore, according to his ability and allowance, he assaulteth, tempteth, abuseth, and stirs up what he can to be hurtful to these poor people, that he may, while his time shall last, make it as hard and difficult for them to go to eternal glory as he can. Ofttimes he abuses them with wrong apprehensions of God, and with wrong apprehensions of Christ. He also casts them into the mire, to the reproach of religion, the shame of their brethren, the derision of the world, and dishonor of God. He holds our hands while the world buffets us; he puts bear-skins upon us, and then sets the dogs at us. He bedaubeth us with his own foam, and then tempts us to believe that that bedaubing comes from ourselves. [f33]

Oh! the rage and the roaring of this lion, and the hatred that he manifests against the Lord Jesus, and against them that are purchased with his blood! But yet, in the midst of all this, the Lord Jesus sends forth his herald to proclaim in the nations his love to the world, and to invite them to come in

to him for life. Yea, his invitation is so large, that it offereth his mercy in the first place to the biggest sinners of every age, which augments the devil's rage the more. Wherefore, as I said before, fret he, fume he, the Lord Jesus will 'divide the spoil' with this great one; yea, he shall divide the spoil with the strong,

> 'because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12).

Ninth, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? *Let the tempted harp upon this string for their help and consolation.*

The tempted, wherever he dwells, always thinks himself the biggest sinner, one most unworthy of eternal life. This is Satan's master argument; thou art a horrible sinner, a hypocrite, one that has a profane heart, and one that is an utter stranger to a work of grace. I say this is his maul, his club, [f34] his masterpiece; he doth with this as some do with their most enchanting songs, sings them everywhere. I believe there are but few saints in the world that have not had this temptation sounding in their ears. But were they but aware, Satan by all this does but drive them to the gap out at which they should go, and so escape his roaring. Saith he, thou art a great sinner, a horrible sinner, a profane-hearted wretch, one that cannot be matched for a vile one in the country. And all this while Christ says to his ministers, offer mercy, in the first place, to the biggest sinners. So that this temptation drives thee directly into the arms of Jesus Christ.

Were therefore the tempted but aware, he might say, 'Ay, Satan, so I am, I am a sinner of the biggest size, and therefore have most need of Jesus Christ; yea, because I am such a wretch, therefore Jesus Christ calls me; yea, he calls me first; the first proffer of the gospel is to be made to the Jerusalem sinner; I am he, wherefore stand back, Satan; make a lane, my right is first to come to Jesus Christ.' This now would be like for like. This would foil the devil; this would make him say, I must not deal with this man thus; for then I put a sword into his hand to cut off my head.

And this is the meaning of Peter, when he saith, 'Resist him steadfast in the faith' (1 Peter 5:9). And of Paul, when he saith,

Take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked' (⁴⁹Ephesians 6:16).

Wherefore is it said, Begin at Jerusalem, if the Jerusalem sinner is not to have the benefit of it? And if I am to have the benefit of it, let me call it to mind when Satan haunts me with continual remembrance of my sins, of my Jerusalem sins. Satan and my conscience say I am the biggest sinner: — Christ offereth mercy, in the first place, to the biggest sinners! Nor is the manner of the offer other but such as suiteth with my mind. I am sorry for my sin; yea, sorry at my heart that ever sinful thought did enter, or find the least entertainment in my wicked mind: and might I obtain my wish, I would never more that my heart should be a place for ought but the grace, and spirit, and faith of the Lord Jesus. I speak not this to lessen my wickedness; I would not for all the world but be placed by mine own conscience in the very front of the biggest sinners, that I might be one of the first that are beckoned, by the gracious hand of Jesus the Savior, to come to him for mercy.

Well, sinner, thou now speakest like a Christian; but say thus, in a strong spirit, in the hour of temptation, and then thou wilt, to thy commendation and comfort, quit thyself well. This improving of Christ, in dark hours, is the *life*, though the hardest part of our Christianity. We should neither stop at darkness nor at the raging of our lusts, but go on in a way of venturing, and casting the whole of our affairs for the next world at the foot of Jesus Christ. This is the way to make the darkness light, and also to allay the raging of corruption.

The first time the Passover was eaten was in the night; and when Israel took courage to go forward, though the sea stood in their way like a devouring gulf, and the host of the Egyptians follow them at the heels; yet the sea gives place, and their enemies were as still as a stone till they were gone over (⁰²Exodus 12:8; ⁰²Exodus 14:13, 14, 21, 22; ⁰²Exodus 15:16).

There is nothing like faith to help at a pinch; faith dissolves doubts as the sun drives away the mists. And that you may not be put out, know your time, as I said, of believing is always. There are times when some graces may be out of use, but there is no time wherein faith can be said to be so. Wherefore, faith must be always in exercise. Faith is the eye, is the mouth, is the hand, and one of these is of use all day long. Faith is to see, to

receive, to work, or to eat; and a Christian should be seeing, or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Christian must still believe. At ‘what time,’ said the good man, ‘I am afraid, I will trust in thee’ (Psalm 56:2, 3).

Nor can we have a better encouragement to do this than is, by the text, set before us; even an open heart for a Jerusalem sinner. And if for a Jerusalem sinner to come, then for such an one when come. If for such an one to be saved, then for such an one that is saved. If for such an one to be pardoned his great transgressions, then for such an one who is pardoned these to come daily to Jesus Christ too, to be cleansed and set free from his common infirmities, and from the iniquities of his holy things. Therefore, let the poor sinner that would be saved labor for skill to make the best improvement of the grace of Christ to help him against the temptations of the devil and his sins.

Tenth, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? *Let those men consider this that have, or may, in a day of trial, spoken or done what their profession or conscience told them they should not, and that have the guilt and burden thereof upon their consciences.*

Whether a thing be wrong or right, guilt may pursue him that doth contrary to his conscience. But suppose a man should deny his God, or his Christ, or relinquish a good profession, and be under the real guilt thereof, shall he, therefore, conclude he is gone for ever? Let him come again with Peter’s tears, and no doubt but he shall obtain Peter’s forgiveness; for the text includes the biggest sinners. And it is observable, that before this clause was put into this commission, Peter was pardoned his horrible revolt from his Master. He that revolteth in the day of trial, if he is not shot quite dead upon the place, but is sensible of his wound, and calls out for a chirurgeon, shall find his Lord at hand to pour wine and oil into his wounds, that he may again be healed, and to encourage him to think that there may be mercy for him; besides what we find recorded of Peter, you read in the Acts, some were, through the violence of their trials, compelled to blaspheme, and yet are called saints (Acts 26:9-11).

Hence you have a promise or two that speak concerning such kind of men, to encourage us to think that, at least, some of them shall come back to the

Lord their God. ‘Shall they fall,’ saith he, ‘and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?’ (<2400804>Jeremiah 8:4). ‘and in that day will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion — for ever.’ What we are to understand by her that halteth, is best expressed by the prophet Elijah (<330406>Micah 4:6, 7; <360319>Zephaniah 3:19; <111821>1 Kings 18:21).

I will conclude, then, that for them that have halted, or may halt, the Lord has mercy in the bank, [f35] and is willing to accept them if they return to him again. Perhaps they may never be after that of any great esteem in the house of God, but if the Lord will admit them to favor and forgiveness — O exceeding and undeserved mercy! (See <264410>Ezekiel 44:10-14). Thou, then, that mayest be the man, remember this, that there is mercy also for thee. Return, therefore, to God, and to his Son, who hath yet in store for thee, and who will do thee good.

But, perhaps, thou wilt say, He doth not save all revolters, and, therefore, perhaps not me.

Answer. Art thou returning to God? If thou art returning, thou art the man;

> ‘Return, ye backsliding children, *and* I will heal your backslidings’ (<240322>Jeremiah 3:22).

Some, as I said, that revolt, are shot dead upon the place; and for them, who can help them? But for them that cry out of their wounds it is a sign that they are yet alive, and, if they use the means in time, doubtless they may be healed.

Christ Jesus has bags of mercy that were never yet broken up or unsealed. Hence it is said, he has goodness laid up; things reserved in heaven for his. And if he breaks up one of these bags, who can tell what he can do? Hence his love is said to be such as passeth knowledge, and that his riches are unsearchable. He has, nobody knows what; for nobody knows who! He has by him, in store, for such as seem, in the view of all men, to be gone beyond recovery. For this, the text is plain. What man or angel could have thought that the Jerusalem sinners had been yet on this side of an

impossibility of enjoying life and mercy? Hadst thou seen their actions, and what horrible things they did to the Son of God; yea, how stoutly they backed what they did with resolves and endeavors to persevere, when they had killed his person, against his name and doctrine; and that there was not found among them all that while, as we read of, the least remorse or regret for these their doings; couldest though have imagined that mercy would ever have took hold of them, at least so soon! Nay, that they should, of all the world, be counted those only meet to have it offered to them in the very first place! For so my text commands, saying, Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

I tell you the thing is a wonder, and must for ever stand for a wonder among the sons of men. It stands, also, for an everlasting invitation and allurement to the biggest sinners to come to Christ for mercy. Now since, in the opinion of all men, the revolter is such an one; if he has, as I said before, any life in him, let him take encouragement to come again, that he may live by Christ.

Eleventh, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? *Then let God's ministers tell them so.*

There is an incidence [f36] in us, I know not how it doth come about, when we are converted, to contemn them that are left behind. Poor fools as we are, we forget that we ourselves were so (Titus 3:2, 3).

But would it not become us better, since we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to carry it towards them so, that we may give them convincing ground to believe that we have found that mercy which also sets open the door for them to come and partake with us. Ministers, I say, should do thus, both by their doctrine, and in all other respects. Austerity doth not become us, neither in doctrine nor in conversation. [f37] We ourselves live by grace; let us give as we receive, and labor to persuade our fellow-sinners, which God has left behind us, to follow after, that they may partake with us of grace. We are saved by grace; let us live like them that are gracious. Let all our things, to the world, be done in charity towards them; pity them, pray for them, be familiar with them, for their good. Let us lay aside our foolish, worldly, carnal grandeur; let us not walk the streets, and have such behaviors as signify we are scarce for touching of the poor ones that

are left behind; no, not with a pair of tongs. It becomes not ministers thus to do.

A GENTLE REPROOF.

Remember your Lord, he was familiar with publicans and sinners to a proverb:

> ‘Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber,
> a friend of publicans and sinners’ (Matthew 11:19).

The first part, concerning his gluttonous eating and drinking, to be sure, was an horrible slander; but for the other, nothing was ever spoke truer of him by the world. Now, why should we lay hands cross on this text; that is, choose good victuals, and love the sweet wine better than the salvation of the poor publican? Why not familiar with sinners, provided we hate their spots and blemishes, and seek that they may be healed of them? Why not fellowly with our carnal neighbors? If we do take occasion to do so, that we may drop, and be yet distilling some good doctrine upon their souls? Why not go to the poor man’s house, and give him a penny, and a Scripture to think upon? Why not send for the poor to fetch away, at least, the fragments of thy table, that the bowels of thy fellow- sinner may be refreshed as well as thine?

Ministers should be exemplary; but I am an inferior man, and must take heed of too much meddling. But might I, I would meddle with them, with their wives, and with their children too. I mean not this of all, but of them that deserve it, though I may not name them. But, I say, let ministers follow the steps of their blessed Lord, who, by word and deed, showed his love to the salvation of the world, in such a carriage as declared him to prefer their salvation before his own private concern. For we are commanded to follow his steps, ‘who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.’

And as I have said concerning ministers, so I say to all the brethren, Carry it so, that all the world may see, that indeed you are the sons of love. Love your Savior; yea, show one to another that you love him, not only by a seeming love of affection, but with the love of duty. Practical love is best.

[f38] Many love Christ with nothing but the lick of the tongue. Alas! Christ Jesus the Lord must not be put off thus;

> ‘He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,’ saith he,
> ‘he it is that loveth me’ (John 14:21).

Practical love, which stands in self-denial, in charity to my neighbor, and a patient enduring of affliction for his name; this is counted love. Right love to Christ is that which carries in it a provoking argument to others of the brethren (Hebrews 10:24). Should a man ask me how he should know that he loveth the children of God? the best answer I could give him, would be in the words of the apostle John; ‘By this,’ saith he, ‘we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments’ (1 John 5:2). Love to God and Christ is then shown, when we are tender of his name; and then we show ourselves tender of his name, when we are afraid to break any, the least of his commandments. And when we are here, then do we show our love to our brother also.

THE CONCLUSION.

Now, we have obligation sufficient thus to do, for that our Lord loved us, and gave himself for us, to deliver us from death, that we might live through him. The world, when they hear the doctrine that I have asserted and handled in this little book; to wit, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners, will be apt, because themselves are unbelievers, to think that this is a doctrine that leads to looseness, and that gives liberty to the flesh; but if you that believe love your brethren and your neighbors truly, and as you should, you will put to silence the ignorance of such foolish men, and stop their mouths from speaking evil of you. And, I say, let the love of Christ constrain us to this. Who deserveth our heart, our mouth, our life, our goods, so much as Jesus Christ, who has bought us to himself by his blood, to this very end, that we should be a peculiar people, zealous of good works?

There is nothing more seemly in the world than to see a Christian walk as becomes the gospel; nor anything more unbecoming a reasonable creature, than to hear a man say, ‘I believe in Christ,’ and yet see in his life debauchery and profaneness. Might I, such men should be counted the basest of men; such men should be counted by all unworthy of the name

of a Christian, and should be shunned by every good man, as such who are the very plague of profession. For so it is written, we should carry it towards them. Whoso have a form of godliness, and deny the power thereof, from such we must turn away.

It has ofttimes come into my mind to ask, By what means it is that the gospel profession should be so tainted [f39] with loose and carnal gospelers? and I could never arrive to better satisfaction in the matter than this — such men are made professors by the devil, and so by him put among the rest of the godly. A certain man had a fruitless fig tree planted in his vineyard; but by whom was it planted there? even by him that sowed the tares, his own children, among the wheat (<420306>Luke 13:6; <401337>Matthew 13:37-40). And that was the devil. But why doth the devil do thus? Not of love to them, but to make of them offenses and stumbling-blocks to others. For he knows that a loose professor in the church does more mischief to religion than ten can do to it that are in the world. Was it not, think you, the devil that stirred up the damsel that you read of in <441601>Acts 16 to cry out, ‘These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation?’ Yes it was, as is evident, for Paul was grieved to hear it. But why did the devil stir up her to cry so, but because that was the way to blemish the gospel, and to make the world think that it came from the same hand as did her soothsaying and witchery? (<441616>Acts 16:16-18). ‘Holiness, O Lord, becomes thy house for ever.’ Let, therefore, whoever they be that profess the name of Christ, take heed that they scandal not that profession which they make of him, since he has so graciously offered us, as we are sinners of the biggest size, in the first place, his grace to save us.

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS.

Having thus far spoken of the riches of the grace of Christ, and of the freeness of his heart to embrace the Jerusalem sinners, it may not be amiss to give you yet, as a caution, an intimation of one thing, namely, that this grace and freeness of his heart, is limited to time and day; the which, whoso overstandeth, shall perish notwithstanding. For, as a king, who, of grace, sendeth out to his rebellious people an offer of pardon, if they accept thereof by such a day, yet beheadeth or hangeth those that come not in for mercy until the day or time be past; so Christ Jesus has set the

sinner a day, a day of salvation, an acceptable time; but he who standeth out, or goeth on in rebellion beyond that time, is like to come off with the loss of his soul (<470602>2 Corinthians 6:2; <580313>Hebrews 3:13-19; <580407>Hebrews 4:7; <422041>Luke 19:41, 42). Since, therefore, things are thus, it may be convenient here to touch a little upon these particulars.

> **First**, That this day, or time thus limited, when it is considered with reference to this or that man, is ofttimes undiscerned by the person concerned therein, and always is kept secret as to the shutting up thereof.

And this, in the wisdom of God is thus, to the end no man, when called upon, should put off turning to God to another time. Now, and TODAY, is that and only that which is revealed in holy Writ (<195022>Psalm 50:22; <211201>Ecclesiastes 12:1; <580313>Hebrews 3:13, 15). And this shows us the desperate hazards which those men run, who, when invitation or conviction attends them, put off turning to God to be saved till another, and, as they think, a more fit season and time. For many, by so doing, defer this to do till the day of God's patience and long-suffering is ended; and then, for their prayers and cries after mercy, they receive nothing but mocks, and are laughed at by the God of heaven (<200120>Proverbs 1:20-30; <236512>Isaiah 65:12-16; <236604>Isaiah 66:4; <380711>Zechariah 7:11-13).

> **Secondly**, Another thing to be considered is this, namely, That the day of God's grace with some men begins sooner, and also sooner ends, than it doth with others. Those at the first hour of the day, had their call sooner than they who were called upon to turn to God at the sixth hour of the day; yea, and they who were hired at the third hour, had their call sooner than they who were called at the eleventh (<402001>Matthew 20:1-6).

1. The day of God's patience began with Ishmael, and also ended before he was twenty years old. At thirteen years of age he was circumcised; the next year after, Isaac was born; and then Ishmael was fourteen years old. Now, that day that Isaac was weaned, that day was Ishmael rejected; and suppose that Isaac was three years old before he was weaned, that was but the seventeenth year of Ishmael; wherefore the day of God's grace was ended with him betimes (<011725>Genesis 17:25; <012102>Genesis 21:2-11; <480430>Galatians 4:30).

2. Cain's day ended with him betimes; for, after God had rejected him, he lived to beget many children, and build a city, and to do many other things. But, alas! all that while he was a fugitive and a vagabond. Nor carried he anything with him after the day of his rejection was come, but this doleful language in his conscience. 'From God's face shall I be hid' (Genesis 4:10-15).

3. Esau, through his extravagancies, would needs go sell his birthright, not fearing, as other confident fools, but that yet the blessing would still be his. After which, he lived many years; but all of them under the wrath of God, as was, when time came, made to appear to his destruction; for, 'when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears' (Hebrews 12:16, 17).

Many instances might be given as to such tokens of the displeasure of God against such as fool away, as the wise man has it, the prize which is put into their hand (Proverbs 17:16).

Let these things, therefore, be a further caution to those that sit under the glorious sound of the gospel, and hear of the riches of the grace of God in Christ to poor sinners. To slight grace, to despise mercy, and to stop the ear when God speaks, when he speaks such great things, so much to our profit, is a great provocation. He offereth, he calls, he woos, he invites, he prays, he beseeches us in this day of his grace to be reconciled to him; yea, and has provided for us the means of reconciliation himself. Now, this despised must needs be provoking; and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Objection. But some man may say unto me, 'Fain I would be saved, fain I would be saved by Christ; but I fear this day of grace is past, and that I shall perish, notwithstanding the exceeding riches of the grace of God.'

Answer. To this doubt I would answer several things.

1. With respect to this day.

2. With respect to thy desires.

3. With respect to thy fears.

1. With respect to this day; that is, whether it be ended with a man or no.

(1.) Art thou jogged, and shaken, and molested at the hearing of the Word? Is thy conscience awakened and convinced then, that thou art at present in a perishing state, and that thou hast need to cry to God for mercy? This is a hopeful sign that this day of grace is not past with thee. For, usually, they that are past grace, are also, in their conscience, 'past feeling,' being 'seared with a hot iron' (<490418>Ephesians 4:18, 19; <540401>1 Timothy 4:1, 2). Consequently, those past grace must be such as are denied the awakening fruits of the Word preached. The dead that hear, says Christ, shall live; at least wise, [f40] Christ has not quite done with them; the day of God's patience is not at an end with them (<430525>John 5:25).

(2.) Is there, in thy more retired condition, arguings, strugglings, and strivings with thy spirit to persuade thee of the vanity of what vain things thou lovest, and to win thee in thy soul to a choice of Christ Jesus and his heavenly things? Take heed and rebel not, for the day of God's grace and patience will not be past with thee till he saith, his 'Spirit shall strive no more' with thee; for then the woe comes, when he shall depart from them; and when he says to the means of grace, Let them alone (<280417>Hosea 4:17; <280912>Hosea 9:12).

(3.) Art thou visited in the night seasons with dreams about thy state, and that thou art in danger of being lost? Hast thou heart- shaken apprehensions when deep sleep is upon thee, of hell, death, and judgment to come? These are signs that God has not wholly left thee, or cast thee behind his back for ever. 'For God speaketh once, yea twice, *yet man* perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man *from his* purpose,' his sinful purposes, 'and hide pride from man' (<183314>Job 33:14-17). All this while God has not left the sinner, nor is come to the end of his patience towards him, but stands, at least, with the door of grace ajar in his hand, as being loath, as yet, to bolt it against him.

(4.) Art thou followed with affliction, and dost thou hear God's angry voice in thy afflictions? Doth he send with the affliction an interpreter,

to show thee thy vileness; and why, or wherefore, that hand of God is upon thee, and upon what thou hast; to wit, that it is for thy sinning against him, and that thou mightest be turned to him? If so, thy summer is not quite ended; thy harvest is not yet quite over and gone. Take heed, stand out no longer, lest he cause darkness, and lest thy feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and lest, while you look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness (Jeremiah 8:20; Jeremiah 13:15-17).

(5.) Art thou crossed, disappointed, and waylaid, and overthrown in all thy foolish ways and doings? This is a sign God has not quite left thee, but that he still waits upon thee to turn thee. Consider, I say, has he made a hedge and a wall to stop thee? Has he crossed thee in all thou puttest thy hand unto? Take it as a call to turn to him; for, by his thus doing, he shows he has a mind to give thee a better portion. For usually, when God gives up men, and resolves to let them alone in the broad way, he gives them rope, and lets them have their desires in all hurtful things (Hosea 2:6-15; Psalm 73:3-13; Romans 11:9). Therefore take heed to this also, that thou strive not against this hand of God; but betake thyself to a serious inquiry into the causes of this hand of God upon thee, and incline to think, it is because the Lord would have thee look to that, which is better than what thou wouldst satisfy thyself withal. When God had a mind to make the prodigal go home to his father, he sent a famine upon him, and denied him a bellyful of the husks which the swine did eat. And observe it, now he was in a strait, he betook him to consideration of the good that there was in his father's house; yea, he resolved to go home to his father, and his father dealt well with him; he received him with music and dancing, because he had received him safe and sound (Luke 15:14-32).

(6.) Hast thou any enticing touches of the Word of God upon thy mind? Doth, as it were, some holy word of God give a glance upon thee, cast a smile upon thee, let fall, though it be but one drop of its savor upon thy spirit; yea, though it stays but one moment with thee? O then the day of grace is not past! The gate of heaven is not shut! nor God's heart and bowels withdrawn from thee as yet. Take heed, therefore, and beware that thou make much of the heavenly gift, and of

that good word of God of the which he has made thee taste. Beware, I say, and take heed; there may be a falling away for all this; but, I say, as yet God has not left thee, as yet he has not cast thee off (Hebrews 6:1-9).

2. With respect to thy desires, what are they? Wouldst thou be saved? Wouldst thou be saved with a thorough salvation? Wouldst thou be saved from guilt and filth too? Wouldst thou be the servant of thy Savior? Art thou indeed weary of the service of thy old master the devil, sin, and the world? And have these desires put thy soul to the flight? Hast thou, through desires, betaken thyself to thy heels? Dost fly to him that is a Savior from the wrath to come, for life? If these be thy desires, and if they be unfeigned, fear not! Thou are one of those runaways which God has commanded our Lord to receive, and not to send thee back to the devil thy master again, but to give thee a place in his house, even the place which liketh thee best. 'Thou shalt not deliver unto his master,' says he, 'the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him' (Deuteronomy 23:15, 16).

This is a command to the church, consequently to the Head of the church; for all commands from God come to her through her Head. Whence I conclude, that as Israel of old was to receive the runaway servant who escaped from a heathen master to them, and should not dare to send him back to his master again; so Christ's church now, and consequently Christ himself, may not, will not, refuse that soul that has made his escape from sin, Satan, the world, and hell, unto him, but will certainly let him dwell in his house, among his saints, in that place which he shall choose, even where it liketh him best. For he says, in another place, 'And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' In no wise, let his crimes be what they will, either for nature, multitude, or the attendance of aggravating circumstances. Wherefore, if thy desires be firm, sound, and unfeigned to become the saved of Christ, and his servant, fear not, he will not, he will in no wise put thee away, or turn thee over to thy old master again.

3. As to thy fears, whatever they are, let that be supposed which is supposed before, and they are groundless, and so of no weight.

Objection. But I am afraid I am not [of the] elect, or chosen to salvation, though you called me fool a little before for so fearing.

Answer. Though election is, in order, before calling, as to God, yet the knowledge of calling must go before the belief of my election, as to myself. Wherefore, souls that doubt of the truth of their effectual calling, do but plunge themselves into a deeper labyrinth of confusion that concern themselves with their election; I mean, while they labor to know it before they prove their calling. 'Make your calling, and so your election sure' (2 Peter 1:4-10).

Wherefore, at present, lay the thoughts of thy election by, and ask thyself these questions: Do I see my lost condition? Do I see salvation is nowhere but in Christ? Would I share in this salvation by faith in him? And would I, as was said before, be thoroughly saved, to wit, from the filth as from the guilt? Do I love Christ, his Father, his saints, his words, and ways? This is the way to prove we are elect. Wherefore, sinner, when Satan, or thine own heart, seeks to puzzle thee with election, say thou, I cannot attend to talk of this point now, but stay till I know that I am called of God to the fellowship of his Son, and then I will show you that I am elect, and that my name is written in the book of life.

If poor distressed souls would observe this order, they might save themselves the trouble of an unprofitable labor under these unseasonable and soul-sinking doubts. [f41]

Let us, therefore, upon the sight of our wretchedness, fly and venturously leap into the arms of Christ, which are now as open to receive us into his bosom as they were when nailed to the cross. This is coming to Christ for life aright; this is right running away from thy [old] master to him, as was said before. And for this we have multitudes of Scriptures to support, encourage, and comfort us in our so doing.

But now, let him that doth thus be sure to look for it, for Satan will be with him tomorrow, to see if he can get him again to his old service; and if he cannot do that, then will he enter into dispute with him, to wit, about whether he be elect to life, and called indeed to partake of this Christ, to whom he is fled for succor, or whether he comes to him of his own presumptuous mind. Therefore we are bid, as to come, so to arm ourselves

with that armor which God has provided; that we may resist, quench, stand against, and withstand all the fiery darts of the devil (⁴⁹Ephesians 6:11-18). If, therefore, thou findest Satan in this order to march against thee, remember that thou hadst this item about it; and betake thyself to faith and good courage, and be sober, and hope to the end.

Objection. But how if I should have sinned the sin unpardonable, or that called the sin against the Holy Ghost?

Answer. If thou hast, thou art lost for ever; but yet before it is concluded by thee that thou hast so sinned, know that they that would be saved by Jesus Christ, through faith in his blood, cannot be counted for such.

1. Because of the promise, for that must not be frustrate: and that says, 'And him that cometh to Christ, he will in no wise cast out.' And again, 'Whoso will, let him take of the water of life freely' (⁴³John 6:37; ⁶⁶Revelation 21:6; ⁶⁶Revelation 22:17).

But, I say, how can these Scriptures be fulfilled, if he that would indeed be saved, as before said, has sinned the sin unpardonable? The Scripture must not be made void, nor their truth be cast to the ground. Here is a promise, and here is a sinner; a promise that says he shall not be cast out that comes; and the sinner comes, wherefore he must be received: consequently, he that comes to Christ for life, has not, cannot have sinned that sin for which there is no forgiveness. And this might suffice for an answer to any coming soul, that fears, though he comes, that he has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost.

2. But, again, he that has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost cannot come, has no heart to come, can by no means be made willing to come to Jesus Christ for life; for that he has received such an opinion of him, and of his things, as deters and holds him back.

> **(1.)** He counteth this blessed person, this Son of God, a magician, a conjuror, a witch, or one that did, when he was in the world, what he did, by the power and spirit of the devil (⁴⁰Matthew 9:34; ⁴⁰Matthew 12:24, 25, etc.; ⁴¹Mark 3:22-30). Now he that has this opinion of this Jesus, cannot be willing to cast himself at his feet for life, or to come to him as the only way to God and to salvation. And hence it is said again, that such an one puts him to open shame, and

treadeth him under foot; that is, by contemning, reproaching, vilifying, and despising of him, as if he were the vilest one, or the greatest cheat in the world; and has, therefore, as to his esteem of him, called him accursed, crucified him to himself, or counted him one hanged, as one of the worst of malefactors (<3806>Hebrews 6:6; <3810>Hebrews 10:29; <4612>1 Corinthians 12:3).

(2.) His blood, which is the meritorious cause of man's redemption, even the blood of the everlasting covenant, he counteth 'an unholy thing,' or that which has no more virtue in it to save a soul from sin than has the blood of a dog (<3810>Hebrews 10:29). [f42] For when the apostle says, 'he counts it an unholy thing,' he means, he makes it of less value than that of a sheep or cow, which were clean according to the law; and, therefore, must mean, that his blood was of no more worth to him, in his account, than was the blood of a dog, an ass, or a swine, which always was, as to sacrifices, rejected by the God of heaven, as unholy or unclean. Now he who has no better esteem of Jesus Christ, and of his death and blood, will not be persuaded to come to him for life, or to trust in him for salvation.

(3.) But further, all this must be done against manifest tokens to prove the contrary, or after the shining of gospel light upon the soul, or some considerable profession of him as the Messiah, or that he was the Savior of the world.

(a.) It must be done against manifest tokens to prove the contrary; and thus the reprobate Jews committed it when they saw the works of God, which put forth themselves in him, and called them the works of the devil and Beelzebub.

(b.) It must be done against some shining light of the gospel upon them. And thus it was with Judas, and with those who, after they were enlightened, and had tasted, and had felt something of the powers of the world to come, fell away from the faith of him, and put him to open shame and disgrace (<3805>Hebrews 6:5, 6).

(c.) It must also be done after, and in opposition to one's own open profession of him. For if, after they have escaped the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have know the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment, which is the word of faith delivered unto them.

(d.) All this must be done openly, before witnesses, in the face, sight, and view of the world, by word and act. This is the sin that is unpardonable; and he that hath thus done, can never, it is impossible he ever should, be renewed again to repentance, and that for a double reason; first, such an one doth say, he will not; and [second] of him God says, he shall not have the benefit of salvation by him.

Objection. But if this be the sin unpardonable, why is it called the sin against the Holy Ghost, and not rather the sin against the Son of God?

Answer. It is called 'the sin against the Holy Ghost,' because such count the works he did, which were done by the Spirit of God, the works of the spirit of the devil. Also because all such as so reject Christ Jesus the Lord, they do it in despite of that testimony which the Holy Ghost has given of him in the holy Scriptures; for the Scriptures are the breathings of the Holy Ghost, as in all other things, so in that testimony they bear of the person, of the works, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Sinner, this is the sin against the Holy Ghost. What sayest thou? Hast thou committed it? Nay, I know thou hast not, if thou *wouldst* be saved by Christ. Yea, it is impossible that thou shouldst have done it, if indeed thou wouldst be saved by him. No man can desire to be saved by him, who he yet judgeth to be an impostor, a magician, a witch. No man can hope for redemption by that blood which he yet counteth an unholy thing. Nor will God ever suffer such an one to repent, who has, after light and profession of him, thus horribly, and devil-like, contemned and trampled upon him.

True, words, and wars, and blasphemies, against this Son of man, are pardonable; but then they must be done 'ignorantly, and in unbelief.' Also, all blasphemous thoughts are likewise such as may be passed by, if the

soul afflicted with them, indeed is sorry for them (<540113>1 Timothy 1:13-15; <411028>Mark 3:28).

All but this, sinner, all but this! If God had said, he will forgive one sin, it had been undeserved grace; but when he says he will pardon all but one, this is grace to the height. Nor is that one unpardonable otherwise, but because the Savior that should save them is rejected and put away. Jacob's ladder; Christ is Jacob's ladder that reacheth up to heaven; and he that refuseth to go by this ladder thither, will scarce by other means get up so high. There is none other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved. There is none other sacrifice for sin than this; he also, and he only, is the Mediator that reconcileth men to God. And, sinner, if thou wouldst be saved by him, his benefits are thine; yea, though thou art a great and Jerusalem transgressor. [f43]

COME AND WELCOME TO JESUS CHRIST;

OR, A PLAIN AND PROFITABLE DISCOURSE ON JOHN 6:37

SHOWING THE CAUSE, TRUTH, AND MANNER OF THE COMING OF A SINNER TO JESUS CHRIST; WITH HIS HAPPY RECEPTION AND BLESSED ENTERTAINMENT.

WRITTEN BY JOHN BUNYAN, AUTHOR OF "THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS."

"And they shall come which were ready to perish."
— Isaiah 27:13.

London, 1681.

ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR.

"Come and welcome to Jesus Christ," is a subject peculiarly fitted to the deep and searching experience of John Bunyan. He knew all the wiles of sin and Satan, in placing stumblingblocks in the way of a sincere penitent; all the human craft employed in keeping the soul from a simple and entire reliance upon Christ for salvation. This little work soon became most deservedly popular, passing through four large editions during the last seven years of the author's life. It is an enlightened display of the dealings of the Father in giving sinners to Christ; the Son in saving them by his atonement, mediation, and intercession; and the Holy Spirit in sanctifying and fitting them for glory. Here is no Calvinism, Lutheranism, or Arminianism; no Episcopacy, Presbytery, or Independency; nothing but Christism and Bibleism. The gracious invitation is addressed to all who feel their misery, Come unto me, and I will make you happy and blessed. All who feel the leprosy of sin are invited to this spiritual Physician, and

he only can and will heal them. All who suffer under the slavery of sin and Satan, Christ alone can make you free. Come to him, and you shall be free indeed. The analysis of Bunyan's treatise shows that ALL mankind are born in sin. ALL sinners are invited to Christ. None will come but such as feel the plague, and see the leprosy of sin. Those who come are drawn in a variety of ways — some terrified with the horrors of hell, others allured by the gracious voice of the Savior, and the prospects of heavenly felicity. ALL who sincerely come, attain the same end, a sincere and total reliance upon the Savior as the only refuge from the roaring lion.

Every other way to life is guarded by the flaming swords of the cherubim. Christ opens his golden arms wider than all our miseries. But he suffers no rival on his throne, no partnership with Moses or John Baptist. The personification of "shall come," and of "ignorance," is strikingly illustrative; as is "sin, the winding-sheet of the soul;" "unbelief, the white devil;" the sinner being a counselor for Satan; and the two ways of taking our own likeness. His appeal to persecutors is most forcible. But I must not detain the reader longer from the pleasure and profit he will receive from an attentive perusal of these pages.

Hackney, 1850.
George Offor.

COME AND WELCOME TO JESUS CHRIST.

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." — [40637]John 6:37.

A little before, in this chapter, you may read that the Lord Jesus walked on the sea to go to Capernaum, having sent his disciples before in a ship, but the wind was contrary; by which means the ship was hindered in her passage. Now, about the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came walking upon the sea, and overtook them; at the sight of whom they were afraid.

Note, When providences are black and terrible to God's people, the Lord Jesus shows himself to them in wonderful manner; the which sometimes they can as little bear, as they can the things that were before terrible to them. They were afraid of the wind and the water; they were also afraid of their Lord and Savior, when he appeared to them in that state.

But he said, "Be not afraid, it is I."

Note, That the end of the appearing of the Lord Jesus unto his people, though the manner of his appearing be never so terrible, is to allay their fears and perplexities.

Then they received him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at land whither it went.

Note, When Christ is absent from his people, they go on but slowly, and with great difficulty; but when he joineth himself unto them, oh! how fast they steer their course! how soon are they at their journey's end! [F51]

The people now among whom he last preached, when they saw that both Jesus was gone and his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him, they wonderingly asked him, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" but the Lord Jesus, slighting their compliment, answered, "Verily, verily, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

Note, A people may follow Christ far for base ends, as these went after him beyond sea for loaves. A man's belly will carry him a great way in religion; yea, a man's belly will make him venture far for Christ.

Note again, They are not feigning compliments, but gracious intentions, that crown the work in the eye of Christ; or thus, it is not the toil and business of professors, but their love to him, that makes him approve of them.

Note again, When men shall look for friendly entertainment at Christ's hand, if their hearts be rotten, even then will they meet with a check and rebuke. "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

Yet observe again, He doth not refuse to give, even to these, good counsel: he bids them labor for the meat that endureth to eternal life. Oh! how willingly would Jesus Christ have even those professors that come to him with pretences only, come to him sincerely, that they may be saved.

The text, you will find, is, after much more discourse with and about this people, and it is uttered by the Lord Jesus as the conclusion of the whole, and intimateth that, since they were professors in pretence only, and therefore such as his soul could not delight in, as such, that he would content himself with a remnant that his Father had bestowed upon him. As who should say, I am not like to be honored in your salvation; but the Father hath bestowed upon me a people, and they shall come to me in truth, and in them will I be satisfied. The text, therefore, may be called Christ's repose; in the fulfilling whereof he resteth himself content, after much labor and many sermons spent, as it were, in vain. As he saith by the prophet,

> "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain" (Isaiah 49:4).

But as there he saith, "My judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God;" so in the text he saith, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." By these words, therefore, the Lord Jesus comforteth himself under the consideration of the dissimulation of some of his followers. He also thus betook himself to rest under the consideration of the little effect that his

ministry had in Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida: “I thank thee, O Father,” said he, “Lord of heaven and earth, because thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” (<4011125>Matthew 11:25; <4201021>Luke 10:21).

The text, in the general, standeth of TWO PARTS, and hath special respect to the Father and the Son; as also to their joint management of the salvation of the people: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” The first part of the text, as is evident, respecteth the Father and his gift; the other part the Son and his reception of that gift.

First, For the gift of the Father there is this to be considered, to wit, the gift itself; and that is the gift of certain persons to the Son. The Father giveth, and that gift shall come: “And him that cometh.” The gift, then, is of persons; the Father giveth persons to Jesus Christ.

Second, Next you have the Son’s reception of this gift, and that showeth itself in these particulars: —

1. In his hearty acknowledgment of it to be a gift: “The Father giveth me.” [F52].

2. In his taking notice, after a solemn manner, of all and every part of the gift: “All that the Father giveth me.”

3. In his resolution to bring them to himself: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.”

4. And in his determining that not anything shall make him dislike them in their coming: “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

These things might be spoken to at large, as they are in this method presented to view: but I shall choose to speak to the words, FIRST, BY WAY OF EXPLICATION. SECOND, BY WAY OF OBSERVATION.

[FIRST, THE TEXT TREATED BY WAY OF EXPLICATION.] [THE EXTENT OF THE GIFT.]

"All that the Father giveth me." This word all, is often used in Scripture, and is to be taken more largely, or more strictly, even as the truth or argument, for the sake of which it is made use of, will bear. Wherefore, that we may the better understand the mind of Christ in the use of it here, we must consider, that it is limited and restrained only to those that shall be saved, to wit, to those that shall come to Christ; even to those whom he will "in no wise cast out." Thus, also, the words all Israel, is sometimes to be taken, although sometimes it is taken for the whole family of Jacob. "And so all Israel shall be saved" (<451126>Romans 11:26). By all Israel here, he intendeth not all of Israel, in the largest sense; "for they are not all Israel which are of Israel;" "neither because they are of the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, In Isaiahac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (<450906>Romans 9:6-8).

This word ALL, therefore, must be limited and enlarged, as the truth and argument, for the sake of which it is used, will bear; else we shall abuse Scripture, and readers, and ourselves, and all. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," said Christ, "will draw ALL men unto me" (<431232>John 12:32). Can any man imagine, that by ALL, in this place, he should mean all and every individual man in the world, and not rather that all that is consonant to the scope of the place? And if, by being "lifted up from the earth," he means, as he should seem, his being taken up into heaven; and if, by "drawing ALL men after him," he meant a drawing them unto that place of glory; then must he mean by ALL men, those, and only those, that shall in truth be eternally saved from the wrath to come. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" (<451132>Romans 11:32). Here again you have all and all, two alls; but yet a greater disparity between the all made mention of in the first place, and that all made mention of the second. Those intended in this text are the Jews, even all of them, by the first all that you find in the words. The second all doth also intend the same people; but yet only so many of them as God will have mercy upon. "He hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon

all." The all also in the text, is likewise to be limited and restrained to the saved, and to them only. But again; —

The word "giveth," or "hath given," must be restrained, after the same manner, to the same limited number. "All that the Father giveth me." Not all that are given, if you take the gift of the Father to the Son in the largest sense; for in that sense there are many given to him that shall never come unto him; yea, many are given unto him that he will "cast out." I shall, therefore, first show you the truth of this; and then in what sense the gift in the text must be taken.

First, [ALL cannot be intended in its largest sense.] That ALL that are given to Christ, if you take the gift of the Father to him in the largest sense, cannot be intended in the text, is evident —

1. Because, then, all the men, yea, all the things in the world, must be saved. "All things," saith he, "are delivered unto me of my Father" (Matthew 11:27). This, I think, no rational man in the world will conclude. Therefore, the gift intended in the text must be restrained to some, to a gift that is given by way of speciality by the Father to the Son.

2. It must not be taken for ALL, that in any sense are given by the Father to him, because the Father hath given some, yea, many to him, to be dashed in pieces by him. "Ask of me," said the Father to him, "and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." But what must be done with them? must he save them all? No. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2). This method he useth not with them that he saveth by his grace, but with those that himself and saints shall rule over in justice and severity (Revelation 2:26, 27). Yet, as you see, "they are given to him." Therefore, the gift intended in the text must be restrained to some, to a gift that is given by way of speciality by the Father to the Son.

In Psalm 18 he saith plainly, that some are given to him that he might destroy them. "Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me" (Psalm 18:40). These, therefore,

cannot be of the number of those that are said to be given in the text; for those, even ALL of them, shall come to him, “and he will in no wise cast them out.”

> **3.** Some are given to Christ, that he by them might bring about some of his high and deep designs in the world. Thus Judas was given to Christ, to wit, that by him, even as was determined before, he might bring about his death, and so the salvation of his elect by his blood. Yea, and Judas must so manage this business, as that he must lose himself for ever in bringing it to pass. Therefore the Lord Jesus, even in his losing of Judas, applies himself to the judgment of his Father, if he had not in that thing done that which was right, even in suffering of Judas so to bring about his Master’s death, as that he might, by so doing, bring about his own eternal damnation also.

“Those,” said he, “that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12). Let us, then, grant that Judas was given to Christ, but not as others are given to him, not as those made mention of in the text; for then he should have failed to have been so received by Christ, and kept to eternal life. Indeed, he was given to Christ; but he was given to him to lose him, in the way that I have mentioned before; he was given to Christ, that he by him might bring about his own death, as was before determined; and that in the overthrow of him that did it. Yea, he must bring about his own death, as was before determined, and that in the overthrow of him that did it. Yea, he must bring about his dying for us in the loss of the instrument that betrayed him, that he might even fulfil the Scripture in his destruction, as well as in the salvation of the rest. “And none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

[SECOND, THOSE INTENDED AS THE GIFT.]

The gift, therefore, in the text, must not be taken in the largest sense, but even as the words will bear, to wit, for such a gift as he accepteth, and promiseth to be an effectual means of eternal salvation to. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Mark! they shall come that are in special given to me; and they shall by no means be rejected. For this is the substance of the text.

Those, therefore, intended as the gift in the text, are those that are given by covenant to the Son; those that in other places are called “the elect,” “the chosen,” “the sheep,” and “the children of the promise,” etc. These be they that the Father hath given to Christ to keep them; those that Christ hath promised eternal life unto; those to whom he hath given his word, and that he will have with him in his kingdom to behold his glory.

> “This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39)

> “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28)

> “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word; I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” “Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:1, 6, 9, 10, 24).

All these sentences are of the same import with the text; and the alls and manies, those, they, etc., in these several sayings of Christ, are the same with all the given in the text. “All that the Father giveth.”

So that, as I said before, the word ALL, as also other words, must not be taken in such sort as our foolish fancies or groundless opinions will prompt us to, but do admit of an enlargement or a restriction, according to the true meaning and intent of the text. We must therefore diligently consult the meaning of the text, by comparing it with other the sayings of God; so shall we be better able to find out the mind of the Lord, in the word which he has given us to know it by.

[THE PERSON GIVING, THE FATHER.]

"All that the Father giveth." By this word "Father," Christ describeth the person giving; by which we may learn several useful things.

First, That the Lord God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is concerned with the Son in the salvation of his people. True, his acts, as to our salvation, are diverse from those of the Son; he was not capable of doing that, or those things for us, as did the Son; he died not, he spilt not blood for our redemption, as the Son; but yet he hath a hand, a great hand, in our salvation too. As Christ saith, "The Father himself loveth you," and his love is manifest in choosing of us, in giving of us to his Son; yea, and in giving his Son also to be a ransom for us. Hence he is called, "The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." For here even the Father hath himself found out, and made way for his grace to come to us through the sides and the heart-blood of his well-beloved Son (Colossians 1:12-14). The Father, therefore, is to be remembered and adored, as one having a chief hand in the salvation of sinners. We ought to give

> "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12)

For

> "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (John 4:14)

As also we see in the text, the "Father giveth" the sinner to Christ to save him.

Second, Christ Jesus the Lord, by this word "Father," would familiarize this giver to us. Naturally the name of God is dreadful to us, especially when he is discovered to us by those names that declare his justice, holiness, power, and glory; but now this word "Father" is a familiar word, it frighteth not the sinner, but rather inclineth his heart to love, and be pleased with the remembrance of him. Hence Christ also, when he would have us to pray with godly boldness, puts this word "Father" into our mouths; saying, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven;" concluding thereby, that by the familiarity that by such a word is intimated, the children of God may take more boldness to pray for, and

ask great things. I myself have often found, that when I can say but this word Father, it doth me more good than when I call him by any other Scripture name. It is worth your noting, that to call God by his relative title was rare among the saints in Old Testament times. Seldom do you find him called by this name; no, sometimes not in three or four books: but now in New Testament times, he is called by no name so often as this, both by the Lord Jesus himself, and by the apostles afterwards. Indeed, the Lord Jesus was he that first made this name common among the saints, and that taught them, both in their discourses, their prayers, and in their writings, so much to use it; it being more pleasing to, and discovering more plainly our interest in, God, than any other expression; for by this one name we are made to understand that all our mercies are the offspring of God, and that we also that are called are his children by adoption.

[IMPORT OF THE WORD GIVETH.] — "ALL THAT THE FATHER GIVETH."

This word "giveth" is out of Christ's ordinary dialect, and seemeth to intimate, at the first sound, as if the Father's gift to the Son was not an act that is past, but one that is present and continuing; when, indeed, this gift was bestowed upon Christ when the covenant, the eternal covenant, was made between them before all worlds. Wherefore, in those other places, when this gift is mentioned, it is still spoken of, as of an act that is past; as, "All that he hath give me; to as many as thou hast given me; thou gavest them me; and those which thou hast given me." Therefore, of necessity, this must be the first and chief sense of the text; I mean of this word "giveth," otherwise the doctrine of election, and of the eternal covenant which was made between the Father and the Son, in which covenant this gift of the Father is most certainly comprised, will be shaken, or at leastwise questionable, by erroneous and wicked men: for they may say, That the Father gave not all those to Christ that shall be saved, before the world was made; for that this act of giving is an act of continuation. [F53] But again, this word "giveth" is not to be rejected, for it hath its proper use, and may signify to us —

1. That though the act of giving among men doth admit of the time past, or the time to come, and is to be spoken of with reference to such time; yet with God it is not so. Things past, or things to come, are always present

with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ: He “calleth those things which be not,” that is, to us, “as though they were” (Romans 4:17). And again, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” All things to God are present, and so the gift of the Father to the Son, although to us, as is manifest by the word, it is an act that is past (Acts 15:16).

2. Christ may express himself thus, to show, that the Father hath not only given him this portion in the lump, before the world was, but that those that he had so given, he will give him again; that is, will bring them to him at the time of their conversion; for the Father bringeth them to Christ (John 6:44). As it is said, “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work;” that is, in the righteousness of Christ; for it is God that imputeth that to those that are saved (Psalm 45:14; 1 Corinthians 1). A man giveth his daughter to such a man, first in order to marriage, and this respects the time past, and he giveth her again at the day appointed in marriage. And in this last sense, perhaps, the text may have a meaning; that is, that all that the Father hath, before the world was, given to Jesus Christ, he giveth them again to him in the day of their espousals.

Things that are given among men, are ofttimes best at first; to wit, when they are new; and the reason is, because all earthly things wax old; but with Christ it is not so. This gift of the Father is not old and deformed, and unpleasant in his eyes; and therefore to him it is always new. When the Lord spake of giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites, he saith not, that he had given, or would give it to them, but thus:

> “The Lord thy God giveth thee — this good land”
> (Deuteronomy 9:6)

Not but that he had given it to them, while they were in the loins of their fathers, hundreds of years before. Yet he saith now he giveth it to them; as if they were now also in the very act of taking possession, when as yet they were on the other side Jordan. What then should be the meaning? Why, I take it to be this. That the land should be to them always as new; as new as if they were taking possession thereof but now. And so is the gift of the Father, mentioned in the text, to the Son; it is always new, as if it were always new.

“All that the Father giveth me.” In these words you find mention made of two persons, the Father and the Son; the Father giving, and the Son receiving or accepting of this gift. This, then, in the first place, clearly demonstrateth, that the Father and the Son, though they, with the Holy Ghost, are one and the same eternal God; yet, as to their personality, are distinct. The Father is one, the Son is one, the Holy Spirit is one. But because there is in this text mention made but of two of the three, therefore a word about these two. The giver and receiver cannot be the same person in a proper sense, in the same act of giving and receiving. He that giveth, giveth not to himself, but to another; the Father giveth not to the Father, to wit, to himself, but to the Son: the Son receiveth not of the Son, to wit, of himself, but of the Father: so when the Father giveth commandment, he giveth it not to himself, but to another; as Christ saith, “He gave me a commandment” (John 12:49). So again,

> “I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me” (John 8:18).

Further, here is something implied that is not expressed, to wit, that the Father hath not given all men to Christ; that is, in that sense as it is intended in this text, though in a larger, as was said before, he hath given him every one of them; for then all should be saved: he hath, therefore, disposed of some another way. He gives some up to idolatry; he gives some up to uncleanness, to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind. Now these he disposeth of in his anger, for their destruction, that they may reap the fruit of their doings, and be filled with the reward of their own ways (Acts 7:42; Romans 1:24, 26, 28). But neither hath he thus disposed of all men; he hath even of mercy reserved some from these judgments, and those are they that he will pardon, as he saith,

> “For I will pardon them whom I reserve”
> (Jeremiah 50:20)

Now these he hath given to Jesus Christ, by will, as a legacy and portion. Hence the Lord Jesus says,

"This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39).

[THE FATHER'S INTENT IN GIVING.]

The Father, therefore, in giving of them to him to save them, must needs declare unto us these following things: —

First, That he is able to answer this design of God, to wit, to save them to the uttermost sin, the uttermost temptation, etc. (Hebrews 7:25). Hence he is said to lay "help upon one that is mighty," "mighty to save" (Psalm 89:19; Isaiah 63:1) and hence it is again, that God did even of old promise to send his people "a Savior, a great one" (Isaiah 19:20). To save is a great work, and calls for almightiness in the undertaker: hence he is called the "Mighty God, the wonderful Counselor," etc. Sin is strong, Satan is also strong, death and the grave are strong, and so is the curse of the law; therefore it follows, that this Jesus must needs be, by God the Father, accounted almighty, in that he hath given his elect to him to save them, and deliver them from these, and that in despite of all their force and power.

And he gave us testimony of this his might, when he was employed in that part of our deliverance that called for a declaration of it. He abolished death; he destroyed him that had the power of death; he was the destruction of the grave; he hath finished sin, and made an end of it, as to its damning effects upon the persons that the Father hath given him; he hath vanquished the curse of the law, nailed it to his cross, triumphed over them upon his cross, and made a show of these things openly (2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14, 15; Hosea 13:14; Daniel 9:24; Galatians 3:13; Colossians 2:14, 15). Yea, and even now, as a sign of his triumph and conquest, he is alive from the dead, and hath the keys of hell and death in his own keeping (Revelation 1:18).

Second, The Father's giving of them to him to save them, declares unto us that he is and will be faithful in his office of Mediator, and that therefore they shall be secured from the fruit and wages of their sins, which is eternal damnation, by his faithful execution of it. And, indeed, it is said, even by the Holy Ghost himself, That he "was faithful to him that

appointed him," that is, to this work of saving those that the Father hath given him for that purpose; as "Moses was faithful in all his house." Yea, and more faithful too, for Moses was faithful in God's house but as a servant; "but Christ as a Son over his own house" (Hebrews 3). And therefore this man is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, even upon this account, because more faithful than he, as well as because of the dignity of his person. Therefore in him, and in his truth and faithfulness, God resteth well pleased, and hath put all the government of this people upon his shoulders. Knowing that nothing shall be wanting in him, that may any way perfect this design. And of this he, to wit, the Son, hath already given a proof. For when the time was come, that his blood was, by Divine justice, required for their redemption, washing, and cleansing, he as freely poured it out of his heart, as if it had been water out of a vessel; not sticking to part with his own life, that the life which was laid up for his people in heaven might not fail to be bestowed upon them. And upon this account, as well as upon any other, it is that God calleth him "my righteous servant" (Isaiah 53:11). For his righteousness could never have been complete, if he had not been to the uttermost faithful to the work he undertook; it is also, because he is faithful and true, that in righteousness he doth judge and make work for his people's deliverance. He will faithfully perform this trust reposed in him. The Father knows this, and hath therefore given his elect unto him.

Third, The Father's giving of them to him, to save them, declares that he is, and will be gentle, and patient towards them, under all their provocations and miscarriages. It is not to be imagined, the trials and provocations that the Son of God hath all along had with these people that have been given to him that saves them: indeed he is said to be "a tried stone;" for he has been tried, not only by the devil, guilt of sin, death, and the curse of the law, but also by his people's ignorance, unruliness, falls into sin, and declining to errors in life and doctrine. Were we but capable of seeing how this Lord Jesus has been tried even by his people, ever since there was one of them in the world, we should be amazed at his patience and gentle carriages to them. It is said, indeed, "The Lord is very pitiful, slow to anger, and of great mercy." And, indeed, if he had not been so, he could never have endured their manners as he has done from Adam hitherto. Therefore is his pity and bowels towards his church preferred

above the pity and bowels of a mother towards her child. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee,” saith the Lord (<23495>Isaiah 49:15).

God did once give Moses, as Christ’s servant, an handful of his people, to carry them in his bosom, but no further than from Egypt to Canaan; and this Moses, as is said of him by the Holy Ghost, was the meekest man that was then to be found in the earth; yea, and he loved the people at a very great rate; yet neither would his meekness nor love hold out in this work; he failed and grew passionate, even to the provoking his God to anger under this work. “And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?” But what was the affliction? Why, the Lord had said unto him, “Carry this people in thy bosom as a nursing father beareth the suckling child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers.” And how then? Not I, says Moses,

> “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, and let me not see my wretchedness” (<041111>Numbers 11:11-15).

God gave them to Moses, that he might carry them in his bosom, that he might show gentleness and patience towards them, under all the provocations wherewith they would provoke him from that time till he had brought them to their land; but he failed in the work; he could not exercise it, because he had not that sufficiency of patience towards them. But now it is said of the person speaking in the text,

> “That he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (<234011>Isaiah 40:11)

Intimating, that this was one of the qualifications that God looked for, and knew was in him, when he gave his elect to him to save them.

Fourth, The Father giving of him to save them, declares that he hath a sufficiency of wisdom to wage with all those difficulties that would attend him in his bringing of his sons and daughters unto glory. He made him to us to be wisdom; yea, he is called wisdom itself (<460130>1 Corinthians 1:30).

And God saith, moreover, That "he shall deal prudently" (Isaiah 52:13). And, indeed, he that shall take upon him to be the Savior of the people, had need be wise, because their adversaries are subtle above any. Here they are to encounter with the serpent, who for his subtilty outwitted our father and mother, when their wisdom was at highest (Genesis 3). But if we talk of wisdom, our Jesus is wise, wiser than Solomon, wiser than all men, wiser than all angels; he is even the wisdom of God. "Christ is the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). And hence it is that he turneth sin, temptations, persecutions, falls, and all things, for good unto his people (Romans 8:28).

Now these things thus concluded on do show us also the great and wonderful love of the Father, in that he should choose out one every way so well prepared for the work of man's salvation.

Herein, indeed, perceive we the love of God. Huram gathered, that God loved Israel because he had given them such a king as Solomon (2 Chronicles 2:11). But how much more may we behold the love that God hath bestowed upon us, in that he hath given us to his Son, and also given his Son for us?

[THE SON'S RECEPTION OF THE GIFT.]

"All that the Father giveth me SHALL COME." In these last words there is closely inserted an answer unto the Father's end in giving of his elect to Jesus Christ. The Father's end was, that they might come to him, and be saved by him; and that, says the Son, shall be done; neither sin nor Satan, neither flesh nor world, neither wisdom nor folly, shall hinder their coming to me. "They shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Here, therefore, the Lord Jesus positively determineth to put forth such a sufficiency of all grace as shall effectually perform this promise. "They shall come;" that is, he will cause them to come, by infusing of an effectual blessing into all the means that shall be used to that end. As was said to the evil spirit that was sent to persuade Ahab to go and fall at Ramoth-Gilead; Go:

"Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so" (<461022>1 Kings 22:22)

So will Jesus Christ say to the means that shall be used for the bringing of those to him that the Father hath given him. I say, he will bless it effectually to this very end; it shall persuade them, and shall prevail also; else, as I said, the Father's end would be frustrate; for the Father's will is, that

"of all which he hath given him, he should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day," (<430639>John 6:39)

in order next unto himself, Christ the firstfruits, afterwards those that are his at his coming (<461501>1 Corinthians 15). But this cannot be done if there should fail to be a work of grace effectually wrought, though but in any one of them. But this shall not fail to be wrought in them, even in all the Father hath given him to save. "All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me," etc.

But to speak more distinctly to the words, THEY "SHALL COME," two things I would show you from these words —

First, What it is to come to Christ.

Second, What force there is in this promise, to make them come to him.

[WHAT IT IS TO COME TO CHRIST.]

First, I would show you WHAT IT IS TO COME TO CHRIST. This word come must be understood spiritually, not carnally; for many came to him carnally, or bodily, that had no saving advantage by him. Multitudes did thus come unto him in the days of his flesh; yea, innumerable companies. There is also at this day a formal customary coming to his ordinances and ways of worship, which availeth not anything; but with them I shall not now meddle, for they are not intended in the text. The coming, then, intended in the text is to be understood of the coming of the mind to him, even the moving of the heart towards him. I say the moving of the heart towards him, from a sound sense of the absolute want that a man hath of him for his justification and salvation.

This description of coming to Christ divideth itself into two heads: First, That coming to Christ is a moving of the mind towards him. Second, That it is a moving of the mind towards him, from a sound sense of the absolute want that a man hath of him for his justification and salvation.

To speak to the first, that it is a moving of the mind towards him. This is evident; because coming hither or thither, if it be voluntary, is by an act of the mind or will; so coming to Christ is through the inclining of the will. "Thy people shall be willing" (<19B103>Psalm 110:3). This willingness of heart is it which sets the mind a-moving after or towards him. The church expresseth this moving of her mind towards Christ by the moving of her bowels. "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him" (<22B504>Song of Solomon 5:4). "My bowels;" the passions of my mind and affections; which passions of the affections are expressed by the yearning and sounding of the bowels, the yearning or passionate working of them, the sounding of them, or their making a noise for him (<014330>Genesis 43:30; <111326>1 Kings 3:26; <232611>Isaiah 16:11).

This, then, is the coming to Christ, even a moving towards him with the mind. [F54] "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live" (<263409>Ezekiel 47:9). The water in this text is the grace of God in the doctrine of it. The living things are the children of men, to whom the grace of God, by the gospel, is preached. Now, saith he, every living thing which moveth, whithersoever the water shall come, shall live. And see how this word moveth is expounded by Christ himself, in the book of the Revelations: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will," that is, willing, "let him take the water of life freely" (<662217>Revelation 22:17).

So that to move in thy mind and will after Christ, is to be coming to him. There are many poor souls that are coming to Christ, that yet cannot tell how to believe it, because they think that coming to him is some strange and wonderful thing; and, indeed, so it is. But I mean, they overlook the inclination of their will, the moving of their mind, and the sounding of their bowels after him; and count these none of this strange and wonderful thing; when, indeed, it is a work of greatest wonder in this world, to see a man who was sometimes dead in sin possessed of the devil, an enemy to

Christ and to all things spiritually good; I say, to see this man moving with his mind after the Lord Jesus Christ, is one of the highest wonders in the world.

Second, It is a moving of the mind towards him, from a sound sense of the absolute want that a man hath of him for his justification and salvation. Indeed, without this sense of a lost condition without him, there will be no moving of the mind towards him. A moving of their mouth there may be;

> "With their mouth they show much love" (Ezekiel 33:31)

Such a people as this will come as the true people cometh; that is, in show and outward appearance. And they will sit before God's ministers, as his people sit before them; and they will hear his words too, but they will not do them; that is, will not come inwardly with their minds. "For with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart," or mind, "goeth after their covetousness." Now, all this is because they want an effectual sense of the misery of their state by nature; for not till they have that will they, in their mind, move after him. Therefore, thus it is said concerning the true comers, At

> "that day the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (Isaiah 27:13)

They are then, as you see, the outcasts, and those that are ready to perish, that, indeed, have their minds effectually moved to come to Jesus Christ. This sense of things was that which made the three thousand come, that made Saul come, that made the jailer come, and that, indeed, makes all others come, that come effectually (Acts 2:8, 18).

Of the true coming to Christ, the four lepers were a famous semblance, of whom you read, (2 Kings 7:3), etc. The famine in those days was sore in the land, there was no bread for the people; and as for that sustenance that was, which was asses' flesh and doves' dung, that was only in Samaria, and of these the lepers had no share, for they were thrust without the city. Well, now they sat in the gate of the city, and hunger was, as I may say, making his last meal of them; and being, therefore, half dead already, what do they think of doing? Why, first they display the dismal

colors of death before each other's faces, and then resolve what to do, saying, "If we say we will enter into the city, then famine is in the city, and we shall die there: if we sit still here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; if they kill us, we shall but die." Here, now, was necessity at work, and this necessity drove them to go thither for life, whither else they would never have gone for it. Thus it is with them that in truth come to Jesus Christ. Death is before them, they see it and feel it; he is feeding upon them, and will eat them quite up, if they come not to Jesus Christ; and therefore they come, even of necessity, being forced thereto by that sense they have of their being utterly and everlastingly undone, if they find not safety in him. These are they that will come. Indeed, these are they that are invited to come.

> "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Take two or three things to make this more plain; to wit, That coming to Christ floweth from a sound sense of the absolute need that a man hath of him, as afore.

1. "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble" (Jeremiah 31:9). Mind it; they come with weeping and supplication; they come with prayers and tears. Now prayers and tears are the effects of a right sense of the need of mercy. Thus a senseless sinner cannot come, he cannot pray, he cannot cry, he cannot come sensible of what he sees not, nor feels.

> "In those days, and in that time - the children of Israel shall come; they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" (Jeremiah 1:4, 5).

2. This coming to Christ, it is called a running to him, as flying to him; a flying to him from wrath to come. By all which terms is set forth the sense of the man that comes; to wit, That he is affected with the sense of his sin,

and the death due thereto; that he is sensible that the avenger of blood pursues him, and that, therefore, he is thus off, if he makes not speed to the Son of God for life (<400307>Matthew 3:7; <193909>Psalm 143:9). Flying is the last work of a man in danger; all that are in danger do not fly; no, not all that see themselves in danger; flying is the last work of a man in danger; all that hear of danger will not fly. Men will consider if there be no other way of escape before they fly. Therefore, as I said, flying is the last thing. When all refuge fails, and a man is made to see that there is nothing left him but sin, death, and damnation, unless he flies to Christ for life; then he flies, and not till then.

3. That the true coming is from a sense of an absolute need of Jesus Christ to save, etc., is evident by the outcry that is made by them to come, even as they are coming to him, “Lord, save me,” or I perish; “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” and the like (<401430>Matthew 14:30; <440237>Acts 2:37; <441630>Acts 16:30). This language doth sufficiently discover that the truly-coming souls are souls sensible of their need of salvation by Jesus Christ; and, moreover, that there is nothing else that can help them but Christ.

4. It is yet further evident by these few things that follow: It is said that such are “pricked in their heart,” that is, with the sentence of death by the law; and the least prick in the heart kills a man (<440237>Acts 2:37). Such are said, as I said before, to weep, to tremble, and to be astonished in themselves at the evident and unavoidable danger that attends them, unless they fly to Jesus Christ (<440916>Acts 9:16).

5. Coming to Christ is attended with an honest and sincere forsaking of all for him.

> “If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (<421426>Luke 14:26, 27).

By these and the like expressions elsewhere, Christ describeth the true comer, or the man that indeed is coming to him; he is one that casteth all behind his back; he leaveth all, he forsaketh all, he hateth all things that

would stand in his way to hinder his coming to Jesus Christ. There are a great many pretended comers to Jesus Christ in the world; and they are much like to the man you read of in (Matthew 21:30), that said to his father's bidding, "I go, Sir, and went not." I say, there are a great many such comers to Jesus Christ; they say, when Christ calls by his gospel, I come, Sir; but still they abide by their pleasures and carnal delights. They come not at all, only they give him a courtly compliment; but he takes notice of it, and will not let it pass for any more than a lie. He said, "I go, Sir, and went not;" he dissembled and lied. Take heed of this, you that flatter yourselves with your own deceivings. Words will not do with Jesus Christ. Coming is coming, and nothing else will go for coming with him.

[OBJECTIONS THAT USUALLY LIE IN THE WAY OF COMING TO CHRIST.]

Before I speak to the other head, I shall answer some objections that usually lie in the way of those that in truth are coming to Jesus Christ.

> **Objection 1.** Though I cannot deny but my mind runs after Christ, and that too as being moved thereto from a sight and consideration of my lost condition, for I see without him I perish; yet I fear my ends are not right in coming to him.

Quest. Why, what is thine end in coming to Christ?

Answer. My end is, that I might have life, and be saved by Jesus Christ.

This is the objection; well, let me tell thee, that to come to Christ for life, and to be saved, although at present thou hast no other end, is a lawful and good coming to Jesus Christ. This is evident, because Christ propoundeth life as the only argument to prevail with sinners to come to him, and so also blameth them because they come not to him for life.

> "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life"
> (John 5:40)

Besides, there are many other scriptures whereby he allureth sinners to come to him, in which he propoundeth nothing to them but their safety. As, "whosoever believeth in him should not perish;" he that believeth is "passed from death unto life." "He that believeth - shall be saved." "He

that believeth on him is not condemned." And believing and coming are all one. So that you see, to come to Christ for life, is a lawful coming and good. In that he believeth, that he alone hath made atonement for sin (Romans 2). And let me add over and above, that for a man to come to Christ for life, though he comes to him for nothing else but life, it is to give much honor to him.

1. He honoreth the word of Christ, and consenteth to the truth of it; and that in these two general heads.

(1.) He consenteth to the truth of all those sayings that testify that sin is most abominable in itself, dishonorable to God, and damnable to the soul of man; for thus saith the man that cometh to Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 44:4; Romans 2:23; Romans 6:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:12).

(2.) In that he believeth, as the word hath said, that there is in the world's best things, righteousness and all, nothing but death and damnation; for so also says the man that comes to Jesus Christ for life (Romans 7:24, 25; Romans 8:2, 3; 2 Corinthians 3:6-8).

2. He honoreth Christ's person, in that he believeth that there is life in him, and that he is able to save him from death, hell, the devil, and damnation; for unless a man believes this, he will not come to Christ for life (Hebrews 7:24, 25).

3. He honoreth him, in that he believeth that he is authorized of the Father to give life to those that come to him for it (John 5:11, 12; John 17:1-3).

4. He honoreth the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

(1.) In that he believeth that Christ hath more power to save from sin by the sacrifice that he hath offered for it, than hath all law, devils, death, or sin to condemn. He that believes not this, will not come to Jesus Christ for life (Acts 13:38; Hebrews 2:14, 15; Revelation 1:17, 18).

(2.) In that he believeth that Christ, according to his office, will be most faithful and merciful in the discharge of his office. This must be

included in the faith of him that comes for life to Jesus Christ (<62201>1 John 2:1-3; <58207>Hebrews 2:17, 18).

5. Further, He that cometh to Jesus Christ for life, taketh part with him against sin, and against the ragged and imperfect righteousness of the world; yea, and against false Christs, and damnable errors, that set themselves against the worthiness of his merits and sufficiency. This is evident, for that such a soul singleth Christ out from them all, as the only one that can save.

6. Therefore as Noah, at God's command, thou preparest this ark, for the saving of thyself, by which also thou condemnest the world, and art become heir of the righteousness which is by faith (<58107>Hebrews 11:7). Wherefore, coming sinner, be content; he that cometh to Jesus Christ, believeth too that he is willing to show mercy to, and have compassion upon him, though unworthy, that comes to him for life. And therefore thy soul lieth not only under a special invitation to come, but under a promise too of being accepted and forgiven (<40128>Matthew 11:28).

All these particular parts and qualities of faith are in that soul that comes to Jesus Christ for life, as is evident to any indifferent judgment. For, will he that believeth not the testimony of Christ concerning the baseness of sin, and the insufficiency of the righteousness of the world, come to Christ for life? No. He that believeth not this testimony of the word, comes not. He that believeth that there is life anywhere else, comes not. He that questions whether the Father hath given Christ power to forgive, comes not. He that thinketh that there is more in sin, in the law, in death, and the devil, to destroy, than there is in Christ to save, comes not. He also that questions his faithful management of his priesthood for the salvation of sinners, comes not.

Thou, then, that art indeed the coming sinner, believest all this. True, perhaps thou dost not believe with that full assurance, nor hast thou leisure to take notice of thy faith as to these distinct acts of it; but yet all this faith is in him coming to Christ for life. And the faith that thus worketh, is the faith of the best and purest kind; because this man comes alone as a sinner, and as seeing that life is, and is to be had only in Jesus Christ.

Before I conclude my answer to this objection, take into thy consideration these two things.

1st. [Consider] that the cities of refuge were erected for those that were dead in law, and that yet would live by grace; even for those that were to fly thither for life from the avenger of blood that pursueth after them. And it is worth your noting, that those that were upon their flight thither, are in a peculiar manner called the people of God: "Cast ye up, cast ye up," saith God;

> "prepare the way; take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people" (<2574>Isaiah 57:14)

This is meant of preparing the way to the city of refuge, that the slayers might escape thither; which flying slayers are here, by way of specialty, called the people of God; even those of them that escaped thither for life.

2ndly. [Consider] that of Ahab, when Benhadad sent to him for life, saying, "Thus saith thy servant Benhadad, I pray thee let me live." Though Benhadad had sought the crown, kingdom, yea, and also the life of Ahab, yet how effectually doth Benhadad prevail with him! Is Benhadad yet alive? saith Ahab; He is my brother; yea, go ye, bring him to me. So he made him ride in his chariot (<1200>1 Kings 20).

Coming sinner, what thinkest thou? If Jesus Christ had as little goodness in him as Ahab, he might grant an humble Benhadad life; thou neither beggest of him his crown and dignity; life, eternal life, will serve thy turn. How much more then shalt thou have it, since thou hast to deal with him who is goodness and mercy itself! yea, since thou art also called upon, yea, greatly encouraged by a promise of life, to come unto him for life! Read also these Scriptures, <0435>Numbers 35:11, 14, 15, <0620>Joshua 20:1-6, <5806>Hebrews 6:16-21.

> **Objection 2.** When I say I only seek myself, I mean I do not find that I do design God's glory in mine own salvation by Christ, and that makes me fear I do not come aright.

Answer. Where doth Christ Jesus require such a qualification of those that are coming to him for life? Come thou for life, and trouble not thy head with such objections against thyself, and let God and Christ alone to

glorify themselves in the salvation of such a worm as thou art. The Father saith to the Son, “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” God propoundeth life to sinners, as the argument to prevail with them to come to him for life; and Christ says plainly,

> “I am come that they might have life” (<430010>John 10:10)

He hath no need of thy designs, though thou hast need of his. Eternal life, pardon of sin, and deliverance from wrath to come, Christ propounds to thee, and these be the things that thou hast need of; besides, God will be gracious and merciful to worthless, undeserving wretches; come then as such an one, and lay no stumblingblocks in the way to him, but come to him for life, and live (<430534>John 5:34; <430010>John 10:10; <430336>John 3:36; <400121>Matthew 1:21; <200835>Proverbs 8:35, 36; <520110>1 Thessalonians 1:10; <431125>John 11:25, 26).

When the jailer said, “Sirs, What must I do to be saved?” Paul did not so much as once ask him, What is your end in this question? do you design the glory of God, in the salvation of your soul? He had more wit; he knew that such questions as these would have been but fools’ babbles about, instead of a sufficient salve [F55] “Which Cambell seeing, though he could not salve, to so weighty a question as this. Wherefore, since this poor wretch lacked salvation by Jesus Christ, I mean to be saved from hell and death, which he knew, now, was due to him for the sins that he had committed, Paul bids him, like a poor condemned sinner as he was, to proceed still in this his way of self-seeking, saying,

> “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (<441630>Acts 16:30-32)

I know that afterwards thou wilt desire to glorify Christ by walking in the way of his precepts; but at present thou wantest life; the avenger of blood is behind thee, and the devil like a roaring lion is behind thee; well, come now, and obtain life from these; and when thou hast obtained some comfortable persuasion that thou art made partaker of life by Christ, then, and not till then, thou wilt say,

> “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 6 who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; who

redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Psalm 103:1-4).

Objection 3. But I cannot believe that I come to Christ aright, because sometimes I am apt to question his very being and office to save.

Thus to do is horrible; but mayest thou not judge amiss in this matter?

How can I judge amiss, when I judge as I feel? Poor soul! Thou mayest judge amiss for all that. Why, saith the sinner, I think that these questionings come from my heart. Let me answer. That which comes from thy heart, comes from thy will and affections, from thy understanding, judgment, and conscience, for these must acquiesce in thy questioning, if thy questioning be with thy heart. And how sayest thou, for to name no more, dost thou with thy affection and conscience thus question? Answer. No, my conscience trembles when such thoughts come into my mind; and my affections are otherwise inclined.

Then I conclude, that these things are either suddenly injected by the devil, or else are the fruits of that body of sin and death that yet dwells within thee, or perhaps from both together.

If they come wholly from the devil, as they seem, because thy conscience and affections are against them, or if they come from that body of death that is in thee, and be not thou curious in inquiring from whether of them they come, the safest way is to lay enough at thy own door; nothing of this should hinder thy coming, nor make thee conclude thou comest not aright.[F57] And before I leave thee, let me a little query with thee about this matter.

1. Dost thou like these wicked blasphemies? Answer. No, no, their presence and working kills me.

2. Dost thou mourn for them, pray against them, and hate thyself because of them? Answer. Yes, yes; but that which afflicts me is, I do not prevail against them.

3. Dost thou sincerely choose, mightest thou have thy choice, that thy heart might be affected and taken with the things that are best, most heavenly, and holy? Answer. With all my heart, and death the next hour, if it were God's will, rather than thus to sin against him.

Well then, thy not liking of them, thy mourning for them, thy praying against them, and thy loathing thyself because of them, with thy sincere choosing of those thoughts for thy delectation that are heavenly and holy, clearly declares, that these things are not countenanced either with thy will, affections, understanding, judgment, or conscience; and so, that thy heart is not in them, but that rather they come immediately from the devil, or arise from the body of death that is in thy flesh, of which thou oughtest thus to say,

> "Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:17).

I will give thee a pertinent instance. In Deuteronomy 22, thou mayest read of a betrothed damsel, one betrothed to her beloved, one that had given him her heart and mouth, as thou hast given thyself to Christ; yet was she met with as she walked in the field, by one that forced her, because he was stronger than she. Well, what judgment now doth God, the righteous judge, pass upon the damsel for this? "The man only that lay with her," saith God,

> "shall die. But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death. For, as when a man riseth against his neighbor, and slayeth him, even so is this matter; for he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her" (Deuteronomy 22:25-27).

Thou art this damsel. The man that forced thee with these blasphemous thoughts, is the devil; and he lighteth upon thee in a fit place, even in the field, as thou art wandering after Jesus Christ; but thou criest out, and by thy cry did show, that thou abhorrest such wicked lewdness. Well, the Judge of all the earth will do right; he will not lay the sin at thy door, but at his that offered the violence. And for thy comfort take this into consideration, that he came to heal them "that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38).

> **Objection 4.** But, saith another, I am so heartless, so slow, and, as I think, so indifferent in my coming, that, to speak truth, I know not whether my kind of coming ought to be called a coming to Christ.

Answer. You know that I told you at first, that coming to Christ is a moving of the heart and affections towards him.

But, saith the soul, my dullness and indifferency in all holy duties, demonstrate my heartlessness in coming; and to come, and not with the heart, signifies nothing at all.

1. The moving of the heart after Christ is not to be discerned, at all times, by thy sensible affectionate performance of duties, but rather by those secret groanings and complaints which thy soul makes to God against that sloth that attends thee in duties.

2. But grant it to be even as thou sayest it is, that thou comest so slowly, etc., yet, since Christ bids them come that come not at all, surely they may be accepted that come, though attended with those infirmities which thou at present groanest under. He saith, "and him that cometh;" he saith not, If they come sensible; so fast; but, "and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." He saith also in [illegible] Proverbs 9, "As for him that wanteth understanding," that is, an heart (for oftentimes the understanding is taken for the heart), "come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

3. Thou mayest be vehement in thy spirit in coming to Jesus Christ, and yet be plagued with sensible sloth; so was the church when she cried, "Draw me, we will run after thee;" and Paul, when he said, "When I would do good, evil is present with me" ([illegible] Song of Solomon 14; [illegible] Romans 7; [illegible] Galatians 5:19). The works, strugglings, and oppositions of the flesh, are more manifest than are the works of the Spirit in our hearts, and so are sooner felt than they. What then? Let us not be discouraged at the sight and feeling of our own infirmities, but run the faster to Jesus Christ for salvation.

4. Get thy heart warmed with the sweet promise of Christ's acceptance of the coming sinner, and that will make thee make more haste unto him. Discouraging thoughts they are like unto cold weather, they benumb the senses, and make us go ungainly about our business; but the sweet and warm gleads [F58] of promise are like the comfortable beams of the sun, which liven and refresh. [F59] You see how little the bee and fly do play in

the air in winter; why, the cold hinders them from doing it; but when the wind and sun is warm, who so busy as they?

5. But again, he that comes to Christ, flies for his life. Now, there is no man that flies for his life, that thinks he speeds fast enough on his journey; no, could he, he would willingly take a mile at a step. O my sloth and heartlessness, sayest thou!

> "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest" (<19556>Psalm 55:6, 8).

Poor coming soul, thou art like the man that would ride full gallop, whose horse will hardly trot! Now, the desire of his mind is not to be judged of by the slow pace of the dull jade he rides on, but by the hitching, and kicking, and spurring, as he sits on his back. Thy flesh is like this dull jade; it will not gallop after Christ; it will be backward, though thy soul and heaven lie at stake. [F60] But be of good comfort, Christ judgeth not according to the fierceness of outward motion (<41017>Mark 10:17) but according to the sincerity of the heart and inward parts (<43047>John 1:47; <19506>Psalm 51:6; <40264>Matthew 26:41).

6. Ziba, in appearance, came to David much faster than did Mephibosheth; but yet his heart was not so upright in him to David as was his. It is true, Mephibosheth had a check from David; for, said he, "Why wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?" But when David came to remember that Mephibosheth was lame, for that was his plea — "thy servant is lame" (<10919>2 Samuel 19), he was content, and concluded, he would have come after him faster than he did; and Mephibosheth appealed to David, who was in those days as an angel of God, to know all things that are done in the earth, if he did not believe that the reason of his backwardness lay in his lameness, and not in his mind. Why, poor coming sinner, thou canst not come to Christ with that outward swiftness of a courier as many others do; but doth the reason of thy backwardness lie in thy mind and will, or in the sluggishness of the flesh? Canst thou say sincerely,

"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"
(<4064>Matthew 26:41)

Yea, canst thou appeal to the Lord Jesus, who knoweth perfectly the very inmost thought of thy heart, that this is true? Then take this for thy comfort, he hath said, "I will assemble her that halteth - I will make her that halted a remnant," (<3306>Micah 4:6), "and I will save her that halteth" (<3619>Zephaniah 3:19). What canst thou have more from the sweet lips of the Son of God? But,

7. I read of some that are to follow Christ in chains; I say, to come after him in chains. "Thus saith the Lord, The labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee: in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee: they shall make supplication unto thee, saying - Surely there is none else" to save (<2454>Isaiah 45:14). Surely they that come after Christ in chains, come to him in great difficulty, because their steps, by the chains, are straitened. And what chains are so heavy as those that discourage thee? Thy chain, which is made up of guilt and filth, is heavy; it is a wretched bond about thy neck, by which thy strength doth fail (<2501>Lamentations 1:14; <2501>Lamentations 3:18). But come, though thou comest in chains; it is glory to Christ that a sinner comes after him in chains. The chinking of thy chains, though troublesome to thee, are not, nor can be obstruction to thy salvation; it is Christ's work and glory to save thee from thy chains, to enlarge thy steps, and set thee at liberty. The blind man, though called, surely could not come apace to Jesus Christ, but Christ could stand still, and stay for him (<4109>Mark 10:49). True, "He rideth upon the wings of the wind;" but yet he is long-suffering, and his long-suffering is salvation to him that cometh to him (<6009>2 Peter 3:9).

8. Hadst thou seen those that came to the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, how slowly, how hobblingly, they came to him, by reason of their infirmities; and also how friendly, and kindly, and graciously, he received them, and gave them the desire of their hearts, thou wouldest not, as thou dost, make such objections against thyself, in thy coming to Jesus Christ.

Objection 5. But, says another, I fear I come too late; I doubt I have staid too long; I am afraid the door is shut.

Answer. Thou canst never come too late to Jesus Christ, if thou dost come. This is manifest by two instances.

1. By the man that came to him at the eleventh hour. This man was idle all the day long. He had a whole gospel day to come in, and he played it all away save only the last hour thereof. But at last, at the eleventh hour, he came, and goes into the vineyard to work with the rest of the laborers, that had borne the burden and heat of the day. Well, but how was he received by the lord of the vineyard? Why, when pay-day came, he had even as much as the rest; yea, had his money first. True, the others murmured at him; but what did the Lord Jesus answer them?

> "Is thine eye evil, because I am good? I will give unto this last, even as unto thee" (Matthew 20:14, 15).

2. The other instance is, the thief upon the cross. He came late also, even as at an hour before his death; yea, he stayed from Jesus Christ as long as he had liberty to be a thief, and longer too; for could he have deluded the judge, and by lying words have escaped his just condemnation, for ought I know, he had not come as yet to his Savior; but being convicted, and condemned to die, yea, fastened to the cross, that he might die like a rogue, as he was in his life; behold the Lord Jesus, when this wicked one, even now, desireth mercy at his hands, tells him, and that without the least reflection upon him, for his former misspent life,

> "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43)

Let no man turn this grace of God into wantonness. My design is now to encourage the coming soul.

> **Objection** But is not the door of mercy shut against some before they die?

Answer. Yea; and God forbids that prayers should be made to him for them (Jeremiah 6:16; Jude 1:22).

Question Then, why may not I doubt that I may be one of these?

Answer. By no means, if thou art coming to Jesus Christ; because when God shuts the door upon men, he gives them no heart to come to Jesus

Christ. “None come but those to whom it is given of the Father.” But thou comest, therefore it is given to thee of the Father.

Be sure, therefore, if the Father hath given thee an heart to come to Jesus Christ, the gate of mercy yet stands open to thee. For it stands not with the wisdom of God to give strength to come to the birth, and yet to shut up the womb, (Isaiah 66:9); to give grace to come to Jesus Christ, and yet shut up the door of his mercy upon thee. “Incline your ear,” saith he, “and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isaiah 55:3).

Objection But it is said, that some knocked when the door was shut.

Answer. Yes; but the texts in which these knockers are mentioned, are to be referred unto the day of judgment, and not to the coming of the sinner to Christ in this life. See the texts, Matthew 15:11, Luke 13:24, 25. These, therefore, concern thee nothing at all, that art coming to Jesus Christ, thou art coming NOW! “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Now God is upon the mercy-seat; now Christ Jesus sits by, continually pleading the victory of his blood for sinners; and now, even as long as this world lasts, this word of the text shall still be free, and fully fulfilled; “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Sinner, the greater sinner thou art, the greater need of mercy thou hast, and the more will Christ be glorified thereby. Come then, come and try; come, taste and see how good the Lord is to an undeserving sinner!

Objection 6. But, says another, I am fallen since I began to come to Christ; therefore I fear I did not come aright, and so consequently that Christ will not receive me.

Answer. Falls are dangerous, for they dishonor Christ, wound the conscience, and cause the enemies of God to speak reproachfully. But it is no good argument, I am fallen, therefore I was not coming aright to Jesus Christ. If David, and Solomon, and Peter, had thus objected against themselves, they had added to their griefs; and yet, at least they had as much cause as thou. A man whose steps are ordered by the Lord, and whose goings the Lord delights in, may yet be overtaken with a temptation

that may cause him to fall [F61] (Psalm 37:23, 24). Did not Aaron fall; yea, and Moses himself? What shall we say of Hezekiah and Jehosaphat? There are, therefore, falls and falls; falls pardonable and falls unpardonable. Falls unpardonable are falls against light, from the faith, to the despising of, and trampling upon Jesus Christ and his blessed undertakings (Hebrews 6:2-5; Hebrews 10:28, 29). Now, as for such, there remains no more sacrifice for sin. Indeed, they have no heart, no mind, no desire to come to Jesus Christ for life, therefore they must perish. Nay, says the Holy Ghost, "It is impossible that they should be renewed again unto repentance." Therefore these God had no compassion for, neither ought we; but for other falls though they be dreadful, and God will chastise his people for them, they do not prove thee a graceless man, one not coming to Jesus Christ for life.

It is said of the child in the gospel, that while

> "he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him"
> (Luke 9:42)

Dejected sinner, it is no wonder that thou hast caught a fall in coming to Jesus Christ. Is it not rather to be wondered at, that thou hast not caught before this a thousand times a thousand falls? considering,

1. What fools we are by nature.

2. What weaknesses are in us.

3. What mighty powers the fallen angels, our implacable enemies, are.

4. Considering also how often the coming man is benighted in his journey; and also what stumblingblocks do lie in his way.

5. Also his familiars, that were so before, now watch for his halting, and seek by what means they may to cause him to fall by the hand of their strong ones.

What then? Must we, because of these temptations, incline to fall? No. Must we not fear falls? Yes.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"
(1 Corinthians 10:12)

Yet let him not utterly be cast down; "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up those that are bowed down." Make not light of falls! Yet, hast thou fallen? "Ye have," said Samuel, "done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord," but serve him with a perfect heart, and turn not aside, "for the Lord will not forsake his people," and he counteth the coming sinner one of them,

"because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people"
(1 Samuel 12:20-22).

[WHAT FORCE THERE IS IN THE PROMISE TO MAKE THEM COME TO CHRIST.]

Second, "Shall come to me." Now we come to show WHAT FORCE THERE IS IN THIS PROMISE TO MAKE THEM COME TO HIM. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." I will speak to this promise, First, In general. Second, In particular.

[**First**], In general. This word SHALL is confined to these ALL that are given to Christ. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Hence I conclude,

1. That coming to Jesus Christ aright is an effect of their being, of God, given to Christ before. Mark, They shall come. Who? Those that are given. They come, then, because they were given, "thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Now, this is indeed a singular comfort to them that are coming in truth to Christ, to think that the reason why they come is, because they were given of the Father before to him. Thus, then, may the coming soul reason with himself as he comes. Am I coming, indeed, to Jesus Christ? This coming of mine is not to be attributed to me or my goodness, but to the grace and gift of God to Christ. God gave first my person to him, and, therefore, hath now given me a heart to come.

2. This word, shall come, maketh thy coming not only the fruit of the gift of the Father, but also of the purpose of the Son; for these words are a Divine purpose; they show us the heavenly determination of the Son. "The Father hath given them to me, and they shall; yea, they shall come to

me.” Christ is as full in his resolution to save those given to him as is the Father in giving of them. Christ prizeth the gift of his Father; he will lose nothing of it; he is resolved to save it every whit by his blood, and to raise it up again at the last day; and thus he fulfills his Father’s will, and accomplisheth his own desires (<4B639>John 6:39).

3. These words, shall come, make thy coming to be also the effect of an absolute promise; coming sinner, thou art concluded in a promise; thy coming is the fruit of the faithfulness of an absolute promise. It was this promise, by the virtue of which thou at first receivedst strength to come; and this is the promise, by the virtue of which thou shalt be effectually brought to him. It was said to Abraham, “At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.” This son was Isaiahac. Mark! “Sarah shall have a son;” there is the promise. And Sarah had a son; there was the fulfilling of the promise; and, therefore, was Isaiahac called the child of the promise (<01179>Genesis 17:19; <01810>Genesis 18:10; <5B909>Romans 9:9).

Sarah shall have a son. But how, if Sarah be past age? Why, still the promise continues to say, Sarah shall have a son. But how, if Sarah be barren? Why, still the promise says, Sarah shall have a son. But Abraham’s body is now dead? Why, the promise is still the same, Sarah shall have a son. Thus, you see what virtue there is in an absolute promise; it carrieth enough in its own bowels to accomplish the thing promised, whether there be means or no in us to effect it. Wherefore, this promise in the text, being an absolute promise, by virtue of it, not by virtue of ourselves, or by our own inducements, do we come to Jesus Christ: for so are the words of the text: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.”

Therefore is every sincere comer to Jesus Christ called also a child of the promise.

> “Now we, brethren, as Isaiahac was, are the children of promise,” (<4B428>Galatians 4:28)

that is, we are the children that God hath promised to Jesus Christ, and given to him; yea, the children that Jesus Christ hath promised shall come to him. “All that the Father giveth me shall come.”

4. This word, shall come, engageth Christ to communicate all manner of grace to those thus given him to make them effectually to come to him.

"They shall come;" that is, not if they will, but if grace, all grace, if power, wisdom, a new heart, and the Holy Spirit, and all joining together, can make them come. I say, this word, shall come, being absolute, hath no dependence upon our own will, or power, or goodness; but it engageth for us even God himself, Christ himself, the Spirit himself. When God had made that absolute promise to Abraham, that Sarah "should have a son," Abraham did not at all look at any qualification in himself, because the promise looked at none; but as God had, by the promise, absolutely promised him a son; so he considered now not his own body now dead, nor yet the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

> "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20, 21)

He had promised, and had promised absolutely, Sarah shall have a son. Therefore, Abraham looks that he, to wit, God, must fulfil the condition of it. Neither is this expectation of Abraham disapproved by the Holy Ghost, but accounted good and laudable; it being that by which he gave glory to God. The Father, also, hath given to Christ a certain number of souls for him to save; and he himself hath said, "They shall come to him." Let the church of God then live in a joyful expectation of the utmost accomplishment of this promise; for assuredly it shall be fulfilled, and not one thousandth part of a tittle thereof shall fail. "They SHALL come to me."

> [**Second**, In particular.] And now, before I go any further, I will more particularly inquire into the nature of an absolute promise.

1. We call that an absolute promise that is made without any condition; or more fully thus: That is an absolute promise of God, or of Christ, which maketh over to this or that man any saving, spiritual blessing, without a condition to be done on our part for the obtaining thereof. And this we have in hand is such an one. Let the best Master of Arts on earth show me, if he can, any condition in this text depending upon any qualification in us, which is not by the same promise concluded, shall be by the Lord Jesus effected in us.

2. An absolute promise therefore is, as we say, without if or and; that is, it requireth nothing of us, that itself might be accomplished. It saith not, They shall, if they will; but they shall: not, they shall, if they use the means; but, they shall. You may say, that a will and the use of the means is supposed, though not expressed. But I answer, No, by no means; that is, as a condition of this promise. If they be at all included in the promise, they are included there as the fruit of the absolute promise, not as if it expected the qualification to arise from us.

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"
(Psalm 110:3)

That is another absolute promise. But doth that promise suppose a willingness in us, as a condition of God's making us willing? They shall be willing, if they are willing; or, they shall be willing, if they will be willing. This is ridiculous; there is nothing of this supposed. The promise is absolute as to us; all that it engageth for its own accomplishment is, the mighty power of Christ and his faithfulness to accomplish.

3. The difference, therefore, betwixt the absolute and conditional promise is this:

(1.) They differ in their terms. The absolute promises say, I will, and you shall: the other, I will, if you will; or, Do this, and thou shalt live (Jeremiah 4:1; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ezekiel 18:30-32; Ezekiel 36:24-34; Hebrews 8:7-13; Matthew 19:21).

(2.) They differ in their way of communicating of good things to men; the absolute ones communicate things freely, only of grace; the other, if there be that qualification in us, that the promise calls for, not else.

(3.) The absolute promises therefore engage God, the other engage us: I mean, God only, us only.

(4.) Absolute promises must be fulfilled; conditional may, or may not be fulfilled. The absolute ones must be fulfilled, because of the faithfulness of God; the other may not, because of the unfaithfulness of men.

(5.) Absolute promises have therefore a sufficiency in themselves to bring about their own fulfilling; the conditional have not so. The

absolute promise is therefore a big-bellied promise, because it hath in itself a fullness of all desired things for us; and will, when the time of that promise is come, yield to us mortals that which will verily save us; yea, and make us capable of answering of the demands of the promise that is conditional.

4. Wherefore, though there be a real, yea, an eternal difference, in these things, with others, betwixt the conditional and absolute promise; yet again, in other respects, there is a blessed harmony betwixt them; as may be seen in these particulars. The conditional promise calls for repentance, the absolute promise gives it (<44531>Acts 5:31). The conditional promise calls for faith, the absolute promise gives it (<36312>Zephaniah 3:12; <45512>Romans 15:12). The conditional promise calls for a new heart, the absolute promise gives it (<26625>Ezekiel 36:25, 26). The conditional promise calleth for holy obedience, the absolute promise giveth it, or causeth it (<26627>Ezekiel 36:27).

5. And as they harmoniously agree in this, so again the conditional promise blesseth the man, who by the absolute promise is endued with its fruit. As, for instance, the absolute promise maketh men upright; and then the conditional follows, saying,

> "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord" (<19901>Psalm 119:1)

The absolute promise giveth to this man the fear of the Lord; and then the conditional followeth, saying, "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord" (<19801>Psalm 128:1). The absolute promise giveth faith, and then this conditional follows, saying, "Blessed is she that believed" (<36312>Zephaniah 3:12; <42045>Luke 1:45). The absolute promise brings free forgiveness of sins; and then says the condition,

> "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (<45407>Romans 4:7)

The absolute promise says, that God's elect shall hold out to the end; then the conditional follows with his blessings, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (<60104>1 Peter 1:4-6; <40413>Matthew 24:13).

Thus do the promises gloriously serve one another and us, in this their harmonious agreement.

Now, the promise under consideration is an absolute promise. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.”

This promise therefore is, as is said, a big-bellied promise, and hath in itself all those things to bestow upon us that the conditional calleth for at our hands. They shall come! Shall they come? Yes, they shall come. But how, if they want those things, those graces, power, and heart, without which they cannot come? Why, Shall-come answereth all this, and all things else that may in this manner be objected. And here I will take the liberty to amplify things.

[Objections to the absoluteness of this promise (the force of SHALL-COME) answered.]

Objection 1. But they are dead, dead in trespasses and sins, how shall they then come?

Answer. Why, Shall-come can raise them from this death. “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” Thus, therefore, is this impediment by Shall-come removed out of the way. They shall heal, they shall live.

Objection 2. But they are Satan’s captives; he takes them captive at his will, and he is stronger than they: how then can they come?

Answer. Why, Shall-come hath also provided an help for this. Satan had bound that daughter of Abraham so, that she could by no means lift up herself; but yet Shall-come set her free both in body and soul. Christ will have them turned from the power of Satan to God. But what! Must it be, if they turn themselves, or do something to merit of him to turn them? No, he will do it freely, of his own good will. Alas! Man, whose soul is possessed by the devil, is turned whithersoever that governor listeth, is taken captive by him, notwithstanding its natural powers, at his will; but what will he do? Will he hold him when Shall-come puts forth itself, will he then let [F62] him, for coming to Jesus Christ? No, that cannot be! His power is but the power of a fallen angel, but Shall-come is the Word of God. Therefore Shall-come must be fulfilled; “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

There were seven devils in Mary Magdalene, too many for her to get from under the power of; but when the time was come that Shall-come was to be fulfilled upon her, they give place, fly from her, and she comes indeed to Jesus Christ, according as it is written, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.”

The man that was possessed with a legion, (Mark 5), was too much by them captivated for him by human force to come; yea, had he had, to boot, all the men under heaven to help him, had he that said, He shall come, withheld his mighty power: but when this promise was to be fulfilled upon him, then he comes; nor could all their power hinder his coming. It was also this Shall-come that preserved him from death; when by these evil spirits he was hurled hither and thither; and it was by the virtue of Shall-come that at last he was set at liberty from them, and enabled indeed to come to Christ. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.”

Objection 3. They shall, you say; but how if they will not; and, if so, then what can Shall-come do?

Answer. True, there are some men say,

“We are lords; we will come no more unto thee”
(Jeremiah 2:31)

But as God says in another case, if they are concerned in Shall-come to me, they

“shall know whose words shall stand, mine or theirs”
(Jeremiah 41:28)

Here, then, is the case; we must now see who will be the liar, he that saith, I will not; or he that saith, He shall come to me. You shall come, says God; I will not come, saith the sinner. Now, as sure as he is concerned in this Shall-come, God will make that man eat his own words; for I will not, is the unadvised conclusion of a crazy-headed sinner; but Shall-come was spoken by him that is of power to perform his word. “Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,” said the Father. But he answered, and said, I will not come. What now? will he be able to stand to his refusal? will he pursue his desperate denial? No, “he afterwards repented and went.” But how came he by that repentance? Why, it was wrapped up for him in the absolute

promise; and therefore, notwithstanding he said, “I will not, he afterwards repented and went.” By this parable Jesus Christ sets forth the obstinacy of the sinners of the world, as touching their coming to him; they will not come, though threatened: yea, though life be offered them upon condition of coming.

But now, when Shall-come, the absolute promise of God, comes to be fulfilled upon them, then they come; because by that promise a cure is provided against the rebellion of their will.

> “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power”
> (Psalm 110:3).

Thy people, what people? Why, the people that thy Father hath given thee. The obstinacy and plague that is in the will of that people, shall be taken away; and they shall be made willing; Shall-come will make them willing to come to thee.

He that had seen Paul in the midst of his outrages against Christ, his gospel, and people, would hardly have thought that he would ever have been a follower of Jesus Christ, especially since he went not against his conscience in his persecuting of them. He thought verily that he ought to do what he did. But we may see what Shall-come can do, when it comes to be fulfilled upon the soul of a rebellious sinner: he was a chosen vessel, given by the Father to the Son; and now the time being come that Shall-come was to take him in hand, behold, he is over-mastered, astonished, and with trembling and reverence, in a moment becomes willing to be obedient to the heavenly call (Acts 9).

And were not they far gone, that you read of, (Acts 2) who had their hands and hearts in the murder of the Son of God; and to show their resolvedness never to repent of that horrid fact, said, “His blood be on us and on our children?” But must their obstinacy rule? Must they be bound to their own ruin, by the rebellion of their stubborn wills? No, not those of these the Father gave to Christ; wherefore, at the times appointed, Shall-come breaks in among them; the absolute promise takes them in hand; and then they come indeed, crying out to Peter, and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” No stubbornness of man’s will can stand, when God hath absolutely said the contrary; Shall-come can make

them come “as doves to their windows,” that had afore resolved never to come to him.

The Lord spake unto Manasseh, and to his people, by the prophets, but would he hear? No, he would not. But shall Manasseh come off thus? No, he shall not. Therefore, he being also one of those whom the Father had given to the Son, and so falling within the bounds and reach of Shall-come, at last Shall-come takes him in hand, and then he comes indeed. He comes bowing and bending; he humbles himself greatly, and made supplication to the Lord, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and had mercy upon him (<14:10 2 Chronicles 30:10).

The thief upon the cross, at first, did rail with his fellow upon Jesus Christ; but he was one that the Father had given to him, and, therefore, Shall-come must handle him and his rebellious will. And behold, so soon as he is dealt withal, by virtue of that absolute promise, how soon he buckleth, leaves his railing, falls to supplicating of the Son of God for mercy; “Lord,” saith he, “Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (<40:44 Matthew 27:44; <42:40 Luke 23:40-42).

> **Objection 4.** They shall come, say you, but how if they be blind, and see not the way? For some are kept off from Christ, not only by the obstinacy of their will, but by the blindness of their mind. Now, if they be blind, how shall they come?

Answer. The question is not, Are they blind? But, Are they within the reach and power of Shall-come? If so, that Christ that said, they shall come, will find them eyes, or a guide or both, to bring them to himself. “Must is for the king.” If they shall come, they shall come. No impediment shall hinder.

The Thessalonians’ darkness did not hinder them from being the children of light; “I am come,” said Christ, “that they which see not might see.” And if he saith, See, ye “blind that have eyes,” who shall hinder it? (<49:58 Ephesians 5:8; <49:39 John 9:39; <23:18 Isaiah 29:18; <23:08 Isaiah 43:8).

This promise, therefore, is, as I said, a big-bellied promise, having in the bowels of it, all things that shall occur to the complete fulfilling of itself. They shall come. But it is objected, that they are blind. Well, Shall-come is still the same, and continueth to say, “They shall come to me.” Therefore

he saith again, “I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them” (<23>Isaiah 42:16).

Mark, I will bring them, though they be blind; I will bring them by a way they know not; I will — I will; and therefore “they shall come to me.”

> **Objection 5.** But how, if they have exceeded many in sin, and so made themselves far more abominable? They are the ringleading sinners in the county, the town, or family.

Answer. What then? Shall that hinder the execution of Shall-come? It is not transgressions, nor sins, nor all their transgressions in all their sins, if they by the Father are given to Christ to save them, that shall hinder this promise, that it should not be fulfilled upon them. “In those days, and in that time,” saith the Lord, “the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found” (<24>Jeremiah 50:20). Not that they had none, for they abounded in transgression, (<14>2 Chronicles 33:9; <26>Ezekiel 16:48), but God would pardon, cover, hide, and put them away, by virtue of his absolute promise, by which they are given to Christ to save them. “And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall bear all the good that I do unto them; and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it” (<24>Jeremiah 33:8, 9).

> **Objection 6.** But how, if they have not faith and repentance? How shall they come then?

Answer. Why, he that saith, They shall come, shall he not make it good? If they shall come, they shall come; and he that hath said, they shall come, if faith and repentance be the way to come, as indeed they are, then faith and repentance shall be given to them! for Shall-come must be fulfilled on them.

1. Faith shall be given them. “I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.”

"There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust" (Zephaniah 3:12; Romans 15:12).

2. They shall have repentance. He is exalted to give repentance. "They shall come weeping, and seeking the Lord their God." And again, "With weeping and supplication will I lead them" (Acts 5:31; Jeremiah 31:9).

I told you before, that an absolute promise hath all conditional ones in the belly of it, and also provision to answer all those qualifications, that they propound to him that seeketh for their benefit. And it must be so; for if Shall-come be an absolute promise, as indeed it is, then it must be fulfilled upon every of those concerned therein. I say, it must be fulfilled, if God can by grace, and his absolute will, fulfil it. Besides, since coming and believing is all one, according to John 6:35, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," then, when he saith they shall come, it is as much as to say, they shall believe, and consequently repent, to the saving of the soul.

So then the present want of faith and repentance cannot make this promise of God of none effect; because that this promise hath in it to give what others call for and expect. I will give them an heart, I will give them my Spirit, I will give them repentance, I will give them faith. Mark these words: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." But how came he to be a "new creature," since none can create but God? Why, God indeed doth make them "new creatures." "Behold," saith he, "I make all things new." And hence it follows, even after he had said they are "new creatures," "and all things are of God;" that is, all this new creation standeth in the several operations, and special workings of the Spirit of grace, who is God (2 Corinthians 5:17, 18).

> **Objection 7.** But how shall they escape all those dangerous and damnable opinions, that, like rocks and quicksands, are in the way in which they are going?

Answer. Indeed this age is an age of errors, if ever there was an age of errors in the world; but yet the gift of the Father, laid claim to by the Son in the text, must needs escape them, and in conclusion come to him. There

are a company of Shall-comes in the Bible that doth secure them; not but that they may be assaulted by them; yea, and also for the time entangled and detained by them from the Bishop of their souls, but these Shall-comes will break those chains and fetters, that those given to Christ are entangled in, and they shall come, because he hath said they shall come to him.

Indeed, errors are like that whore of whom you read in the Proverbs, that sitteth in her seat in the high places of the city,

> "to call passengers who go right on their ways"
> (Proverbs 9:13-16)

But the persons, as I said, that by the Father are given to the Son to save them, are, at one time or other, secured by "shall come to me."

And therefore of such it is said, God will guide them with his eye, with his counsels, by his Spirit, and that in the way of peace; by the springs of water, and into all truth (Psalm 32:8; Psalm 73:24; John 16:13; Luke 1:79; Isaiah 49:10). So then he that hath such a guide, and all that the Father giveth to Christ shall have it, he shall escape those dangers, he shall not err in the way; yea, though he be a fool, he shall not err therein, (Isaiah 35:8), for of every such an one it is said, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).

There were thieves and robbers before Christ's coming, as there are also now; but, said he, "The sheep did not hear them." And why did they not hear them, but because they were under the power of Shall-come, that absolute promise, that had that grace in itself to bestow upon them, as could make them able rightly to distinguish of voices, "My sheep hear my voice." But how came they to hear it? Why, to them it is given to know and to hear, and that distinguishingly (John 10:8, 16; John 5:25; Ephesians 5:14).

Further, The very plain sentence of the text makes provision against all these things; for, saith it, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" that is, shall not be stopped, or be allured to take up anywhere short of ME, nor shall they turn aside, to abide with any besides ME.

[IMPORT OF THE WORDS TO ME.]

“Shall come TO ME.” — To me. By these words there is further insinuated, though not expressed, a double cause of their coming to him.

First. There is in Christ a fullness of all-sufficiency of that, even of all that which is needful to make us happy.

Second. Those that indeed come to him, do therefore come to him that they may receive it at his hand.

First. For the first of these, there is in Christ a fullness of all-sufficiency of all that, even of all that which is needful to make us happy. Hence it is said,

> “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell”
> (Colossians 1:19)

And again,

> “Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace”
> (John 1:16)

It is also said of him, that his riches are unsearchable — “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8). Hear what he saith of himself, “Riches and honor are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance. And I will fill their treasures” (Proverbs 8:18-21).

This in general. But, more particularly,

1. There is that light in Christ, that is sufficient to lead them out of, and from all that darkness, in the midst of which all others, but them that come to him, stumble, and fall and perish: “I am the light of the world,” saith he, “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Man by nature is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knows not whither he goes, for darkness hath blinded his eyes; neither can anything but Jesus Christ lead men out of this darkness. Natural conscience cannot do it; the ten commandments, though in the heart of man, cannot do it. This prerogative belongs only to Jesus Christ.

2. There is that life in Christ, that is to be found nowhere else (<8054 John 5:40). Life, as a principle in the soul, by which it shall be acted and enabled to do that which through him is pleasing to God. “He that believeth in,” or cometh to, “me,” saith he, as the Scripture hath said, “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (<8073 John 7:38). Without this life a man is dead, whether he be bad, or whether he be good; that is, good in his own, and other men’s esteem. There is no true and eternal life but what is in the ME that speaketh in the text.

There is also life for those that come to him, to be had by faith in his flesh and blood.

“He that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (<8057 John 6:57)

And this is a life against that death that comes by the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law, under which all men are, and for ever must be, unless they eat the ME that speaks in the text. “Whoso findeth ME,” saith he, “findeth life;” deliverance from that everlasting death and destruction, that, without me, he shall be devoured by (<2035 Proverbs 8:35). Nothing is more desirable than life, to him that hath in himself the sentence of condemnation; and here only is life to be found. This life, to wit, eternal life, this life is in his Son; that is, in him that saith in the text,

“All that the Father hath given me shall come to me”
(<6510 1 John 5:10).

3. The person speaking in the text, is he alone by whom poor sinners have admittance to, and acceptance with the Father, because of the glory of his righteousness, by and in which he presenteth them amiable and spotless in his sight; neither is there any way besides him so to come to the Father: “I am the way,” says he, “and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me” (<8146 John 14:6). All other ways to God are dead and damnable; the destroying cherubim stand with flaming swords, turning every way to keep all others from his presence (<0324 Genesis 3:24). I say, all others but them that come by him. “I am the door; by me,” saith he, “if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (<8109 John 10:9).

The person speaking in the text is HE, and only HE, that can give stable and everlasting peace; therefore, saith he, “My peace I give unto you.” My peace, which is a peace with God, peace of conscience, and that of an

everlasting duration. My peace, peace that cannot be matched, “not as the world giveth, give I unto you;” for the world’s peace is but carnal and transitory, but mine is Divine and eternal. Hence it is called the peace of God, and that passeth all understanding.

4. The person speaking in the text hath enough of all things truly spiritually good, to satisfy the desires of every longing soul. “Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” And to him that is athirst, “I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely” (<4807>John 7:37, <6206>Revelation 21:6).

5. With the person speaking in the text is power to perfect and defend, and deliver those that come to him for safe-guard. “All power,” saith he, “is given unto me in heaven and earth” (<4018>Matthew 28:18).

Thus might I multiply instances in this nature in abundance. But,

Second. They that in truth do come to him, do therefore come to him that they might receive it at his hand. They come for light, they come for life, they come for reconciliation with God: they also come for peace, they come that their soul may be satisfied with spiritual good, and that they may be protected by him against all spiritual and eternal damnation; and he alone is able to give them all this, to the filling of their joy to the full, as they also find when they come to him. This is evident,

1. From the plain declaration of those that already are come to him.

> “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (<4501>Romans 5:1, 2).

2. It is evident also, in that while they keep their eyes upon him, they never desire to change him for another, or to add to themselves some other thing, together with him, to make up their spiritual joy. “God forbid,” saith Paul, “that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,

but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:8, 9).

3. It is evident also, by their earnest desires that others might be made partakers of their blessedness. "Brethren," said Paul, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." That is, that way that he expected to be saved himself. As he saith also to the Galatians, "Brethren," saith he, "I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are;" that is, I am a sinner as you are. Now, I beseech you, seek for life, as I am seeking of it; as who should say, For there is a sufficiency in the Lord Jesus both for me and you.

4. It is evident also, by the triumph that such men make over all their enemies, both bodily and ghostly: "Now thanks be unto God," said Paul, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." And, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ" our Lord? and again, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:35; 1 Corinthians 15:55, 56).

5. It is evident also, for that they are made by the glory of that which they have found in him, to suffer and endure what the devil and hell itself hath or could invent, as a means to separate them from him. Again, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

"Shall come TO ME." Oh! the heart-attracting glory that is in Jesus Christ, when he is discovered, to draw those to him that are given to him of the Father; therefore those that came of old, rendered this as the cause of their coming to him:

"And we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14)

And the reason why others come not, but perish in their sins, is for want of a sight of his glory:

> "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4).

There is therefore heart-pulling glory in Jesus Christ, which, when discovered, draws the man to him; wherefore by shall come to me, Christ may mean, when his glory is discovered, then they must come, then they shall come to me. Therefore, as the true comers come with weeping and relenting, as being sensible of their own vileness, so again it is said, that "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." That is, at the sight of the glory of that grace that shows itself to them now in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the hopes that they now have of being with him in the heavenly tabernacles. Therefore it saith again, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace" (Isaiah 35:10; Isaiah 51:11; Psalm 45:15). There is therefore heart-attracting glory in the Lord Jesus Christ, which, when discovered, subjects the heart to the Word, and makes us come to him.

It is said of Abraham, that when he dwelt in Mesopotamia, "the God of glory appeared unto him," saying, "Get thee out of thy country." And what then? Why, away he went from his house and friends, and all the world could not stay him. "Now," as the Psalmist says, "Who is this King of glory?" he answers, "The Lord, mighty in battle" (Psalm 24:8). And who was that, but he that "spoiled principalities and powers," when he did hang upon the tree, triumphing over them thereon? And who was that but Jesus Christ, even the person speaking in the text? Therefore he said of Abraham, "He saw his day. Yea," saith he to the Jews, "your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad" (Colossians 2:15; James 2:23; John 8:56).

Indeed, the carnal man says, at least in his heart,

> "There is no form or comeliness in Christ; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him," (Isaiah 53:2)

but he lies. This he speaks, as having never seen him. But they that stand in his house, and look upon him through the glass of his Word, by the help of his Holy Spirit, they will tell you other things. "But we all," say they, "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). They see glory in his person, glory in his undertakings, glory in the merit of his blood, and glory in the perfection of his righteousness; yea, heart-affecting, heart-sweetening, and heart-changing glory!

Indeed, his glory is veiled, and cannot be seen but as discovered by the Father (Matthew 11:27). It is veiled with flesh, with meanness of descent from the flesh, and with that ignominy and shame that attended him in the flesh; but they that can, in God's light, see through these things, they shall see glory in him; yea, such glory as will draw and pull their hearts unto him.

Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter; and for aught I know, had been king at last, had he now conformed to the present vanities that were there at court; but he could not, he would not do it. Why? What was the matter? Why! he saw more in the worst of Christ (bear with the expression), than he saw in the best of all the treasures of the land of Egypt. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." But what emboldened him thus to do? Why, "he endured;" for he had a sight of the person speaking in the text. "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." But I say, would a sight of Jesus have thus taken away Moses' heart from a crown, and a kingdom, etc., had he not by that sight seen more in him than was to be seen in them? (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Therefore, when he saith, shall come to me, he means, they shall have a discovery of the glory of the grace that is in him; and the beauty and glory

of that is of such virtue, that it constraineth, and forceth, with a blessed violency, the hearts of those that are given to him.

Moses, of whom we spake before, was no child when he was thus taken with the beauteous glory of his Lord. He was forty years old, and so consequently was able, being a man of that wisdom and opportunity as he was, to make the best judgment of the things, and of the goodness of them that was before him in the land of Egypt. But he, even he it was, that set that low esteem upon the glory of Egypt, as to count it not worth the meddling with, when he had a sight of this Lord Jesus Christ. This wicked world thinks, that the fancies of a heaven, and a happiness hereafter, may serve well enough to take the heart of such, as either have not the world's good things to delight in; or that are fools, and know not how to delight themselves therein. But let them know again, that we have had men of all ranks and qualities, that have been taken with the glory of our Lord Jesus, and have left all to follow him. As Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaiahac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon; and who not, that had either wit or grace, to savor heavenly things? Indeed none can stand off from him, nor any longer hold out against him to whom he reveals the glory of his grace.

[THE PROMISE TO THOSE COMING TO CHRIST.]

"AND HIM THAT COMETH TO ME I will in no wise cast out."

By these words our Lord Jesus doth set forth yet more amply the great goodness of his nature towards the coming sinner. Before, he said, They shall come; and here he declareth, That with heart and affections he will receive them. But, by the way, let me speak one word or two to the seeming conditionality of this promise with which now I have to do. "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Where it is evident, may some say, that Christ's receiving us to mercy depends upon our coming, and so our salvation by Christ is conditional. If we come, we shall be received; if not, we shall not; for that is fully intimated by the words. The promise of reception is only to him that cometh. "And him that cometh." I answer, that the coming in these words mentioned, as a condition of being received to life, is that which is promised, yea, concluded to be effected in us by the promise going before. In those latter words, coming to Christ is

implicitly required of us; and in the words before, that grace that can make us come is positively promised to us. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” thence. We come to Christ, because it is said, We shall come; because it is given to us to come. So that the condition which is expressed by Christ in these latter words is absolutely promised in the words before. And, indeed, the coming here intended is nothing else but the effect of “shall come to me. They shall come, and I will not cast them out.”

“AND HIM THAT COMETH.”

He saith not, and him that is come, but him that cometh. To speak to these words,

First, In general.

Second, More particularly.

[**First**.] In general. They suggest unto us these four things: —

1. That Jesus Christ doth build upon it, that since the Father gave his people to him, they shall be enabled to come unto him. “And him that cometh.” As who should say, I know that since they are given to me, they shall be enabled to come unto me. He saith not, if they come, or I suppose they will come; but, “and him that cometh.” By these words, therefore, he shows us that he addresseth himself to the receiving of them whom the Father gave to him to save them. I say, he addresseth himself, or prepareth himself to receive them. By which, as I said, he concludeth or buildeth upon it, that they shall indeed come to him. He looketh that the Father should bring them into his bosom, and so stands ready to embrace them.

2. Christ also suggesteth by these words, that he very well knoweth who are given to him; not by their coming to him, but by their being given to him. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh,” etc. This him he knoweth to be one of them that the Father hath given him; and, therefore, he received him, even because the Father hath given him to him (<3001>John 10). “I know my sheep,” saith he. Not only those that already have knowledge of him, but those, too, that yet are

ignorant of him. “Other sheep I have,” said he, “which are not of this fold,” (<43 10 16>John 10:16); not of the Jewish church, but those that lie in their sins, even the rude and barbarous Gentiles. Therefore, when Paul was afraid to stay at Corinth, from a supposition that some mischief might befall him there; “Be not afraid,” said the Lord Jesus to him, “but speak, and hold not thy peace — for I have much people in this city” (<44 18 9>Acts 18:9, 10). The people that the Lord here speaks of were not at this time accounted his, by reason of a work of conversion that already had passed upon them, but by virtue of the gift of the Father; for he had given them unto him. Therefore was Paul to stay here, to speak the word of the Lord to them, that, by his speaking, the Holy Ghost might effectually work over their souls, to the causing them to come to him, who was also ready, with heart and soul, to receive them.

3. Christ, by these words, also suggesteth, that no more come unto him than, indeed, are given him of the Father. For the him in this place is one of the all that by Christ was mentioned before. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;” and every him of that all, “I will in no wise cast out.” This the apostle insinuateth, where he saith,

> “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (<49 4 11>Ephesians 4:11-13).

Mark, as in the text, so here he speaketh of all. “Until we all come.” We all! all who? Doubtless, “All that the Father giveth to Christ.” This is further insinuated, because he called this ALL the body of Christ; the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. By which he means the universal number given; to wit, the true elect church, which is said to be his body and fullness (<49 1 22>Ephesians 1:22, 23).

4. Christ Jesus, by these words, further suggesteth, that he is well content with this gift of the Father to him. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” I will heartily, willingly, and with great content of mind, receive him.

They show us, also, that Christ's love in receiving is as large as his Father's love in giving, and no larger. Hence, he thanks him for his gift, and also thanks him for hiding of him and his things from the rest of the wicked (<4011>Matthew 11:25; <4210>Luke 10:21). But,

Secondly, and more particularly, "And HIM that cometh."

[IMPORT OF THE WORD HIM.]

"And him." This word him; by it Christ looketh back to the gift of the Father; not only in the lump and whole of the gift, but to the every him of that lump. As who should say, I do not only accept of the gift of my Father in the general, but have a special regard to every of them in particular; and will secure not only some, or the greatest part, but every him, every dust. Not a hoof of all shall be lost or left behind. And, indeed, in this he consenteth to his Father's will, which is that of all that he hath given him, he should lose nothing (<4639>John 6:39).

"And him." Christ Jesus, also, by his thus dividing the gift of his Father into hims, and by his speaking of them in the singular number, shows what a particular work shall be wrought in each one, at the time appointed of the Father. "And it shall come to pass in that day," saith the prophet, "that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." Here are the hims, one by one, to be gathered to him by the Father (<2327>Isaiah 27:12).

He shows also hereby that no lineage, kindred, or relation, can at all be profited by any outward or carnal union with the person that the Father hath given to Christ. It is only him, the given HIM, the coming him, that he intends absolutely to secure. Men make a great ado with the children of believers; and oh the children of believers! [F63] But if the child of the believer is not the him concerned in this absolute promise, it is not these men's great cry, nor yet what the parent or child can do, that can interest him in this promise of the Lord Christ, this absolute promise.

AND HIM. There are divers sorts of persons that the Father hath given to Jesus Christ; they are not all of one rank, of one quality; some are high, some are low; some are wise, some fools; some are more civil, and

complying with the law; some more profane, and averse to him and his gospel. Now, since those that are given to him are, in some sense, so diverse; and again, since he yet saith, “And him that cometh,” etc., he, by that, doth give us to understand that he is not, as men, for picking and choosing, to take a best and leave a worst, but he is for him that the Father hath given him, and that cometh to him. “He shall not alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good,” (<3027>Leviticus 27:10); but will take him as he is, and will save his soul.

There is many a sad wretch given by the Father to Jesus Christ; but not one of them all is despised or slighted by him. It is said of those that the Father hath given to Christ that they have done worse than the heathen; that they were murderers, thieves, drunkards, unclean persons, and what not; but he has received them, washed them, and saved them. A fit emblem of this sort is that wretched instance mentioned in the 16th of Ezekiel, that was cast out in a stinking condition, to the loathing of its person, in the days that it was born; a creature in such a wretched condition, that no eye pitied, to do any of the things there mentioned unto it, or to have compassion upon it; no eye but his that speaketh in the text.

AND HIM. Let him be as red as blood, let him be as red as crimson. Some men are blood-red sinners, crimson-sinners, sinners of a double die; dipped and dipped again, before they come to Jesus Christ. Art thou that readest these lines such an one? Speak out, man! Art thou such an one? and art thou now coming to Jesus Christ for the mercy of justification, that thou mightest be made white in his blood, and be covered with his righteousness? Fear not; forasmuch as this thy coming betokeneth that thou art of the number of them that the Father hath given to Christ; for he will in no wise cast thee out. “Come now,” saith Christ, “and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (<2801>Isaiah 1:18).

AND HIM. There was many a strange HIM came to Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh; but he received them all, without turning any away; speaking unto them

"of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing" (<4911>Luke 9:11; <4040>Luke 4:40)

These words, AND HIM, are therefore words to be wondered at. That not one of them who, by virtue of the Father's gift, and drawing, are coming to Jesus Christ, I say, that not one of them, whatever they have been, whatever they have done, should be rejected or set by, but admitted to a share in his saving grace. It is said in Luke, that the people "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (<4022>Luke 4:22). Now this is one of his gracious words; these words are like drops of honey, as it is said,

"Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (<201624>Proverbs 16:24)

These are gracious words indeed, even as full as a faithful and merciful High-priest could speak them. Luther saith, "When Christ speaketh, he hath a mouth as wide as heaven and earth." That is, to speak fully to the encouragement of every sinful him that is coming to Jesus Christ. And that his word is certain, hear how himself confirms it: "Heaven and earth," saith he, "shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away" (<235106>Isaiah 51:6; <402435>Matthew 24:35).

It is also confirmed by the testimony of the four evangelists, who gave faithful relation of his loving reception of all sorts of coming sinners, whether they were publicans, harlots, thieves, possessed of devils, bedlams, and what not (<421901>Luke 19:1-10; <402131>Matthew 21:31; <421501>Luke 15; <422343>Luke 23:43; <411609>Mark 16:9; <410501>Mark 5:1-9).

This, then, shows us,

1. "The greatness of the merits of Christ."

2. The willingness of his heart to impute them for life to the great, if coming, sinners.

1. This shows us the greatness of the merits of Christ; for it must not be supposed, that his words are bigger than his worthiness. He is strong to execute his word. He can do, as well as speak. He can do exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think, even to the uttermost, and outside of his word (<490320>Ephesians 3:20). Now, then, since he concludeth any

coming HIM; it must be concluded, that he can save to the uttermost sin, any coming HIM.

Do you think, I say, that the Lord Jesus did not think before he spake? He speaks all in righteousness, and therefore by his word we are to judge how mighty he is to save (Isaiah 63:1). He speaketh in righteousness, in very faithfulness, when he began to build this blessed gospel-fabric, the text; it was for that he had first sat down, and counted the cost; and for that, he knew he was able to finish it! What, Lord, any him? any him that cometh to thee? This is a Christ worth looking after, this is a Christ worth coming to!

This, then, should learn us diligently to consider the natural force of every word of God; and to judge of Christ's ability to save, not by our sins, or by our shallow apprehensions of his grace; but by his word, which is the true measure of grace. And if we do not judge thus, we shall dishonor his grace, lose the benefit of his word, and needlessly fright ourselves into many discouragements though coming to Jesus Christ. Him, any him that cometh, hath sufficient from this word of Christ, to feed himself with hopes of salvation. As thou art therefore coming, O thou coming sinner, judge thou, whether Christ can save thee by the true sense of his words: judge, coming sinner, of the efficacy of his blood, of the perfection of his righteousness, and of the prevalency of his intercession, by his word. "And him," saith he, "that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "In no wise," that is, for no sin. Judge therefore by his word, how able he is to save thee. It is said of God's sayings to the children of Israel,

> "There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45)

And again,

> "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you, all are come to pass unto you; and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Joshua 23:14).

Coming sinner, what promise thou findest in the word of Christ, strain it whither thou canst, so thou dost not corrupt it, and his blood and merits will answer all; what the word saith, or any true consequence that is drawn

therefrom, that we may boldly venture upon. As here in the text he saith, “And him that cometh,” indefinitely, without the least intimation of the rejection of any, though never so great, if he be a coming sinner. Take it then for granted, that thou, whoever thou art, if coming, art intended in these words; neither shall it injure Christ at all, if, as Benhadad’s servants served Ahab, thou shalt catch him at his word. “Now,” saith the text, “the man did diligently observe whether anything would come from him,” to wit, any word of grace; “and did hastily catch it.” And it happened that Ahab had called Benhadad his brother. The man replied, therefore, “Thy brother Benhadad!” (1 Kings 20:33), catching him at his word. Sinner, coming sinner, serve Jesus Christ thus, and he will take it kindly at thy hands. When he in his argument called the Canaanitish woman dog, she catched him at it, and saith, “Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” I say, she catched him thus in his words, and he took it kindly, saying, “O woman great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt” (Matthew 15:28). Catch him, coming sinner, catch him in his words, surely he will take it kindly, and will not be offended at thee.

2. The other thing that I told you is showed from these words, is this: The willingness of Christ’s heart to impute his merits for life to the great, if coming sinner. “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

The awakened coming sinner doth not so easily question the power of Christ, as his willingness to save him. Lord, “if thou wilt, thou canst,” said one (Mark 1:40). He did not put the if upon his power, but upon his will. He concluded he could, but he was not as fully of persuasion that he would. But we have the same ground to believe he will, as we have to believe he can; and, indeed, ground for both is the Word of God. If he was not willing, why did he promise? Why did he say he would receive the coming sinner? Coming sinner, take notice of this; we use to plead practices with men, and why not with God likewise? I am sure we have no more ground for the one than the other; for we have to plead the promise of a faithful God. Jacob took him there: “Thou saidst,” said he, “I will surely do thee good” (Genesis 32:12). For, from this promise he concluded, that it followed in reason, “He must be willing.”

The text also gives some ground for us to draw the same conclusion. “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Here is his willingness asserted, as well as his power suggested. It is worth your observation, that Abraham’s faith considered rather God’s power than his willingness; that is, he drew his conclusion, “I shall have a child,” from the power that was in God to fulfil the promise to him. For he concluded he was willing to give him one, else he would not have promised one.

> “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform” (Revelation 4:20, 21)

But was not his faith exercised, or tried, about his willingness too? No, there was no show of reason for that, because he had promised it. Indeed, had he not promised it, he might lawfully have doubted it; but since he had promised it, there was left no ground at all for doubting, because his willingness to give a son was demonstrated in his promising him a son. These words, therefore, are sufficient ground to encourage any coming sinner that Christ is willing to his power to receive him; and since he hath power also to do what he will, there is no ground at all left to the coming sinner any more to doubt; but to come in full hope of acceptance, and of being received unto grace and mercy. “And him that cometh.” He saith not, and him that is come; but, and him that cometh; that is, and him whose heart begins to move after me, who is leaving all for my sake; him who is looking out, who is on his journey to me. We must, therefore, distinguish betwixt coming, and being come to Jesus Christ. He that is come to him has attained of him more sensibly what he felt before that he wanted, than he has that but yet is coming to him.

[ADVANTAGES TO THE MAN THAT IS COME TO CHRIST.]

A man that is come to Christ hath the advantage of him that is but coming to him; and that in seven things.

1. He that is come to Christ is nearer to him than he that is but coming to him; for he that is but coming to him is yet, in some sense, at a distance from him; as it is said of the coming prodigal,

"And while he was yet a great way off" (Luke 15:20).

Now he that is nearer to him hath the best sight of him; and so is able to make the best judgment of his wonderful grace and beauty, as God saith,

"Let them come near, then let them speak" (Isaiah 41:1)

And as the apostle John saith,

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14).

He that is not yet come, though he is coming, is not fit, not being indeed capable to make that judgment of the worth and glory of the grace of Christ, as he is that is come to him, and hath seen and beheld it. Therefore, sinner, suspend thy judgment till thou art come nearer.

2. He that is come to Christ has the advantage of him that is but coming, in that he is eased of his burden; for he that is but coming is not eased of his burden (Matthew 11:28). He that is come has cast his burden upon the Lord. By faith he hath seen himself released thereof; but he that is but coming hath it yet, as to sense and feeling, upon his own shoulders. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," implies, that their burden, though they are coming, is yet upon them, and so will be till indeed they are come to him.

3. He that is come to Christ has the advantage of him that is but coming in this also, namely, he hath drank of the sweet and soul refreshing water of life; but he that is but coming hath not.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37).

Mark, He must come to him before he drinks: according to that of the prophet, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." He drinketh not as he cometh, but when he is come to the waters (Isaiah 55:1).

4. He that is come to Christ hath the advantage of him that as yet is but coming in this also, to wit, he is not so terrified with the noise, and, as I may call it, hue and cry, which the avenger of blood makes at the heels of him that yet is but coming to him. When the slayer was on his flight to the city of his refuge, he had the noise or fear of the avenger of blood at his

heels; but when he was come to the city, and was entered thereinto, that noise ceased. Even so it is with him that is but coming to Jesus Christ, he heareth many a dreadful sound in is ear; sounds of death and damnation, which he that is come is at present freed from. Therefore he saith, “Come, and I will give you rest.” And so he saith again, “We that have believed, do enter into rest,” as he said, etc. (<5304 Hebrews 4).

5. He, therefore, that is come to Christ, is not so subject to those dejections, and castings down, by reason of the rage and assaults of the evil one, as is the man that is but coming to Jesus Christ, though he has temptations too.

“And as he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him” (<4094 Luke 9:42).

For he has, though Satan still roareth upon him, those experimental comforts and refreshments, to wit, in his treasury, to present himself with, in times of temptation and conflict; which he that is but coming has not.

6. He that is come to Christ has the advantage of him that is but coming to him, in this also, to wit, he hath upon him the wedding garment, etc., but he that is coming has not. The prodigal, when coming home to his father, was clothed with nothing but rags, and was tormented with an empty belly; but when he was come, the best robe is brought out, also the gold ring, and the shoes, yea, they are put upon him, to his great rejoicing. The fatted calf was killed for him; the music was struck up to make him merry; and thus also the Father himself sang of him,

“This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost and is found” (<4215 Luke 15:18, 19).

7. In a word, he that is come to Christ, his groans and tears, his doubts and fears, are turned into songs and praises; for that he hath now received the atonement, and the earnest of his inheritance; but he that is but yet a-coming, hath not those praises nor songs of deliverance with him; nor has he as yet received the atonement and earnest of his inheritance, which is, the sealing testimony of the Holy Ghost, through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon his conscience, for he is not come (<4505 Romans 5:11; <4013 Ephesians 1:13; <5822 Hebrews 12:22-24).

[IMPORT OF THE WORD COMETH.]

"And him that COMETH." There is further to be gathered from this word cometh, these following particulars: —

1. That Jesus Christ hath his eye upon, and takes notice of, the first moving of the heart of a sinner after himself. Coming sinner, thou canst not move with desires after Christ, but he sees the working of those desires in thy heart. "All my desire," said David, "is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee" (Psalm 38:9). This he spake, as he was coming, after he had backslidden, to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is said of the prodigal, that while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, had his eye upon him, and upon the going out of his heart after him (Luke 15:20).

When Nathanael was come to Jesus Christ, the Lord said to them that stood before him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." But Nathanael answered him, "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus answered, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." There, I suppose, Nathanael was pouring out of his soul to God for mercy, or that he would give him good understanding about the Messias to come; and Jesus saw all the workings of his honest heart at that time (John 1:47, 48).

Zaccheus also had some secret movings of heart, such as they were, towards Jesus Christ, when he ran before, and climbed up the tree to see him; and the Lord Jesus Christ had his eye upon him: therefore, when he was come to the place, he looked up to him, bids him come down, "For today," said he, "I must abide at thy house;" to wit, in order to the further completing the work of grace in his soul (Luke 19:1-9). Remember this, coming sinner.

2. As Jesus Christ hath his eye upon, so he hath his heart open to receive, the coming sinner. This is verified by the text: "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This is also discovered by his preparing of the way, in his making of it easy (as may be) to the coming sinner; which preparation is manifest by those blessed words, "I will in no wise cast out;" of which more when we come to the place. And while "he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). All these expressions do

strongly prove that the heart of Christ is open to receive the coming sinner.

3. As Jesus Christ has his eye upon, and his heart open to receive, so he hath resolved already that nothing shall alienate his heart from receiving the coming sinner. No sins of the coming sinner, nor the length of the time that he hath abode in them, shall by any means prevail with Jesus Christ to reject him. Coming sinner, thou art coming to a loving Lord Jesus!

4. These words therefore are dropped from his blessed mouth, on purpose that the coming sinner might take encouragement to continue on his journey, until he be come indeed to Jesus Christ. It was doubtless a great encouragement to blind Bartimeus, that Jesus Christ stood still and called him, when he was crying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" therefore, it is said, he cast away his garment, "rose, and came to Jesus" (<4106>Mark 10:46). Now, if a call to come hath such encouragement in it, what is a promise of receiving such, but an encouragement much more? And observe it, though he had a call to come, yet not having a promise, his faith was forced to work upon a mere consequence, saying, He calls me; and surely since he calls me, he will grant me my desire. Ah! but coming sinner, thou hast no need to go so far about as to draw (in this matter) consequences, because thou hast plain promises: "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Here is full, plain, yea, what encouragement one can desire; for, suppose thou wast admitted to make a promise thyself, and Christ should attest that he would fulfil it upon the sinner that cometh to him, Couldst thou make a better promise? Couldst thou invent a more full, free, or larger promise? a promise that looks at the first moving of the heart after Jesus Christ? a promise that declares, yea, that engageth Christ Jesus to open his heart to receive the coming sinner? yea, further, a promise that demonstrateth that the Lord Jesus is resolved freely to receive, and will in no wise cast out, nor means to reject, the soul of the coming sinner! For all this lieth fully in this promise, and doth naturally flow therefrom. Here thou needest not make use of far-fetched consequences, nor strain thy wits, to force encouraging arguments from the text. Coming sinner, the words are plain: "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

[TWO SORTS OF SINNERS COMING TO CHRIST.]

"And him that COMETH." There are two sorts of sinners that are coming to Jesus Christ. First, Him that hath never, while of late, [F64] at all began to come. Second, Him that came formerly, and after that went back; but hath since bethought himself, and is now coming again. Both these sorts of sinners are intended by the HIM in the text, as is evident; because both are now the coming sinners. "And him that cometh."

First. [The newly-awakened comer.] — For the first of these: the sinner that hath never, while of late, began to come, his way is more easy; I do not say, more plain and open to come to Christ than is the other — those last not having the clog of a guilty conscience, for the sin of backsliding, hanging at their heels. But all the encouragement of the gospel, with what invitations are therein contained to coming sinners, are as free and as open to the one as to the other; so that they may with the same freedom and liberty, as from the Word, both alike claim interest in the promise. "All things are ready;" all things for the coming backsliders, as well as for the others: "Come to the wedding." "And let him that is athirst come" (Matthew 22:1-4; Revelation 22:17).

Second. [The returning backslider.] — But having spoke to the first of these already, I shall here pass it by; and shall speak a word or two to him that is coming, after backsliding, to Jesus Christ for life. Thy way, O thou sinner of a double dye, thy way is open to come to Jesus Christ. I mean thee, whose heart, after long backsliding, doth think of turning to him again. Thy way, I say, is open to him, as is the way of the other sorts of comers; as appears by what follows: —

1. Because the text makes no exception against thee. It doth not say, And any him but a backslider, any him but him. The text doth not thus object, but indefinitely openeth wide its golden arms to every coming soul, without the least exception; therefore thou mayest come. And take heed that thou shut not that door against thy soul by unbelief, which God has opened by his grace.

2. Nay, the text is so far from excepting against thy coming, that it strongly suggesteth that thou art one of the souls intended, O thou coming

backslider; else what need that clause have been so inserted, “I will in no wise cast out?” As who should say, Though those that come now are such as have formerly backslidden, I will in “no wise” cast away the fornicator, the covetous, the railer, the drunkard, or other common sinners, nor yet the backslider neither.

3. That the backslider is intended is evident,

(1.) For that he is sent to by name, “Go, tell his disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7). But Peter was a godly man. True, but he was also a backslider, yea, a desperate backslider: he had denied his Master once, twice, thrice, cursing and swearing that he knew him not. If this was not backsliding, if this was not an high and eminent backsliding, yea, a higher backsliding than thou art capable of, I have thought amiss.

Again, when David had backslidden, and had committed adultery and murder in his backsliding, he must be sent to by name: “And,” saith the text, “the Lord sent Nathan unto David.” And he sent him to tell him, after he had brought him to unfeigned acknowledgment, “The Lord hath also put away, or forgiven thy sin” (2 Samuel 12:1, 13).

This man also was far gone: he took a man’s wife, and killed her husband, and endeavored to cover all with wicked dissimulation. He did this, I say, after God had exalted him, and showed him great favor; wherefore his transgression was greatened also by the prophet with mighty aggravations; yet he was accepted, and that with gladness, at the first step he took in his returning to Christ. For the first step of the backslider’s return is to say, sensibly and unfeignedly, “I have sinned;” but he had no sooner said thus, but a pardon was produced, yea, thrust into his bosom: “And Nathan said unto David, The Lord hath also put away thy sin.”

(2.) As the person of the backslider is mentioned by name, so also is his sin, that, if possible, thy objections against thy returning to Christ may be taken out of thy way; I say, thy sin also is mentioned by name, and mixed, as mentioned, with words of grace and favor:

> “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely”
> (Hosea 14:4).

What sayest thou now, backslider?

(3.) Nay, further, thou art not only mentioned by name, and thy sin by the nature of it, but thou thyself, who art a returning backslider, put,

(a) Amongst God's Israel,

> "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever" (Jeremiah 3:12).

(b) Thou art put among his children; among his children to whom he is married. "Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you" (verse 14).

(c) Yea, after all this, as if his heart was so full of grace for them, that he was pressed until he had uttered it before them, he adds, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (verse 22).

(4.) Nay, further, the Lord hath considered, that the shame of thy sin hath stopped thy mouth, and made thee almost a prayerless man; and therefore he saith unto thee, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." See his grace, that himself should put words of encouragement into the heart of a backslider; as he saith in another place, "I taught Ephraim to go, taking him by the arms." This is teaching him to go indeed, to hold him up by the arms; by the chin, as we say (Hosea 14:2; Hosea 11:3).

From what has been said, I conclude, even as I said before, that the him in the text, and him that cometh, includeth both these sorts of sinners, and therefore both should freely come.

Question 1. But where doth Jesus Christ, in all the word of the New Testament, expressly speak to a returning backslider with words of grace and peace? For what you have urged as yet, from the New Testament, is nothing but consequences drawn from this text. Indeed it is a full text for carnal ignorant sinners that come, but to me, who am a backslider, it yieldeth but little relief.

Answer. How! but little encouragement from the text, when it is said, "I will in now wise cast out"! What more could have been said? What is here

omitted that might have been inserted, to make the promise more full and free? Nay, take all the promises in the Bible, all the freest promises, with all the variety of expressions of what nature or extent soever, and they can but amount to the expressions of this very promise, “I will in no wise cast out;” I will for nothing, by no means, upon no account, however they have sinned, however they have backslidden, however they have provoked, cast out the coming sinner. But,

Question 2. Thou sayest, Where doth Jesus Christ, in all the words of the New Testament, speak to a returning backslider with words of grace and peace, that is under the name of a backslider?

Answer. Where there is such plenty of examples in receiving backsliders, there is the less need for express words to that intent; one promise, as the text is, with those examples that are annexed, are instead of many promises. And besides, I reckon that the act of receiving is of as much, if not of more encouragement, than is a bare promise to receive; for receiving is as the promise, and the fulfilling of it too; so that in the Old Testament thou hast the promise, and in the New, the fulfilling of it; and that in divers examples.

1. In Peter. Peter denied his master, once, twice, thrice, and that with open oath; yet Christ receives him again without any the least hesitation or stick. Yea, he slips, stumbles, falls again, in downright dissimulation, and that to the hurt and fall of many others; but neither of this doth Christ make a bar to his salvation, but receives him again at his return, as if he knew nothing of the fault (Galatians 2).

2. The rest of the disciples, even all of them, did backslide and leave the Lord Jesus in his greatest straits.

> “Then all the disciples forsook him and fled,”
> (Matthew 26:56)

they returned, as he had foretold, every one to his own, and left him alone; but this also he passes over as a very light matter. Not that it was so indeed in itself, but the abundance of grace that was in him did lightly roll it away; for after his resurrection, when first he appeared unto them, he gives them not the least check for their perfidious dealings with him, but salutes them with words of grace, saying, “All hail! be not afraid, peace be

to you; all power in heaven and earth is given unto me." True, he rebuked them for their unbelief, for the which also thou deservest the same. For it is unbelief that alone puts Christ and his benefits from us (⁴³John 16:52; ⁴⁰Matthew 28:9-11; ⁴²Luke 24:39; ⁴¹Mark 16:14).

3. The man that after a large profession lay with his father's wife, committed a high transgression, even such a one that at that day was not heard of, no, not among the Gentiles. Wherefore this was a desperate backsliding; yet, at his return, he was received, and accepted again to mercy (⁴⁶1 Corinthians 5:1, 2; ⁴⁷2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

4. The thief that stole was bid to steal no more; not at all doubting but that Christ was ready to forgive him this act of backsliding (⁴⁹Ephesians 4:28).

Now all these are examples, particular instances of Christ's readiness to receive the backsliders to mercy; and, observe it, examples and proofs that he hath done so are, to our unbelieving hearts, stronger encouragement's than bare promises that so he will do.

But again, the Lord Jesus hath added to these, for the encouragement of returning backsliders, to come to him.

> **(1.)** A call to come, and he will receive them (⁶⁶Revelation 2:1-5; 14-16; 20-22; ⁶⁶Revelation 3:1-3; 15-22). Wherefore New Testament backsliders have encouragement to come.
>
> **(2.)** A declaration of readiness to receive them that come, as here in the text, and in many other places, is plain. Therefore, "Set thee up way marks, make thee high heaps," of the golden grace of the gospel, "set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest." When thou didst backslide; "turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities" (²⁴Jeremiah 31:21).

"And him that cometh." He saith not, and him that talketh, that professeth, that maketh a show, a noise, or the like; but, him that cometh. Christ will take leave to judge, who, among the many that make a noise, they be that indeed are coming to him. It is not him that saith he comes, nor him of whom others affirm that he comes; but him that Christ himself shall say doth come, that is concerned in this text. When the woman that had the bloody issue came to him for cure, there were others as well as

she, that made a great bustle about him, that touched, yea, thronged him. Ah, but Christ could distinguish this woman from them all; “And he looked round about” upon them all, “to see her that had done this thing” (Mark 5:25-32). He was not concerned with the thronging, or touchings of the rest; for theirs were but accidental, or at best, void of that which made her touch acceptable. Wherefore Christ must be judge who they be that in truth are coming to him; Every man’s ways are right in his own eyes, “but the Lord weigheth the spirits” (Proverbs 16:2). It standeth therefore every one in hand to be certain of their coming to Jesus Christ; for as thy coming is, so shall thy salvation be. If thou comest indeed, thy salvation shall be indeed; but if thou comest but in outward appearance, so shall thy salvation be; but of coming, see before, as also afterwards, in the use and application.

“And him that cometh TO ME.” These words to me are also well to be heeded; for by them, as he secureth those that come to him, so also he shows himself unconcerned with those that in their coming rest short, to turn aside to others; for you must know, that every one that comes, comes not to Jesus Christ; some that come, come to Moses, and to his law, and there take up for life; with these Christ is not concerned; with these his promise hath not to do.

> “Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

Again, some that came, came no further than to gospel ordinances, and there stay; they came not through them to Christ; with these neither is he concerned; nor will their “Lord, Lord,” avail them anything in the great and dismal day. A man may come to, and also go from the place and ordinances of worship, and yet not be remembered by Christ. “So I saw the wicked buried,” said Solomon, “who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done; this is also vanity” (Ecclesiastes 8:10).

“TO ME.” These words, therefore, are by Jesus Christ very warily put in, and serve for caution and encouragement; for caution, lest we take up in our coming anywhere short of Christ; and for encouragement to those that

shall in their coming, come past all; till they come to Jesus Christ. “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Reader, if thou lovest thy soul, take this caution kindly at the hands of Jesus Christ. Thou seest thy sickness, thy wound, thy necessity of salvation. Well, go not to king Jareb, for he cannot heal thee, nor cure thee of thy wound (<28513>Hosea 5:13). Take the caution, I say, lest Christ, instead of being a Savior unto thee, becomes a lion, a young lion, to tear thee, and go away (<28514>Hosea 5:14).

There is a coming, but not to the Most High; there is a coming, but not with the whole heart, but as it were feignedly; therefore take the caution kindly (<24310>Jeremiah 3:10; <28716>Hosea 7:16).

“And him that cometh TO ME;” Christ as a Savior will stand alone, because his own arm alone hath brought salvation unto him. He will not be joined with Moses, nor suffer John Baptist to be tabernacled by him. I say they must vanish, for Christ will stand alone (<42928>Luke 9:28-36). Yea, God the Father will have it so; therefore they must be parted from him, and a voice from heaven must come to bid the disciples hear only the beloved Son. Christ will not suffer any law, ordinance, statute, or judgment, to be partners with him in the salvation of the sinner. Nay, he saith not, and him that cometh to my WORD; but, and him that cometh to ME. The words of Christ, even his most blessed and free promises, such as this in the text, are not the Savior of the world; for that is Christ himself, Christ himself only. The promises, therefore, are but to encourage the coming sinner to come to Jesus Christ, and not to rest in them, short of salvation by him. “And him that cometh TO ME.” The man, therefore, that comes aright, casts all things behind his back, and looketh at, nor hath his expectations from ought, but the Son of God alone; as David said,

> “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock, and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be moved” (<19605>Psalm 62:5, 6).

His eye is to Christ, his heart is to Christ, and his expectation is from him, from him only.

Therefore the man that comes to Christ, is one that hath had deep considerations of his own sins, slighting thoughts of his own

righteousness, and high thoughts of the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; yea, he sees, as I have said, more virtue in the blood of Christ to save him, than there is in all his sins to damn him. He therefore setteth Christ before his eyes; there is nothing in heaven or earth, he knows, that can save his soul and secure him from the wrath of God, but Christ; that is, nothing but his personal righteousness and blood.

[IMPORT OF THE WORDS IN NO WISE.]

"And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." IN NO WISE: by these words there is

[**First**,] Something expressed; and

[**Second**,] Something implied.

First, That which is expressed is Christ Jesus, his unchangeable resolution to save the coming sinner; I will in no wise reject him, or deny him the benefit of my death and righteousness. This word, therefore, is like that which he speaks of the everlasting damnation of the sinner in hell-fire; "He shall by no means depart thence;" that is, never, never come out again, no, not to all eternity (<40526>Matthew 5:26; <40546>Matthew 25:46). So that as he that is condemned into hell-fire hath no ground of hope for his deliverance thence; so him that cometh to Christ, hath no ground to fear he shall ever be cast in thither.

"Thus saith the Lord, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the Lord" (<243137>Jeremiah 31:37). "Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob" (<243325>Jeremiah 33:25, 26). But heaven cannot be measured, nor the foundations of the earth searched out beneath; his covenant is also with day and night, and he hath appointed the ordinances of heaven; therefore he will not cast away the seed of Jacob, who are the coming ones, but will certainly save them from the dreadful wrath to come (<245004>Jeremiah 50:4, 5). By this, therefore, it is manifest, that it was not the greatness of sin, nor the long continuance in it, no, nor yet the backsliding, nor the pollution of thy nature, that can put a bar in against, or be an

hindrance of, the salvation of the coming sinner. For, if indeed this could be, then would this solemn and absolute determination of the Lord Jesus, of itself, fall to the ground, and be made of none effect. But his "counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure;" that is, his pleasure in this; for his promise, as to this irreversible conclusion, ariseth of his pleasure; he will stand to it, and will fulfil it, because it is his pleasure (<2346>Isaiah 46:10, 11).

Suppose that one man had the sins, or as many sins as an hundred, and another should have an hundred times as many as he; yet, if they come, this word, "I will in no wise cast out," secures them both alike.

Suppose a man hath a desire to be saved, and for that purpose is coming in truth to Jesus Christ; but he, by his debauched life, has damned many in hell; why, the door of hope is by these words set as open for him, as it is for him that hath not the thousandth part of his transgressions. "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Suppose a man is coming to Christ to be saved, and hath nothing but sin, and an ill-spent life, to bring with him; why, let him come, and welcome to Jesus Christ, "And he will in no wise cast him out" (<4742>Luke 7:42). Is not this love that passeth knowledge? Is not this love the wonderment of angels? And is not this love worthy of all acceptation at the hands and hearts of all coming sinners?

[HINDRANCES IN COMING TO CHRIST.]

Second, That which is implied in the words is,

1. The coming souls have those that continually lie at Jesus Christ [F65] to cast them off.

2. The coming souls are afraid that those will prevail with Christ to cast them off. For these words are spoken to satisfy us, and to stay up our spirits against these two dangers: "I will in no wise cast out."

1. For the first, Coming souls have those that continually lie at Jesus Christ to cast them off. And there are three things that thus bend themselves against the coming sinner.

(1.) There is the devil, that accuser of the brethren, that accuses them before God, day and night (Revelation 12:10). This prince of darkness is unwearied in this work; he doth it, as you see, day and night; that is, without ceasing. He continually puts in his caveats against thee, if so be he may prevail. How did he ply [F66] it against that good man Job, if possibly he might have obtained his destruction in hell-fire? He objected against him, that he served not God for nought, and tempted God to put forth his hand against him, urging, that if he did it, he would curse him to his face; and all this, as God witnesseth, "he did without a cause" (Job 1:9-11; Job 2:4, 5). How did he ply it with Christ against Joshua the high-priest? "And he showed me Joshua," said the prophet, "the high-priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1).

To resist him; that is, to prevail with the Lord Jesus Christ to resist him; objecting the uncleanness and unlawful marriage of his sons with the Gentiles; for that was the crime that Satan laid against them (Ezra 10:18). Yea, and for aught I know, Joshua was also guilty of the fact; but if not of that, of crimes no whit inferior; for he was clothed with filthy garments, as he stood before the angel. Neither had he one word to say in vindication of himself, against all that this wicked one had to say against him. But notwithstanding that, he came off well; but he might for it thank a good Lord Jesus, because he did not resist him, but contrariwise, took up his cause, pleaded against the devil, excusing his infirmity, and put justifying robes upon him before his adversary's face.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? And he answered and spoke to those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him; and unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:2-4).

Again, how did Satan ply it against Peter, when he desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat? that is, if possible, sever all grace from his heart, and leave him nothing but flesh and filth, to the end that he might make the Lord Jesus loathe and abhor him. "Simon, Simon," said Christ,

“Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.” But did he prevail against him? No: “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” As who should say, Simon, Satan hath desired me that I would give thee up to him, and not only thee, but all the rest of thy brethren — for that the word you imports — but I will not leave thee in his hand: I have prayed for thee, thy faith shall not fail; I will secure thee to the heavenly inheritance (<4222>Luke 22:30-32).

(2.) As Satan, so every sin of the coming sinner, comes in with a voice against him, if perhaps they may prevail with Christ to cast off the soul. When Israel was coming out of Egypt to Canaan, how many times had their sins thrown them out of the mercy of God, had not Moses, as a type of Christ, stood in the breach to turn away his wrath from them! (<19623>Psalm 106:23). Our iniquities testify against us, and would certainly prevail against us, to our utter rejection and damnation, had we not an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (<6201>1 John 2:1, 2).

The sins of the old world cried them down to hell; the sins of Sodom fetched upon them fire from heaven, which devoured them; the sins of the Egyptians cried them down to hell, because they came not to Jesus Christ for life. Coming sinner, thy sins are no whit less than any; nay, perhaps, they are as big as all theirs. Why is it then, that thou livest when they are dead, and that thou hast a promise of pardon when they had not? “Why, thou art coming to Jesus Christ;” and therefore sin shall not be thy ruin.

(3.) As Satan and sin, so the law of Moses, as it is a perfect holy law, hath a voice against you before the face of God. “There is one that accuseth you, even Moses,” his law (<4045>John 5:45). Yea, it accuseth all men of transgression that have sinned against it; for as long as sin is sin, there will be a law to accuse for sin. But this accusation shall not prevail against the coming sinner; because it is Christ that died, and that ever lives, to make intercession for them that “come to God by him” (Romans 8; <5825>Hebrews 7:25).

These things, I say, do accuse us before Christ Jesus; yea, and also to our own faces, if perhaps they might prevail against us. But these words, “I will in no wise cast out,” secureth the coming sinner from them all.

The coming sinner is not saved, because there is none that comes in against him; but because the Lord Jesus will not hear their accusations, will not cast out the coming sinner. When Shimei came down to meet king David, and to ask for pardon for his rebellion, up starts Abishai, and puts in his caveat, saying, Shall not Shimei die for this? This is the case of him that comes to Christ. He hath this Abishai, and that Abishai, that presently steps in against him, saying, Shall not this rebel's sins destroy him in hell? Read further. But David answered,

> "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel, for do not I know, that I am king this day over Israel?" (2 Samuel 19:16-22).

That is Christ's answer by the text, to all that accuse the coming Shimeis. What have I to do with you, that accuse the coming sinners to me? I count you adversaries, that are against my showing mercy to them. Do not I know that I am exalted this day to be king of righteousness, and king of peace? "I will in no wise cast them out."

2. But again, these words do closely imply, that the coming souls are afraid that these accusers will prevail against them, as is evident, because the text is spoken for their relief and succor. For that need not be, if they that are coming were not subject to fear and despond upon this account. Alas, there is guilt, and the curse lies upon the conscience of the coming sinner!

Besides, he is conscious to himself what a villain, what a wretch he hath been against God and Christ. Also he now knows, by woeful experience, how he hath been at Satan's beck, and at the motion of every lust. He hath now also new thoughts of the holiness and justice of God. Also he feels, that he cannot forbear sinning against him. For the motions of sins, which are by the law, doth still work in his members, to bring forth fruit unto death (Romans 7:5). But none of this needs be [a discouragement] since we have so good, so tender-hearted, and so faithful a Jesus to come to, who will rather overthrow heaven and earth, than suffer a tittle of this text to fail. "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

[IMPORT OF THE WORDS TO CAST OUT.]

Now, we have yet to inquire into two things that lie in the words, to which there hath yet been nothing said. As,

First, What it is to cast out.

Second, How it appears that Christ hath power to save or cast out?

[WHAT IT IS TO CAST OUT.]

First. For the first of these, What it is to cast out. To this I will speak,

First, Generally.

Second, More particularly.

[FIRST, GENERALLY.]

1. To cast out, is to slight and despise, and contemn; as it is said of Saul's shield, "it was vilely cast away," (<102121>2 Samuel 1:21), that is, slighted and contemned. Thus it is with the sinners that come not to Jesus Christ. He slights, despises, and contemns them; that is, "casts them away."

2. Things cast away are reputed as monstrous cloths, and as the dirt of the street (<230324>Isaiah 3:24; <198942>Psalm 18:42; <400513>Matthew 5:13; <401517>Matthew 15:17). And thus it shall be with the men that come not to Jesus Christ, they shall be counted as monstrous, and as the dirt in the streets.

3. To be cast out, or off, it is to be abhorred, not to be pitied; but to be put to perpetual shame (<194409>Psalm 44:9; <198938>Psalm 89:38; <300111>Amos 1:11). But,

Second, More particularly, to come to the text. The casting out here mentioned is not limited to this or the other evil: therefore it must be extended to the most extreme and utmost misery. Or thus: He that cometh to Christ shall not want anything that may make him gospelly-happy in this world, or that which is to come; nor shall he want anything that cometh not, that may make him spiritually and eternally miserable. But further, As it is to be generally taken [as respecteth the things that are now], so it respecteth things that shall be hereafter.

I. For the things that are now, they are either,

1. More general: Or,

2. More particular.

1. More general, thus:

(1.) It is “to be cast out” of the presence and favor of God. Thus was Cain cast out: “Thou has driven,” or cast “me out this day; from thy face,” that is, from thy favor “shall I be hid.” A dreadful complaint! But the effect of a more dreadful judgment! (<01004>Genesis 4:14; <24239>Jeremiah 23:39; <13809>1 Chronicles 28:9).

(2.) “To be cast out,” is to be cast out of God’s sight. God will look after them no more, care for them no more; nor will he watch over them any more for good (<12720>2 Kings 17:20; <24705>Jeremiah 7:15). Now they that are so, are left like blind men, to wander and fall into the pit of hell. This, therefore, is also a sad judgment! therefore here is the mercy of him that cometh to Christ. He shall not be left to wander at uncertainties. The Lord Jesus Christ will keep him, as a shepherd doth his sheep (Psalm 23). “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

(3.) “To be cast out,” is to be denied a place in God’s house, and to be left as fugitives and vagabonds, to pass a little time away in this miserable life, and after that to go down to the dead (<48430>Galatians 4:30; <01043>Genesis 4:13, 14; <01210>Genesis 21:10). Therefore here is the benefit of him that cometh to Christ, he shall not be denied a place in God’s house. They shall not be left like vagabonds in the world. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” See <20426>Proverbs 14:26, <23603>Isaiah 56:3-5, <49019>Ephesians 1:19-22, <46321>1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

(4.) In a word, “To be cast out,” is to be rejected as are the fallen angels. For their eternal damnation began at their being cast down from heaven to hell. So then, not to be cast out, is to have a place, a house, and habitation there; and to have a share in the privileges of elect angels.

These words, therefore, “I will not cast out,” will prove great words one day to them that come to Jesus Christ (<61204>2 Peter 2:4; <43031>John 20:31; <42035>Luke 20:35).

2. Second, and more particularly,

(1.) Christ hath everlasting life for him that cometh to him, and he shall never perish; “For he will in no wise cast him out;” but for the rest, they are rejected, “cast out,” and must be damned (<430027>John 10:27, 28).

(2.) Christ hath everlasting righteousness to clothe them with that come to him, and they shall be covered with it as with a garment, but the rest shall be found in the filthy rags of their own stinking pollutions, and shall be wrapt up in them, as in a winding-sheet, and so bear their shame before the Lord, and also before the angels (<270927>Daniel 9:27; <235720>Isaiah 57:20; <660304>Revelation 3:4-18, 15, 16).

(3.) Christ hath precious blood, that, like an open fountain, stands free for him to wash in, that comes to him for life; “And he will in no wise cast him out;” but they that come not to him are rejected from a share therein, and are left to ireful vengeance for their sins (<381301>Zechariah 13:1; <600118>1 Peter 1:18, 19; <430308>John 13:8; <430316>John 3:16).

(4.) Christ hath precious promises, and they shall have a share in them that come to him for life; for “he will in no wise cast them out.” But they that come not can have no share in them, because they are true only in him; for in him, and only in him, all the promises are yea and amen. Wherefore they that come not to him, are no whit the better for them (<195016>Psalm 50:16; <470120>2 Corinthians 1:20, 21).

(5.) Christ hath also fullness of grace in himself for them that come to him for life: “And he will in no wise cast them out.” But those that come not unto him are left in their graceless state; and as Christ leaves them, death, hell, and judgment finds them. “Whoso findeth me,” saith Christ, “findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death” (<200835>Proverbs 8:35, 36).

(6.) Christ is an Intercessor, and ever liveth to make intercession for them that come to God by him: “But their sorrows shall be multiplied, that hasten after another,” or other gods, their sins and lusts.

"Their drink-offerings will I not offer, nor take up their names into his lips" (Psalm 16:4; Hebrews 7:25).

(7.) Christ hath wonderful love, bowels, and compassions, for those that come to him; for "he will in no wise cast them out." But the rest will find him a lion rampant; he will one day tear them all to pieces. "Now consider this," saith he, "ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver" (Psalm 50:22).

(8.) Christ is one by and for whose sake those that come to him have their persons and performances accepted of the Father: "And he will in no wise cast them out;" but the rest must fly to the rocks and mountains for shelter, but all in vain, to hide them from his face and wrath (Revelation 6:15-17).

II. But again, These words, CAST OUT, have a special look to what will be hereafter, even at the day of judgment. For then, and not till then, will be the great anathema and casting out made manifest, even manifest by execution. Therefore here to speak to this, and that under these two heads. As,

First, Of the casting out itself.

Second, Of the place into which they shall be cast, that shall then be cast out.

First, The casting out itself standeth in two things.

1. In a preparatory work.

2. In the manner of executing the act.

1. The preparatory work standeth in these three things.

(1.) It standeth in their separation that have not come to him, from them that have, at that day. Or thus: At the day of the great casting out, those that have not NOW come to him, shall be separated from them that have; for them that have "he will not cast out." "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a

shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:31, 32). This dreadful separation, therefore, shall then be made betwixt them that NOW come to Christ, and them that come not. And good reason; for since they would not with us come to him now they have time, why should they stand with us when judgment is come?

(2.) They shall be placed before him according to their condition: they that have come to him, in great dignity, even at his right hand; "For he will in no wise cast them out": but the rest shall be set at his left hand, the place of disgrace and shame; for they did not come to him for life. Distinguished also shall they be by fit terms: these that come to him he calleth the sheep, but the rest are frowish goats, "and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats;" and the sheep will be set on the right hand — next heaven gate, for they came to him — but the goats on his left, to go from him into hell, because they are not of his sheep.

(3.) Then will Christ proceed to conviction of those that came not to him, and will say, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in," or did not come unto me. Their excuse of themselves he will slight as dirt, and proceed to their final judgment.

2. Now when these wretched rejecters of Christ shall thus be set before him in their sins, and convicted, this is the preparatory work upon which follows the manner of executing the act which will be done.

(1.) In the presence of all the holy angels.

(2.) In the presence of all them that in their lifetime came to him, by saying unto them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels": with the reason annexed to it. For you were cruel to me and mine, particularly discovered in these words, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (Matthew 25:41-43).

Second, Now it remains that we speak of the place into which these shall be cast, which, in the general, you have heard already, to wit, the first

prepared for the devil and his angels. But, in particular, it is thus described: —

1. It is called Tophet: “For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king,” the Lucifer, “it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it” (<2332>Isaiah 30:32).

2. It is called hell. “It is better for thee to enter halt” or lame “into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell” (<4095>Mark 9:45).

3. It is called the wine-press of the wrath of God. “And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth,” that is, them that did not come to Christ, “and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God” (<6619>Revelation 14:19).

4. It is called a lake of fire. “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (<6615>Revelation 20:15).

5. It is called a pit.

> “Thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (<2313>Isaiah 14:13-15).

6. It is called a bottomless pit, out of which the smoke and the locust came, and into which the great dragon was cast; and it is called bottomless, to show the endlessness of the fall that they will have into it, that come not, in the acceptable time, to Jesus Christ (<6901>Revelation 9:1, 2; <6603>Revelation 20:3).

7. It is called outer darkness. “Bind him hand and foot - and cast him into outer darkness,” “and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness,” “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (<4013>Matthew 22:13; <4025>25:30).

8. It is called a furnace of fire. “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all

things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." And again, "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (<4013 40>Matthew 13:40-51).

9. Lastly, It may not be amiss, if, in the conclusion of this, I show in few words to what the things that torment them in this state are compared. Indeed, some of them have been occasionally mentioned already; as that they are compared,

(1.) To wood that burneth.

(2.) To fire.

(3.) To fire and brimstone: But,

(4.) It is compared to a worm, a gnawing worm, a never-dying gnawing worm; They are cast into hell, "where their worm dieth not" (<4109 44>Mark 9:44).

(5.) It is called unquenchable fire; "He will gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (<4012 12>Matthew 3:12; <4208 17>Luke 3:17).

(6.) It is called everlasting destruction; "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (<5301 07>2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

(7.) It is called wrath without mixture, and is given them in the cup of his indignation. "If any man worship the beast, and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (<6614 09>Revelation 14:9, 10).

(8.) It is called the second death.

> "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power" (Revelation 20:6, 14).

(9.) It is called eternal damnation. "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Oh! these three words! Everlasting punishment! Eternal damnation! And For ever and ever! How will they gnaw and eat up all the expectation of the end of the misery of the cast-away sinners. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night," etc., (Revelation 14:11).

Their behavior in hell is set forth by four things as I know of; —

(a.) By calling for help and relief in vain;

(b.) By weeping;

(c.) By wailing;

(d.) By gnashing of teeth.

[THE POWER OF CHRIST TO SAVE, OR TO CAST OUT.]

Second. And now we come to the second thing that is to be inquired into, namely, How it appears that Christ hath power to save, or to cast out. For by these words, "I will in no wise cast out," he declareth that he hath power to do both. Now this inquiry admits us to search into the things:

First, How it appears that he hath power to save;

Second, How it appears that he hath power to cast out.

First, That he hath power to save, appears by that which follows: —

1. To speak only of him as he is mediator: he was authorized to this blessed work by his Father, before the world began. Hence the apostle saith, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world"

(<490104>Ephesians 1:4). With all those things that effectually will produce our salvation. Read the same chapter, with <550109>2 Timothy 1:9.

2. He was promised to our first parents, that he should, in the fullness of time, bruise the serpent's head; and, as Paul expounds it, redeem them that were under the law. Hence, since that time, he hath been reckoned as slain for our sins. By which means all the fathers under the first testament were secured from the wrath to come; hence he is called, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (<661308>Revelation 13:8; <010315>Genesis 3:15; <480404>Galatians 4:4, 5).

3. Moses gave testimony of him by the types and shadows, and bloody sacrifices, that he commanded from the mouth of God to be in use for the support of his people's faith, until the time of reformation; which was the time of this Jesus his death (<581010>Hebrews 9:10).

4. At the time of his birth it was testified of him by the angel,

> "That he should save his people from their sins"
> (<400121>Matthew 1:21).

5. It is testified of him in the days of his flesh, that he had power on earth to forgive sins (<410205>Mark 2:5-12).

6. It is testified also of him by the apostle Peter, that

> "God hath exalted him with his own right hand, to be a prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins"
> (<440531>Acts 5:31).

7. In a word, this is everywhere testified of him, both in the Old Testament and the New. And good reason that he should be acknowledged and trusted in, as a Savior.

(1.) He came down from heaven to be a Savior (<430638>John 6:38-40).

(2.) He was anointed when on earth to be a Savior (<420322>Luke 3:22).

(3.) He did the works of a Savior. As,

(a.) He fulfilled the law, and became the end of it for righteousness, for them that believe in him (<450603>Romans 10:3, 4).

(b.) He laid down his life as a Savior; he gave his life as "a ransom for many" (<4020>Matthew 20:28; <4106>Mark 10:45; <5402>1 Timothy 2:6).

(c.) He hath abolished death, destroyed the devil, put away sin, got the keys of hell and death, is ascended into heaven; is there accepted of God, and bid sit at the right hand as a Savior; and that because his sacrifice for sins pleased God (<5010>2 Timothy 1:10; <3014>Hebrews 2:14, 15; <3012>Hebrews 10:12, 13; <4007>Ephesians 4:7, 8; <4160>John 16:10, 11; <4050>Acts 5:30, 31).

(4.) God hath sent out and proclaimed him as a Savior, and tells the world that we have redemption through his blood, that he will justify us, if we believe in his blood, and that he can faithfully and justly do it. Yea, God doth beseech us to be reconciled to him by his Son; which could not be, if he were not anointed by him to this very end, and also if his works and undertakings were not accepted of him considered as a Savior (<5624>Romans 3:24, 25; <4759>2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

(5.) God hath received already millions of souls into his paradise, because they have received this Jesus for a Savior; and is resolved to cut them off, and to cast them out of his presence, that will not take him for a Savior (<3022>Hebrews 12:22-26).

I intend brevity here; therefore a word to the second, and so conclude.

Second, How it appears that he hath power to cast out. This appears also by what follows: —

1. The Father, for the service that he hath done him as Savior, hath made him Lord of all, even Lord of quick and dead.

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived,
that he might be Lord both of the dead and living"
(<5409>Romans 14:9).

2. The Father hath left it with him to quicken whom he will, to wit, with saving grace, and to cast out whom he will, for their rebellion against him (<4521>John 5:21).

3. The Father hath made him judge of quick and dead, hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and appointed that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father (⁴⁸John 5:22, 23).

4. God will judge the world by this man: the day is appointed for judgment, and he is appointed for judge.

> "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man" (⁴⁴Acts 17:31).

Therefore we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive for the things done in the body, according to what they have done. If they have closed with him, heaven and salvation; if they have not, hell and damnation! And for these reasons he must be judge: —

(1.) Because of his humiliation, because of his Father's word he humbled himself, and he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This hath respect to his being judge, and his sitting in judgment upon angels and men (⁵⁰Philippians 2:7-11; ⁴⁵Romans 14:10, 11).

(2.) That all men might honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.

> "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (⁴⁸John 5:22, 23).

(3.) Because of his righteous judgment, this work is fit for no creature; it is only fit for the Son of God. For he will reward every man according to his ways (⁶⁶Revelation 22:12).

(4.) Because he is the Son of man. He

"hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:27).

[SECOND, THE TEXT TREATED BY WAY OF OBSERVATION.]

Thus have I in brief passed through this text by way of explications. My next work is to speak to it by way of observation. But I shall be also as brief in that as the nature of the thing will admit.

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

And now I come to some observations, and a little briefly to speak to them, and then conclude the whole. The words thus explained afford us many, some of which are these.

1. That God the Father, and Christ his Son, are two distinct persons in the Godhead.

2. That by them, not excluding the Holy Ghost, is contrived and determined the salvation of fallen mankind.

3. That this contrivance resolved itself into a covenant between these persons in the Godhead, which standeth in giving on the Father's part, and receiving on the Son's. "All that the Father giveth me," etc.

4. That every one that the Father hath given to Christ, according to the mind of God in the text, shall certainly come to him.

5. That coming to Jesus Christ is therefore not by the will, wisdom, or power of man; but by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father. "All that the Father giveth me shall come."

6. That Jesus Christ will be careful to receive, and will not in any wise reject those that come, or are coming to him. "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." There are, besides these, some other truths implied in the words. As,

7. They that are coming to Jesus Christ are ofttimes heartily afraid that he will not receive them.

8. Jesus Christ would not have them that in truth are coming to him once think that he will cast them out.

These observations lie all of them in the words, and are plentifully confirmed by the Scriptures of truth; but I shall not at this time speak to them all, but shall pass by the first, second, third, fourth, and sixth, partly because I design brevity, and partly because they are touched upon in the explicatory part of the text. I shall therefore begin with the fifth observation, and so make that the first in order, in the following discourse.

[COMING TO CHRIST NOT BY THE POWER OF MAN, BUT BY THE DRAWING OF THE FATHER.]

Observation First. First, then, coming to Christ is not by the will, wisdom, or power of man, but by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father. This observation standeth of two parts. First, The coming to Christ is not by the will, wisdom, or power of man; Second, But by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father.

That the text carrieth this truth in its bosom, you will find if you look into the explication of the first part thereof before. I shall, therefore, here follow the method propounded, viz: show,

First, That coming to Christ is not by the will, wisdom, or power of man. This is true, because the Word doth positively say it is not.

1. It denieth it wholly to be by the will of man. “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man” (John 1:13). And again, “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth” (Romans 9:16).

2. It denieth it to be of the wisdom of man, as is manifest from these considerations:

(1.) In the wisdom of God it pleased him, that the world by wisdom should not know him. Now, if by their wisdom they cannot know him, it follows, by that wisdom, they cannot come unto him; for coming to him is not before, but after some knowledge of him (1 Corinthians 1:21; Acts 13:27; Psalm 9:10).

(2.) The wisdom of man, in God’s account, as to the knowledge of Christ, is reckoned foolishness.

"Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20).

And again, The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1 Corinthians 2:14). If God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world; and again, if the wisdom of this world is foolishness with him, then verily it is not likely, that by that a sinner should become so prudent as to come to Jesus Christ, especially if you consider,

(3.) That the doctrine of a crucified Christ, and so of salvation by him, is the very thing that is counted foolishness to the wisdom of the world. Now, if the very doctrine of a crucified Christ be counted foolishness by the wisdom of this world, it cannot be that, by that wisdom, a man should be drawn out in his soul to come to him (1 Corinthians 3:19; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23).

(4.) God counted the wisdom of this world one of his greatest enemies; therefore, by that wisdom no man can come to Jesus Christ. For it is not likely that one of God's greatest enemies should draw a man to that which best of all pleaseth God, as coming to Christ doth. Now, that God counteth the wisdom of this world one of his greatest enemies, is evident,

(a.) For that it casteth the greatest contempt upon his Son's undertakings, as afore is proved, in that it counts his crucifixion foolishness; though that be one of the highest demonstrations of Divine wisdom (Ephesians 1:7, 8).

(b.) Because God hath threatened to destroy it, and bring it to nought, and cause it to perish; which surely he would not do, was it not an enemy, would it direct men to, and cause them to close with Jesus Christ (Isaiah 29:14; 1 Corinthians 1:19).

(c.) He hath rejected it from helping in the ministry of his Word, as a fruitless business, and a thing that comes to nought (1 Corinthians 2:4, 6, 12, 13).

(d.) Because it causeth to perish, those that seek it, and pursue it (1 Corinthians 1:18, 19).

(e.) And God has proclaimed, that if any man will be wise in this world, he must be a fool in the wisdom of this world, and that is the way to be wise in the wisdom of God. “If any man seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (<460318>1 Corinthians 3:18-20).

3. Coming to Christ is not by the power of man. This is evident partly,

(1.) From that which goeth before. For man’s power in the putting forth of it, in this matter, is either stirred up by love, or sense of necessity; but the wisdom of this world neither gives man love to, or sense of a need of, Jesus Christ; therefore, his power lieth still, as from that.

(2.) What power has he that is dead, as every natural man spiritually is, even dead in trespasses and sins? Dead, even as dead to God’s New Testament things as he that is in his grave is dead to the things of this world. What power hath he, then, whereby to come to Jesus Christ? (<430525>John 5:25; <490201>Ephesians 2:1; <510213>Colossians 2:13).

(3.) God forbids the mighty man’s glorying in his strength; and says positively, “By strength shall no man prevail;” and again, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord” (<242323>Jeremiah 9:23, 24; <090209>1 Samuel 2:9; <380406>Zechariah 4:6; <460127>1 Corinthians 1:27-31).

(4.) Paul acknowledgeth that man, nay, converted man, of himself, hath not a sufficiency of power in himself to think a good thought; if not to do that which is least, for to think is less than to come; then no man, by his own power, can come to Jesus Christ (<470305>2 Corinthians 2:5).

(5.) Hence we are said to be made willing to come, by the power of God; to be raised from a state of sin to a state of grace, by the power of God; and to believe, that is to come, through the exceeding working of his mighty power (<191003>Psalm 110:3; <510212>Colossians 2:12; <490118>Ephesians 1:18, 20; <182314>Job 23:14). But this needed not, if either man had power or will to come; or so much as graciously to think of being willing to come, of themselves, to Jesus Christ.

Second, I should now come to the proof of the second part of the observation [namely, the coming to Christ is by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father], but that is occasionally done already, in the explicatory part of the text, to which I refer the reader; for I shall here only give thee a text or two more to the same purpose, and so come to the use and application.

1. It is expressly said,

> "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).

By this text, there is not only insinuated that in man is want of power, but also of will, to come to Jesus Christ: they must be drawn; they come not if they be not drawn. And observe, it is not man, no, nor all the angels in heaven, that can draw one sinner to Jesus Christ. No man cometh to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

2. Again, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). It is an heavenly gift that maketh man come to Jesus Christ.

3. Again, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45).

I shall not enlarge, but shall make some use and application, and so come to the next observation.

[USE AND APPLICATION OF OBSERVATION FIRST.]

Use First. Is it so? Is coming to Jesus Christ not by the will, wisdom, or power of man, but by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father? Then they are to blame that cry up the will, wisdom, and power of man, as things sufficient to bring men to Christ.

There are some men who think they may not be contradicted, when they plead for the will, wisdom, and power of man in reference to the things that are of the kingdom of Christ; but I will say to such a man, he never yet came to understand, that himself is what the Scripture teacheth concerning him; neither did he ever know what coming to Christ is, by the

teaching, gift, and drawing of the Father. He is such a one that hath set up God's enemy in opposition to him, and that continueth in such acts of defiance; and what his end, without a new birth, will be, the Scripture teacheth also; but we will pass this.

Use Second. Is it so? Is coming to Jesus Christ by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father? Then let saints here learn to ascribe their coming to Christ to the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father. Christian man, bless God, who hath given thee to Jesus Christ by promise; and again, bless God for that he hath drawn thee to him. And why is it thee? Why not another? O that the glory of electing love should rest upon thy head, and that the glory of the exceeding grace of God should take hold of thy heart, and bring thee to Jesus Christ!

Use Third. Is it so, that coming to Jesus Christ is by the Father, as aforesaid? Then this should teach us to set a high esteem upon them that indeed are coming to Jesus Christ; I say, an high esteem on them, for the sake of him by virtue of whose grace they are made to come to Jesus Christ.

We see that when men, by the help of human abilities, do arrive at the knowledge of, and bring to pass that which, when done, is a wonder to the world, how he that did it, is esteemed and commended; yea, how are his wits, parts, industry, and unweariedness in all admired, and yet the man, as to this, is but of the world, and his work the effect of natural ability; the things also attained by him end in vanity and vexation of spirit. Further, perhaps in the pursuit of these his achievements, he sins against God, wastes his time vainly, and at long-run loses his soul by neglecting of better things; yet he is admired! But I say, if this man's parts, labor, diligence, and the like, will bring him to such applause and esteem in the world, what esteem should we have of such an one that is by the gift, promise, and power of God, coming to Jesus Christ?

1. This is a man with whom God is, in whom God works and walks; a man whose motion is governed and steered by the mighty hand of God, and the effectual working of his power. Here is a man!

2. This man, by the power of God's might, which worketh in him, is able to cast a whole world behind him, with all the lusts and pleasures of it, and

to charge through all the difficulties that men and devils can set against him. Here is a man.

3. This man is travelling to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus. Here is a man!

4. This man can look upon death with comfort, can laugh at destruction when it cometh, and longs to hear the sound of the last trump, and to see his Judge coming in the clouds of heaven. Here is a man indeed!

Let Christians, then, esteem each other as such. I know you do it; but do it more and more. And that you may, consider these two or three things.

(1.) These are the objects of Christ's esteem (Matthew 12:48, 49; 15:22-28; Luke 7:9).

(2.) These are the objects of the esteem of angels (Daniel 9:12; Daniel 10:21, 22; Daniel 13:3, 4; Hebrews 2:14).

(3.) These have been the objects of the esteem of heathens, when but convinced about them (Daniel 5:10, 11; Acts 5:15; 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25). "Let each [of you, then,] esteem [each] other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:2).

Use Fourth. Again, Is it so, that no man comes to Jesus Christ by the will, wisdom, and power of man, but by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father? Then this shows us how horribly ignorant of this such are, who make the man that is coming to Christ the object of their contempt and rage. These are also unreasonable and wicked men; men in whom is no faith (2 Thessalonians 3:2). Sinners, did you but know what a blessed thing it is to come to Jesus Christ, and that by the help and drawing of the Father, they do indeed come to him; you would hang and burn in hell a thousand years, before you would turn your spirits as you do, against him that God is drawing to Jesus Christ, and also against the God that draws him.

But, faithless sinner, let us a little expostulate the matter. What hath this man done against thee, that is coming to Jesus Christ? Why dost thou make him the object of thy scorn? doth his coming to Jesus Christ offend

thee? doth his pursuing of his own salvation offend thee? doth his forsaking of his sins and pleasures offend thee?

Poor coming man! “Shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?” (<2 Exodus 8:26).

But, I say, why offended at this? Is he ever the worse for coming to Jesus Christ, or for his loving and serving of Jesus Christ? Or is he ever the more a fool, for flying from that which will drown thee in hell-fire, and for seeking eternal life? Besides, pray, Sirs, consider it; this he doth, not of himself, but by the drawing of the Father. Come, let me tell thee in thine ear, thou that wilt not come to him thyself, and him that would, thou hinderest —

1. Thou shalt be judged for one that hath hated, maligned, and reproached Jesus Christ, to whom this poor sinner is coming.

2. Thou shalt be judged, too, for one that hath hated the Father, by whose powerful drawing this sinner doth come.

3. Thou shalt be taken and judged for one that has done despite to the Spirit of grace in him that is, by its help, coming to Jesus Christ. What sayest thou now? Wilt thou stand by thy doings? Wilt thou continue to contemn and reproach the living God? Thinkest thou that thou shalt weather it out well enough at the day of judgment? “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee,” saith the Lord? (<26 Ezekiel 22:14, <43 John 15:18-25; <65 Jude 1:15; <52 1 Thessalonians 4:8).

Use Fifth. Is it so, that no man comes to Jesus Christ by the will, wisdom, and power of man, but by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father? Then this showeth us how it comes to pass, that weak means are so powerful as to bring men out of their sins to a hearty pursuit after Jesus Christ. When God bid Moses speak to the people, he said,

> “I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee”
> (<2 Exodus 18:19).

When God speaks, when God works, who can let it? None, none; then the work goes on! Elias threw his mantle upon the shoulders of Elisha; and what a wonderful work followed! When Jesus fell in with the crowing of a

cock, what work was there! O when God is in the means, then shall that means — be it never so weak and contemptible in itself — work wonders (<11199>1 Kings 19:19; <40674>Matthew 26:74, 75; <41471>Mark 14:71, 72; <42260>Luke 22:60-62). The world understood not, nor believed, that the walls of Jericho should fall at the sound of rams' horns; but when God will work, the means must be effectual. A word weakly spoken, spoken with difficulty, in temptation, and in the midst of great contempt and scorn, works wonders, if the Lord thy God will say so too.

Use Sixth. Is it so? Doth no man come to Jesus Christ by the will, wisdom, and power of man, but by the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father? Then here is room for Christians to stand and wonder at the effectual working of God's providences, that he hath made use of, as means to bring them to Jesus Christ.

For although men are drawn to Christ by the power of the Father, yet that power putteth forth itself in the use of means: and these means are divers, sometimes this, sometimes that; for God is at liberty to work by which, and when, and how he will; but let the means be what they will, and as contemptible as may be, yet God that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and that out of weakness can make strong, can, nay, doth oftentimes make use of very unlikely means to bring about the conversion and salvation of his people. Therefore, you that are come to Christ — and that by unlikely means — stay yourselves, and wonder, and, wondering, magnify almighty power, by the work of which the means hath been made effectual to bring you to Jesus Christ.

What was the providence that God made use of as a means, either more remote or more near, to bring thee to Jesus Christ? Was it the removing of thy habitation, the change of thy condition, the loss of relations, estate, or the like? Was it thy casting of thine eye upon some good book, thy hearing of thy neighbors talk of heavenly things, the beholding of God's judgments as executed upon others, or thine own deliverance from them, or thy being strangely cast under the ministry of some godly man? O take notice of such providence or providences! They were sent and managed by mighty power to do thee good. God himself, I say, hath joined himself unto this chariot: yea, and so blessed it, that it failed not to accomplish the thing for which he sent it.

God blesseth not to every one his providences in this manner. How many thousands are there in this world, that pass every day under the same providences! but God is not in them, to do that work by them as he hath done for thy poor soul, by his effectually working with them. O that Jesus Christ should meet thee in this providence, that dispensation, or the other ordinance! This is grace indeed! At this, therefore, it will be thy wisdom to admire, and for this to bless God.

Give me leave to give you a taste of some of those providences that have been effectual, through the management of God, to bring salvation to the souls of his people.

(1.) The first shall be that of the woman of Samaria. It must happen, that she must needs go out of the city to draw water, not before nor after, but just when Jesus Christ her Savior was come from far, and set to rest him, being weary, upon the well. What a blessed providence was this! Even a providence managed by the almighty wisdom, and almighty power, to the conversion and salvation of this poor creature. For by this providence was this poor creature and her Savior brought together, that that blessed work might be fulfilled upon the woman, according to the purpose before determined by the Father (⁴⁰⁰¹John 4).

(2.) What providence was it that there should be a tree in the way for Zaccheus to climb, thereby to give Jesus opportunity to call that chief of the publicans home to himself, even before he came down therefrom (⁴²⁰¹Luke 19).

(3.) Was it not also wonderful that the thief, which you read of in the gospel, should, by the providence of God, be cast into prison, to be condemned even at that session that Christ himself was to die; nay, and that it should happen, too, that they must be hanged together, that the thief might be in hearing and observing of Jesus in his last words, that he might be converted by him before his death! (⁴²³⁰Luke 23).

(4.) What a strange providence was it, and as strangely managed by God, that Onesimus, when he was run away from his master, should be taken, and, as I think, cast into that very prison where Paul lay bound for the Word of the gospel; that he might there be by him converted, and then sent home again to his master Philemon! Behold

"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"(Romans 8:28).

Nay, I have myself known some that have been made to go to hear the Word preached against their wills; others have gone not to hear, but to see and to be seen; nay, to jeer and flout others, as also to catch and carp at things. Some also to feed their adulterous eyes with the sight of beautiful objects; and yet God hath made use even of these things, and even of the wicked and sinful proposals of sinners, to bring them under the grace that might save their souls.

Use Seventh. Doth no man come to Jesus Christ but by the drawing, etc., of the Father? Then let me here caution those poor sinners, that are spectators of the change that God hath wrought in them that are coming to Jesus Christ, not to attribute this work and change to other things and causes.

There are some poor sinners in the world that plainly see a change, a mighty change, in their neighbors and relations that are coming to Jesus Christ. But, as I said, they being ignorant, and not knowing whence it comes and whither it goes, for "so is every one that is born of the Spirit," (John 3:8), therefore they attribute this change to others causes: as melancholy; to sitting alone; to overmuch reading; to their going to too many sermons; to too much studying and musing on what they hear.

Also they conclude, on the other side, that it is for want of merry company; for want of physic; and therefore they advise them to leave off reading, going to sermons, the company of sober people; and to be merry, to go a gossiping, to busy themselves in the things of this world, not to sit musing alone, etc. But come, poor ignorant sinner, let me deal with thee. It seems thou art turned counselor for Satan: I tell thee thou knowest not what thou dost. Take heed of spending thy judgment after this manner; thou judgest foolishly, and sayest in this, to every one that passeth by, thou art a fool. What! count convictions for sin, mournings for sin, and repentance for sin, melancholy? This is like those that on the other side said, "These men are [drunk with] full of new wine," etc. Or as he that said Paul was mad (Acts 2:13, Acts 26:24). Poor ignorant sinner! canst thou judge no better? What! is sitting alone, pensive under God's hand, reading the Scriptures, and hearing of sermons, etc., the way to be

undone? The Lord open thine eyes, and make thee to see thine error! Thou hast set thyself against God, thou hast despised the operation of his hands, thou attemptest to murder souls. What! canst thou give no better counsel touching those whom God hath wounded, than to send them to the ordinances of hell for help? Thou biddest them be merry and lightsome; but dost thou not know that "the heart of fools is in the house of mirth?" (Ecclesiastes 7:4).

Thou biddest them shun the hearing of thundering preachers; but is it not "better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools?" (Ecclesiastes 7:5). Thou biddest them busy themselves in the things of this world; but dost thou not know that the Lord bids,

"Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness?"
(Matthew 6:33).

Poor ignorant sinner! hear the counsel of God to such, and learn thyself to be wiser. "Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James 5:13). "Blessed is the man that heareth me" (Proverbs 8:32). And hear for time to come, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). "Search the Scriptures" (John 5:39). "Give attendance to reading" (1 Timothy 4:13). "It is better to go to the house of mourning" (Ecclesiastes 7:2, 3).

And wilt thou judge him that doth thus? Art thou almost like Elymas the sorcerer, that sought to turn the deputy from the faith? Thou seekest to pervert the right ways of the Lord. Take heed lest some heavy judgment overtake thee (Acts 13:8-13). What! teach men to quench convictions; take men off from a serious consideration of the evil of sin, of the terrors of the world to come, and how they shall escape the same? What! teach men to put God and his Word out of their minds, by running to merry company, by running to the world, by gossiping? etc. This is as much as to bid them to say to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" or, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? or what profit have we if we keep his ways?" Here is a devil in grain! What! bid man walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

[TWO OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.]

Objection 1. But we do not know that such are coming to Jesus Christ; truly we wonder at them, and think they are fools.

Answer. Do you not know that they are coming to Jesus Christ? then they may be coming to him, for aught you know; and why will ye be worse than the brute, to speak evil of the things you know not? What! are ye made to be taken and destroyed? must ye utterly perish in your own corruptions? (2 Peter 2:12). Do you not know them? Let them alone then. If you cannot speak good of them, speak not bad.

> "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38, 39)

But why do you wonder at a work of conviction and conversion? Know you not that this is the judgment of God upon you, "ye despisers, to behold, and wonder, and perish?" (Acts 13:40, 41). But why wonder, and think they are fools? Is the way of the just an abomination to you? See that passage, and be ashamed, "He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked" (Proverbs 29:27). Your wondering at them argues that you are strangers to yourselves, to conviction for sin, and to hearty desires to be saved; as also to coming to Jesus Christ.

Objection 2. But how shall we know that such men are coming to Jesus Christ?

Answer. Who can make them see that Christ has made blind? (John 2:8, 9). Nevertheless, because I endeavor thy conviction, conversion, and salvation, consider: Do they cry out of sin, being burthened with it, as of an exceeding bitter thing? Do they fly from it, as from the face of a deadly serpent? Do they cry out of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as to justification in the sight of God? Do they cry out after the Lord Jesus, to save them? Do they see more worth and merit in one drop of Christ's blood to save them, than in all the sins of the world to damn them? Are they tender of sinning against Jesus Christ? Is his name, person, and undertakings, more precious to them, than is the glory of the world? Is this word more dear unto them? Is faith in Christ (of which they

are convinced by God's Spirit of the want of, and that without it they can never close with Christ) precious to them? Do they savor Christ in his Word, and do they leave all the world for his sake? And are they willing, God helping them, to run hazards for his name, for the love they bear to him? Are his saints precious to them? If these things be so, whether thou seest them or no, these men are coming to Jesus Christ (<8709>Romans 7:9-14; <9808>Psalm 38:3-8; <8618>Hebrews 6:18-20; <2646>Isaiah 64:6; <3007>Philippians 3:7, 8; <9540>Psalm 54:1; <9926>109:26; <4160>Acts 16:30; <9507>Psalm 51:7, 8; <6018>1 Peter 1:18, 19; <8724>Romans 7:24; <4702>2 Corinthians 5:2; <4054>Acts 5:41; <5207>James 2:7; <2510>Song of Solomon 5:10-16; <9390>Psalm 119; <8135>John 13:35; <6047>1 John 4:7; 3:14; <8169>John 16:9; <5423>Romans 14:23; <5106>Hebrews 11:6; <9910>Psalm 19:10, 11; <2516>Jeremiah 15:16; <5124>Hebrews 11:24-27; <4202>Acts 20:22-24; <4213>21:13; <5035>Titus 3:15; <6010>2 John 1; <4016>Ephesians 4:16; <5070>Philippians 7; <6624>1 Corinthians 16:24).

[COMERS OFTTIMES AFRAID THAT CHRIST WILL NOT RECEIVE THEM.]

Observation Second. — I come now to the second observation propounded to be spoken to, to wit, That they that are coming to Jesus Christ, are ofttimes heartily afraid that Jesus Christ will not receive them.

I told you that this observation is implied in the text; and I gather it,

First, From the largeness and openness of the promise: "I will in no wise cast out." For had there not been a proneness in us to "fear casting out," Christ needed not to have, as it were, waylaid our fear, as he doth by this great and strange expression, "In no wise;" "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." There needed not, as I may say, such a promise to be invented by the wisdom of heaven, and worded at such a rate, as it were on purpose to dash in pieces at one blow all the objections of coming sinners, if they were not prone to admit of such objections, to the discouraging of their own souls. For this word, "in no wise," cutteth the throat of all objections; and it was dropped by the Lord Jesus for that very end; and to help the faith that is mixed with unbelief. And it is, as it were, the sum of all promises; neither can any objection be made upon the unworthiness that thou findest in thee, that this promise will not assoil.

But I am a great sinner, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

But I am an old sinner, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

But I am a hard-hearted sinner, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

But I am a backsliding sinner, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

But I have served Satan all my days, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

But I have sinned against light, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

But I have sinned against mercy, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

But I have no good thing to bring with me, sayest thou.

“I will in no wise cast out,” says Christ.

Thus I might go on to the end of things, and show you, that still this promise was provided to answer all objections, and doth answer them. But I say, what need it be, if they that are coming to Jesus Christ are not sometimes, yea, oftentimes, heartily afraid, “that Jesus Christ will cast them out?”

Second, I will give you now two instances that seem to imply the truth of this observation.

In the ninth of Matthew, at the [402] second verse, you read of a man that was sick of the palsy; and he was coming to Jesus Christ, being borne upon a bed by his friends: he also was coming himself, and that upon another account than any of his friends were aware of; even for the pardon of sins, and the salvation of his soul. Now, so soon as ever he was come into the presence of Christ, Christ bids him “be of good cheer.” It seems

then, his heart was fainting; but what was the cause of his fainting? Not his bodily infirmity, for the cure of which his friends did bring him to Christ; but the guilt and burden of his sins, for the pardon of which himself did come to him; therefore he proceeds, “Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” I say, Christ saw him sinking in his mind, about how it would go with his most noble part; and therefore, first, he applies himself to him upon that account. For though his friends had faith enough as to the cure of the body, yet he himself had little enough as to the cure of his soul: therefore Christ takes him up as a man falling down, saying, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

That about the Prodigal seems pertinent also to this matter: “When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father.” Heartily spoken; but how did he perform his promise? I think not so well as he promised to do; and my ground for my thoughts is, because his father, so soon as he was come to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him; implying, methinks, as if the prodigal by this time was dejected in his mind; and therefore his father gives him the most sudden and familiar token of reconciliation. And kisses were of old time often used to remove doubts and fears. Thus Laban and Esau kiss Jacob. Thus Joseph kissed his brethren; and thus also David kissed Absalom (Genesis 31:55; Genesis 33:1-4; Genesis 48:9, 10; 2 Samuel 14:33). It is true, as I said, at first setting out, he spake heartily, as sometimes sinners also do in their beginning to come to Jesus Christ; but might not he, yea, in all probability he had, between the first step he took, and the last, by which he accomplished that journey, many a thought, both this way and that; as whether his father would receive him or no? As thus: I said, “I would go to my Father.” But how, if when I come at him he should ask me, Where I have all this while been? What must I say then? Also, if he ask me, What is become of the portion of goods that he gave me? What shall I say then? If he asks me, Who have been my companions? What shall I say then? If he also shall ask me, What hath been my preferment in all the time of my absence from him? What shall I say then? Yea, and if he ask me, Why I came home no sooner? What shall I say then? Thus, I say, might he reason with himself, and being conscious to himself, that he could give but a bad answer to any of these interrogatories, no marvel if he stood

in need first of all of a kiss from his father's lips. For had he answered the first in truth, he must say, I have been a haunter of taverns and ale-houses; and as for my portion, I spent it in riotous living; my companions were whores and drabs; as for my preferment, the highest was, that I became a hog-herd; and as for my not coming home till now, could I have made shift to have staid abroad any longer, I had not lain at thy feet for mercy now.

I say, these things considered, and considering, again, how prone poor man is to give way, when truly awakened, to despondings and heart misgivings, no marvel if he did sink in his mind, between the time of his first setting out, and that of his coming to his Father.

Third, But, thirdly, methinks I have for the confirmation of this truth the consent of all the saints that are under heaven, to wit, That they that are coming to Jesus Christ, are ofttimes heartily afraid that he will not receive them.

Question But what should be the reason? I will answer to this question thus:

1. It is not for want of the revealed will of God, that manifesteth grounds for the contrary, for of that there is a sufficiency; yea, the text itself hath laid a sufficient foundation for encouragement, for them that are coming to Jesus Christ. "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

2. It is not for want of any invitation to come, for that is full and plain.

> "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

3. Neither is it for want of a manifestation of Christ's willingness to receive, as those texts above named, with that which follows, declareth,

> "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37).

4. It is not for want of exceeding great and precious promises to receive them that come. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18).

5. It is not for want of solemn oath and engagement to save them that come.

> "For - because he could swear by no greater, he swear by himself - that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (<58613>Hebrews 6:13-18).

6. Neither is it for want of great examples of God's mercy, that have come to Jesus Christ, of which we read most plentifully in the Word. Therefore, it must be concluded, it is for want of that which follows.

[WHAT IT IS THAT PREVENTS THE COMING TO CHRIST.]

First, It is for want of the knowledge of Christ. Thou knowest but little of the grace and kindness that is in the heart of Christ; thou knowest but little of the virtue and merit of his blood; thou knowest but little of the willingness that is in his heart to save thee; and this is the reason of the fear that ariseth in thy heart, and that causeth thee to doubt that Christ will not receive thee. Unbelief is the daughter of Ignorance. Therefore Christ saith,

> "O fools, and slow of heart to believe" (<42425>Luke 24:25).

Slowness of heart to believe, flows from thy foolishness in the things of Christ; this is evident to all that are acquainted with themselves, and are seeking after Jesus Christ. The more ignorance, the more unbelief. The more knowledge of Christ, the more faith.

> "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee" (<19910>Psalm 9:10).

He, therefore, that began to come to Christ but the other day, and hath yet but little knowledge of him, he fears that Christ will not receive him. But he that hath been longer acquainted with him, he

> "is strong, and hath overcome the wicked one" (<62213>1 John 2:13).

When Joseph's brethren came into Egypt to buy corn, it is said, "Joseph knew his brethren, but his brethren knew not him." What follows? Why,

great mistrust of heart about their speeding well; especially, if Joseph did but answer them roughly, calling them spies, and questioning their truth and the like. And observe it, so long as their ignorance about their brother remained with them, whatsoever Joseph did, still they put the worse sense upon it. For instance, Joseph upon a time bids the steward of his house bring them home, to dine with him, to dine even in Joseph's house. And how is this resented by them? Why, they are afraid. "And the men were afraid, because they were brought unto" their brother "Joseph's house." And they said, He seeketh occasion against us, and will fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses (Genesis 42, Genesis 43). What! afraid to go to Joseph's house? He was their brother; he intended to feast them; to feast them, and to feast with them. Ah! but they were ignorant that he was their brother. And so long as their ignorance lasted, so long their fear terrified them. Just thus it is with the sinner that but of late is coming to Jesus Christ. He is ignorant of the love and pity that is in Christ to coming sinners. Therefore he doubts, therefore he fears, therefore his heart misgives him.

Coming sinner, Christ inviteth thee to dine and sup with him. He inviteth thee to a banquet of wine, yea, to come into his wine-cellar, and his banner over thee shall be love (Revelation 3:20; Song of Solomon 2:5). But I doubt it, says the sinner: but, it is answered, he calls thee, invites thee to his banquet, flagons, apples; to his wine, and to the juice of his pomegranate. "O, I fear, I doubt, I mistrust, I tremble in expectation of the contrary!" Come out of the man, thou dastardly ignorance! Be not afraid, sinner, only believe; "He that cometh to Christ he will in no wise cast out."

Let the coming sinner, therefore, seek after more of the good knowledge of Jesus Christ. Press after it, seek it as silver, and dig for it as for hid treasure. This will embolden thee; this will make thee wax stronger and stronger. "I know whom I have believed," I know him, said Paul; and what follows? Why, "and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). What had Paul committed to Jesus Christ? The answer is, He had committed to him his soul. But why did he commit his soul to him? Why, because he knew him. He knew him to be faithful, to be kind. He knew he would not

fail him, nor forsake him; and therefore he laid his soul down at his feet, and committed it to him, to keep against that day. But,

Second, Thy fears that Christ will not receive thee may be also a consequent of thy earnest and strong desires after thy salvation by him. For this I observe, that strong desires to have, are attended with strong fears of missing. What man most sets his heart upon, and what his desires are most after, he ofttimes most fears he shall not obtain. So the man, the ruler of the synagogue, had a great desire that his daughter should live; and that desire was attended with fear, that she should not. Wherefore, Christ saith unto him, "Be not afraid" (<4056>Mark 5:36).

Suppose a young man should have his heart much set upon a virgin to have her to wife, if ever he fears he shall not obtain her, it is when he begins to love; now, thinks he, somebody will step in betwixt my love and the object of it; either they will find fault with my person, my estate, my conditions, or something! Now thoughts begin to work; she doth not like me, or something. And thus it is with the soul at first coming to Jesus Christ, thou lovest him, and thy love produceth jealousy, and that jealousy ofttimes begets fears.

Now thou fearest the sins of thy youth, the sins of thine old age, the sins of thy calling, the sins of thy Christian duties, the sins of thine heart, or something; thou thinkest something or other will alienate the heart and affections of Jesus Christ from thee; thou thinkest he sees something in thee, for the sake of which he will refuse thy soul. But be content, a little more knowledge of him will make thee take better heart; thy earnest desires shall not be attended with such burning fears; thou shalt hereafter say, "This is my infirmity" (<1977>Psalm 77:10).

Thou art sick of love, a very sweet disease, and yet every disease has some weakness attending of it: yet I wish this distemper, if it be lawful to call it so, was more epidemical. Die of this disease I would gladly do; it is better than life itself, though it be attended with fears. But thou criest, I cannot obtain: well, be not too hasty in making conclusions. If Jesus Christ had not put his finger in at the hole of the lock, thy bowels would not have been troubled for him (<2204>Song of Solomon 5:4). Mark how the prophet hath it, "They shall walk after the Lord; he shall roar like a lion; when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west, they

shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria" (²⁸Hosea 11:10, 11). When God roars (as oft times the coming soul hears him roar), what man that is coming can do otherwise than tremble? (³⁰Amos 3:8). But trembling he comes: "He sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas" (⁴⁴Acts 16:29).

Should you ask him that we mentioned but now, How long is it since you began to fear you should miss of this damsel you love so? The answer will be, Ever since I began to love her. But did you not fear it before? No, nor should I fear it now, but that I vehemently love her. Come, sinner, let us apply it: How long is it since thou began to fear that Jesus Christ will not receive thee? Thy answer is, Ever since I began to desire that he would save my soul. I began to fear, when I began to come; and the more my heart burns in desires after him, the more I feel my heart fear I shall not be saved by him. See now, did not I tell thee that thy fears were but the consequence of strong desires? Well, fear not, coming sinner, thousands of coming souls are in thy condition, and yet they will get safe into Christ's bosom: "Say," says Christ, "to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; your God will come and save you" (²³Isaiah 35:4; ²³Isaiah 63:1).

Third, Thy fear that Christ will not receive thee may arise from a sense of thine own unworthiness. Thou seest what a poor, sorry, wretched, worthless creature thou art; and seeing this, thou fearest Christ will not receive thee. Alas, sayest thou, I am the vilest of all men; a town-sinner, a ringleading sinner! I am not only a sinner myself, but have made others twofold worse the children of hell also. Besides, now I am under some awakenings and stirrings of mind after salvation, even now I find my heart rebellious, carnal, hard, treacherous, desperate, prone to unbelief, to despair: it forgetteth the Word; it wandereth; it runneth to the ends of the earth. There is not, I am persuaded, one in all the world that hath such a desperate wicked heart as mine is; my soul is careless to do good, but none more earnest to do that which is evil.

Can such a one as I am, live in glory? Can a holy, a just, and a righteous God, once think (with honor to his name) of saving such a vile creature as I am? I fear it. Will he show wonders to such a dead dog as I am? I doubt it. I am cast out to the loathing of my person, yea, I loath myself; I stink in mine own nostrils. How can I then be accepted by a holy and sin-

abhorring God? (<19B805>Psalm 38:5-7; <261001>Ezekiel 11; <262042>Ezekiel 20:42, 44). Saved I would be; and who is there that would not, were they in my condition? Indeed, I wonder at the madness and folly of others, when I see them leap and skip so carelessly about the mouth of hell! Bold sinner, how darest thou tempt God, by laughing at the breach of his holy law? But alas! they are not so bad one way, but I am worse another: I wish myself were anybody but myself; and yet here again, I know not what to wish. When I see such as I believe are coming to Jesus Christ, O I bless them! But I am confounded in myself, to see how unlike, as I think, I am to every good man in the world. They can read, hear, pray, remember, repent, be humble, do everything better than so vile a wretch as I. I, vile wretch, am good for nothing but to burn in hell-fire, and when I think of that, I am confounded too!

Thus the sense of unworthiness creates and heightens fears in the hearts of them that are coming to Jesus Christ; but indeed it should not; for who needs the physician but the sick? or who did Christ come into the world to save, but the chief of sinners? (<410217>Mark 2:17; <550115>1 Timothy 1:15). Wherefore, the more thou seest thy sins, the faster fly thou to Jesus Christ. And let the sense of thine own unworthiness prevail with thee yet to go faster. As it is with the man that carrieth his broken arm in a sling to the bone-setter, still as he thinks of his broken arm, and as he feels the pain and anguish, he hastens his pace to the man. And if Satan meets thee, and asketh, Whither goest thou? tell him thou art maimed, and art going to the Lord Jesus. If he objects thine own unworthiness, tell him, That even as the sick seeketh the physician; as he that hath broken bones seeks him that can set them; so thou art going to Jesus Christ for cure and healing for thy sin sick soul. But it ofttimes happeneth to him that flies for his life, he despairs of escaping, and therefore delivers himself up into the hand of the pursuer. But up, up, sinner; be of good cheer, Christ came to save the unworthy ones: be not faithless, but believe. Come away, man, the Lord Jesus calls thee, saying, “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Fourth. Thy fear that Christ will not receive thee, may arise from a sense of the exceeding mercy of being saved; sometimes salvation is in the eyes of him that desires so great, so huge, so wonderful a thing, that the very thoughts of the excellency of it, engenders unbelief about obtaining it, in

the heart of those that unfeignedly desire it. “Seemeth it to you,” saith David, “a light thing to be a king’s son-in-law?” (1 Samuel 18:23). So the thoughts of the greatness and glory of the thing propounded, as heaven, eternal life, eternal glory, to be with God, and Christ, and angels; these are great things, things too good, saith the soul that is little in his own eyes; things too rich, saith the soul that is truly poor in spirit, for me.

Besides, the Holy Ghost hath a way to greaten heavenly things to the understanding of the coming sinner; yea, and at the same time to greaten, too, the sin and unworthiness of that sinner. Now the soul staggeringly wonders, saying, What! to be made like angels, like Christ, to live in eternal bliss, joy, and felicity! This is for angels, and for them that can walk like angels! If a prince, a duke, an earl, should send (by the hand of his servant) for some poor, sorry, beggarly scrub, to take her for his master to wife, and the servant should come and say, My lord and master, such an one hath sent me to thee, to take thee to him to wife; he is rich, beautiful, and of excellent qualities; he is loving, meek, humble, well-spoken, etc. What now would this poor, sorry, beggarly creature think? What would she say? or how would she frame an answer? When king David sent to Abigail upon this account, and though she was a rich woman, yet she said,

> “Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord” (1 Samuel 25:40, 41).

She was confounded, she could not well tell what to say, the offer was so great, beyond what could in reason be expected.

But suppose this great person should second his suit, and send to this sorry creature again, what would she say now? Would she not say, You mock me? But what if he affirms that he is in good earnest, and that his lord must have her to wife; yea, suppose he should prevail upon her to credit his message, and to address herself for her journey; yet, behold every thought of her pedigree confounds her; also her sense of want of beauty makes her ashamed; and if she doth but think of being embraced, the unbelief that is mixed with that thought whirls her into tremblings; and now she calls herself fool, for believing the messenger, and thinks not to go; if she thinks of being bold, she blushes; and the least thought that she

shall be rejected, when she comes at him, makes her look as if she would give up the ghost.

And is it a wonder, then, to see a soul that is drowned in the sense of glory and a sense of its own nothingness, to be confounded in itself, and to fear that the glory apprehended is too great, too good, and too rich, for such an one? That thing, heaven and eternal glory, is so great, and I that would have it, so small, so sorry a creature, that the thoughts of obtaining it confounds me.

Thus, I say, doth the greatness of the things desired, quite dash and overthrow the mind of the desirer. O, it is too big! it is too big! it is too great a mercy! But, coming sinner, let me reason with thee. Thou sayest, it is too big, too great. Well, will things that are less satisfy thy soul? Will a less thing than heaven, than glory and eternal life, answer thy desires? No, nothing less; and yet I fear they are too big, and too good for me, ever to obtain. Well, as big and as good as they are, God giveth them to such as thou; they are not too big for God to give; no, not too big to give freely. Be content; let God give like himself; he is that eternal God, and giveth like himself. When kings give, they do not use to give as poor men do. Hence it is said, that Nabal made a feast in his house like the feast of a king; and again, "All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto David" (1 Samuel 25:36; 2 Samuel 24:23). Now, God is a great king, let him give like a king; nay, let him give like himself, and do thou receive like thyself. He hath all, and thou hast nothing. God told his people of old, that he would save them in truth and in righteousness, and that they should return to, and enjoy the land, which before, for their sins, had spewed them out; and then adds, under a supposition of their counting the mercy too good, or too big,

> "If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 8:6).

As who should say, they are now in captivity, and little in their own eyes; therefore they think the mercy of returning to Canaan is a mercy too marvelously big for them to enjoy; but if it be so in their eyes, it is not so in mine; I will do for them like God, if they will but receive my bounty like sinners. Coming sinner, God can give his heavenly Canaan, and the

glory of it, unto thee; yea, none ever had them but as a gift, a free gift. He hath given us his Son, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

It was not the worthiness of Abraham, or Moses, or David or Peter, or Paul, but the mercy of God, that made them inheritors of heaven. If God thinks thee worthy, judge not thyself unworthy; but take it, and be thankful. And it is a good sign he intends to give thee, if he hath drawn out thy heart to ask.

"Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear" (Psalm 10:17).

When God is said to incline his ear, it implies an intention to bestow the mercy desired. Take it therefore; thy wisdom will be to receive, not sticking at thy own unworthiness. It is said, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." Again, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people" (1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 113:7, 8). You see also when God made a wedding for his Son, he called not the great, nor the rich, nor the mighty; but the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind (Matthew 12; Luke 14).

Fifth. Thy fears that Christ will not receive thee may arise from the hideous roaring of the devil, who pursues thee. He that hears him roar, must be a mighty Christian, if he can at that time deliver himself from fear. He is called a roaring lion; and then to allude to that in Isaiah, "If one look" into them, they have "darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof" (1 Peter 5:8; Isaiah 5:3).

[TWO OF THE DEVIL'S OBJECTIONS.]

— There are two things among many that Satan useth to roar out after them that are coming to Jesus Christ.

1. That they are not elected. Or

2. That they have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost. To both these I answer briefly —

1. [**Election**.] — Touching election, out of which thou fearest thou art excluded. Why, coming sinner, even the text itself affordeth thee help against this doubt, and that by a double argument.

(1.) That coming to Christ is by virtue of the gift, promise, and drawing of the Father; but thou art a-coming; therefore God hath given thee, promised thee, and is drawing thee to Jesus Christ. Coming sinner, hold to this; and when Satan beginneth to roar again, answer, But I feel my heart moving after Jesus Christ; but that would not be, if it were not given by promise, and drawing to Christ by the power of the Father.

(2.) Jesus Christ hath promised, "That him that cometh to him he will in no wise cast out." And if he hath said it, will he not make it good, I mean even thy salvation? For, as I have said already, not to cast out, is to receive and admit to the benefit of salvation. If then the Father hath given thee, as is manifest by thy coming; and if Christ will receive thee, thou coming soul, as it is plain he will, because he hath said, "He will in no wise cast out;" then be confident, and let those conclusions, that as naturally flow from the text as light from the sun, or water from the fountain, stay thee.

If Satan therefore objecteth, But thou art not elected; answer, But I am coming, Satan, I am coming; and that I could not be, but that the Father draws me; and I am coming to such a Lord Jesus, as will in no wise cast me out. Further, Satan, were I not elect, the Father would not draw me, nor would the Son so graciously open his bosom to me. I am persuaded, that not one of the nonelect shall ever be able to say, no, not in the day of judgment, I did sincerely come to Jesus Christ. Come they may, feignedly, as Judas and Simon Magus did; but that is not our question. Therefore, O thou honest-hearted coming sinner, be not afraid, but come.

2. [**Of the sin against the Holy Ghost**.] — As to the second part of the objection, about sinning the sin against the Holy Ghost, the same argument overthrows that also. But I will argue thus:

(1.) Coming to Christ is by virtue of a special gift of the Father; but the Father giveth no such gift to them that have sinned that sin; therefore thou that art coming hast not committed that sin. That the Father giveth no such gift to them that have sinned that sin is evident —

(a.) Because such have sinned themselves out of God's favor;

> "They shall never have forgiveness" (<401232>Matthew 12:32).

But it is a special favor of God to give unto a man, to come to Jesus Christ; because thereby he obtaineth forgiveness. Therefore he that cometh hath not sinned that sin.

(b.) They that have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, have sinned themselves out of an interest in the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood; "There remaineth [for such] no more sacrifice for sins" (<581026>Hebrews 10:26). But God giveth not grace to any of them to come to Christ, that have no share in the sacrifice of his body and blood. Therefore, thou that art coming to him, hast not sinned that sin.

(2.) Coming to Christ is by the special drawing of the Father; "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (<430644>John 6:44). But the Father draweth not him to Christ, for whom he hath not allotted forgiveness by his blood; therefore they that are coming to Jesus Christ have not committed that sin, because he hath allotted them forgiveness by his blood. That the Father cannot draw them to Jesus Christ, for whom he hath not allotted forgiveness of sins, is manifest to sense: for that would be a plain mockery, a flame, [F67] neither becoming his wisdom, justice, holiness, nor goodness.

(3.) Coming to Jesus Christ lays a man under the promise of forgiveness and salvation. But it is impossible that he that hath sinned that sin should ever be put under a promise of these. Therefore, he that hath sinned that sin can never have heart to come to Jesus Christ.

(4.) Coming to Jesus Christ lays a man under his intercession.

"For he ever liveth to make intercession for them that come" (Hebrews 7:25).

Therefore, he that is coming to Jesus Christ cannot have sinned that sin. Christ has forbidden his people to pray for them that have sinned that sin; and, therefore, will not pray for them himself, but he prays for them that come.

(5.) He that hath sinned that sin, Christ is to him of no more worth than is a man that is dead; "For he hath crucified to himself the Son of God;" yea, and hath also counted his precious blood as the blood of an unholy thing. (Hebrews 6, Hebrews 10) Now, he that hath this low esteem of Christ will never come to him for life; but the coming man has an high esteem of his person, blood, and merits. Therefore, he that is coming has not committed that sin.

(6.) If he that has sinned this sin might yet come to Jesus Christ, then must the truth of God be overthrown; which saith in one place, "He hath never forgiveness;" and in another, "I will in no wise cast him out." Therefore, that he may never have forgiveness, he shall never have heart to come to Jesus Christ. It is impossible that such an one should be renewed, either to or by repentance (Hebrews 6). Wherefore, never trouble thy head nor heart about this matter; he that cometh to Jesus Christ cannot have sinned against the Holy Ghost.

Sixth, Thy fears that Christ will not receive thee may arise from thine own folly, in inventing, yea, in thy chalking out to God, a way to bring thee home to Jesus Christ. Some souls that are coming to Jesus Christ are great tormentors of themselves upon this account; they conclude, that if their coming to Jesus Christ is right, they must needs be brought home thus and thus.

As to instance:

1. Says one, If God be bringing of me to Jesus Christ, then will he load me with the guilt of sin till he makes me roar again.

2. If God be indeed a-bringing me home to Jesus Christ, then must I be assaulted with dreadful temptations of the devil.

3. If God be indeed a-bringing me to Jesus Christ, then, even when I come at him, I shall have wonderful revelations of him.

This is the way that some sinners appoint for God; but, perhaps, he will not walk therein; yet will he bring them to Jesus Christ. But now, because they come not the way of their own chalking out, therefore they are at a loss. They look for heavy load and burden; but, perhaps, God gives them a sight of their lost condition, and addeth not that heavy weight and burden. They look for fearful temptations of Satan; but God sees that yet they are not fit for them, nor is the time come that he should be honored by them in such a condition. They look for great and glorious revelations of Christ, grace, and mercy; but, perhaps, God only takes the yoke from off their jaws, and lays meat before them. And now again they are at a loss, yet a-coming to Jesus Christ; "I drew them," saith God, "with cords of a man, with bands of love - I took the yoke from off their jaws, and laid meat unto them" (<28 11 4>Hosea 11:4).

Now, I say, If God brings thee to Christ, and not by the way that thou hast appointed, then thou art at a loss; and for thy being at a loss, thou mayest thank thyself. God hath more ways than thou knowest of to bring a sinner to Jesus Christ; but he will not give thee beforehand an account by which of them he will bring thee to Christ (<23 40 13>Isaiah 40:13; <18 33 13>Job 33:13). Sometimes he hath his ways in the whirlwind; but sometimes the Lord is not there (<34 01 03>Nahum 1:3; <11 19 11>1 Kings 19:11). If God will deal more gently with thee than with others of his children, grudge not at it; refuse not the waters that go softly, lest he bring upon thee the waters of the rivers, strong and many, even these two smoking firebrand, the devil and guilt of sin (<23 08 06>Isaiah 8:6, 7). He saith to Peter, "Follow me." And what thunder did Zaccheus hear or see? Zaccheus, "Come down," said Christ; "and he came down," says Luke, "and received him joyfully."

But had Peter or Zaccheus made the objection that thou hast made, and directed the Spirit of the Lord as thou hast done, they might have looked long enough before they had found themselves coming to Jesus Christ. Besides, I will tell thee, that the greatness of sense of sin, the hideous roaring of the devil, yea, and abundance of revelations, will not prove that God is bringing thy soul to Jesus Christ; as Balaam, Cain, Judas, and others, can witness.

Further, consider that what thou hast not of these things here, thou mayest have another time, and that to thy distraction. Wherefore, instead of being discontent, because thou art not in the fire, because thou hearest not the sound of the trumpet and alarm of war, “Pray that thou enter not into temptation;” yea, come boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in that time of need (<19815 Psalm 88:15; <40641 Matthew 26:41; <58416 Hebrews 4:16).

Poor creature! thou criest, if I were tempted, I could come faster and with more confidence to Christ. Thou sayest thou knowest not what. What says Job?

> “Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid. Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me” (<18321 Job 13:21, 22).

It is not the overheavy load of sin, but the discovery of mercy; not the roaring of the devil, but the drawing of the Father, that makes a man come to Jesus Christ; I myself know all these things.

True, sometimes, yea, most an end, [F68] they that come to Jesus Christ come the way that thou desirest; the loading, tempted way; but the Lord also leads some by the waters of comfort. If I was to choose when to go a long journey, to wit, whether I would go it in the dead of winter or in the pleasant spring, though, if it was a very profitable journey, as that of coming to Christ is, I would choose to go it through fire and water before I would choose lose the benefit. But, I say, if I might choose the time, I would choose to go it in the pleasant spring, because the way would be more delightsome, the days longer and warmer, the nights shorter and not so cold. And it is observable, that that very argument that thou usest to weaken thy strength in the way, that very argument Christ Jesus useth to encourage his beloved to come to him: “Rise up,” saith he, “my love, my fair one, and come away.” Why? “For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away” (<22210 Song of Solomon 2:10-13).

Trouble not thyself, coming sinner. If thou seest thy lost condition by original and actual sin; if thou seest thy need of the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ; if thou art willing to be found in him, and to take up thy cross and follow him; then pray for a fair wind and good weather, and come away. Stick no longer in a muse and doubt about things, but come away to Jesus Christ. Do it, I say, lest thou tempt God to lay the sorrows of a travailing woman upon thee. Thy folly in this thing may make him do it. Mind what follows: "The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him." Why? "He is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children" (Hosea 13:13).

Seventh, Thy fears that Christ will not receive thee may arise from those decays that thou findest in thy soul, even while thou art coming to him. Some, even as they are coming to Jesus Christ, do find themselves grow worse and worse; and this is indeed a sore trial to the poor coming sinner.

[FEARS THAT WE DO NOT RUN FAST ENOUGH.]

To explain myself. There is such an one a coming to Jesus Christ who, when at first he began to look out after him, was sensible, affectionate, and broken in spirit; but now is grown dark, senseless, hard-hearted, and inclining to neglect spiritual duties, etc. Besides, he now finds in himself inclinations to unbelief, atheism, blasphemy, and the like; now he finds he cannot tremble at God's Word, his judgment, nor at the apprehension of hell fire; neither can he, as he thinketh, be sorry for these things. Now, this is a sad dispensation. The man under the sixth head complaineth for want of temptations, but thou hast enough of them; art thou glad of them, tempted, coming sinner? They that never were exercised with them may think it a fine thing to be within the range, but he that is there is ready to sweat blood for sorrow of heart, and to howl for vexation of spirit! This man is in the wilderness among wild beasts. Here he sees a bear, there a lion, yonder a leopard, a wolf, a dragon; devils of all sorts, doubts of all sorts, fears of all sorts, haunt and molest his soul. Here he sees smoke, yea, feels fire and brimstone, scattered upon his secret places. He hears the sound of an horrible tempest. O! my friends, even the Lord Jesus, that knew all things, even he saw no pleasure in temptations, nor did he desire to be with them; wherefore, one text saith, "he was led," and another, "he

was driven," of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil (Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:12).

But to return. Thus it happeneth sometimes to them that are coming to Jesus Christ. A sad hap indeed! One would think that he that is flying from wrath to come has little need of such clogs as these. And yet so it is, and woeful experience proves it. The church of old complained that her enemies overtook her between the straits; just between hope and fear, heaven and hell (Lamentations 1).

This man feeleth the infirmity of his flesh, he findeth a proneness in himself to be desperate. Now, he chides with God, flings and tumbles like a wild bull in a net, and still the guilt of all returns upon himself, to the crushing of him to pieces. Yet he feeleth his heart so hard, that he can find, as he thinks, no kind falling under any of his miscarriages. Now, he is a lump of confusion in his own eyes, whose spirit and actions are without order.

Temptations serve the Christian as the shepherd's dog serveth the silly sheep; that is, coming behind the flock, he runs upon it, pulls it down, worries it, wounds it, and grievously bedabbleth it with dirt and wet, in the lowest places of the furrows of the field, and not leaving it until it is half dead, nor then neither, except God rebuke.

Here is now room for fears of being cast away. Now I see I am lost, says the sinner. This is not coming to Jesus Christ, says the sinner; such a desperate, hard, and wretched heart as mine is, cannot be a gracious one, saith the sinner. And bid such an one be better, he says, I cannot; no, I cannot.

[WHY TEMPTATIONS ASSAIL GOD'S PEOPLE.]

Question But what will you say to a soul in this condition?

Answer. I will say, That temptations have attended the best of God's people. I will say, That temptations come to do us good; and I will say also, That there is a difference betwixt growing worse and worse, and thy seeing more clearly how bad thou art.

There is a man of an ill-favored countenance, who hath too high a conceit of his beauty; and, wanting the benefit of a glass, he still stands in his own conceit; at last a limner is sent unto him, who draweth his ill-favored face to the life; now looking thereon, he begins to be convinced that he is not half so handsome as he thought he was. Coming sinner, thy temptations are these painters; they have drawn out thy ill-favored heart to the life, and have set it before thine eyes, and now thou seest how ill-favored thou art. Hezekiah was a good man, yet when he lay sick, for aught I know, he had somewhat too good an opinion of his heart; and for aught I know also, the Lord might, upon his recovery, leave him to a temptation, that he might better know all that was in his heart. Compare <2380>Isaiah 38:1-3, with <1432>2 Chronicles 32:31.

Alas! we are sinful out of measure, but see it not to be the full, until an hour of temptation comes. But when it comes, it doth as the painter doth, draweth out our heart to the life: yet the sight of what we are should not keep us from coming to Jesus Christ. There are two ways by which God lets a man into a sight of the naughtiness of his heart; one is, by the light of the Word and Spirit of God; and the other is, by the temptations of the devil. But, by the first, we see our naughtiness one way; and, by the second, another. By the light of the Word and Spirit of God, thou hast a sight of thy naughtiness; and by the light of the sun, thou hast a sight of the spots and defilements that are in thy house or raiment. Which light gives thee to see a necessity of cleansing, but maketh not the blemishes to spread more abominably. But when Satan comes, when he tempts, he puts life and rage into our sins, and turns them, as it were, into so many devils within us. Now, like prisoners, they attempt to break through the prison of our body; they will attempt to get out at our eyes, mouth, ears, any ways, to the scandal of the gospel, and reproach of religion, to the darkening of our evidences, and damning of our souls.

But I shall say, as I said before, this hath ofttimes been the lot of God’s people. And,

"There hath no temptation overtaken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (<460103>1 Corinthians 10:13).

See the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms, and that of the Lamentations. And remember further, that Christ himself was tempted to blaspheme, to worship the devil, and to murder himself, (<400401>Matthew 4; <420401>Luke 4); temptations worse than which thou canst hardly be overtaken with. But he was sinless, that is true. And he is thy Savior, and that is as true! Yea, it is as true also, that by his being tempted, he became the conqueror of the tempter, and a succorer of those that are tempted (<510214>Colossians 2:14, 15; <580215>Hebrews 2:15; <580415>Hebrews 4:15, 16).

Question But what should be the reason that some that are coming to Christ should be so lamentably cast down and buffeted with temptations?

Answer. It may be for several causes.

1. Some that are coming to Christ cannot be persuaded, until the temptation comes, that they are so vile as the Scripture saith they are. True, they see so much of their wretchedness as to drive them to Christ. But there is an over and above of wickedness which they see not. Peter little thought that he had had cursing, and swearing, and lying, and an inclination in his heart to deny his Master, before the temptation came; but when that indeed came upon him, then he found it there to his sorrow (<431336>John 13:36-38; <411466>Mark 14:36-40; 68-72).

2. Some that are coming to Jesus Christ are too much affected with their own graces, and too little taken with Christ's person; wherefore God, to take them off from doting upon their own jewels, and that they might look more to the person, undertaking, and merits of his Son, plunges them into the ditch by temptations. And this I take to be the meaning of Job, "If I wash myself," said he, "with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (<181930>Job 9:30). Job had been a little too much tampering with his own graces, and setting his excellencies a little too high; as these texts make manifest: <183308>Job 33:8-13, <183405>Job 34:5-10, <183502>Job 35:2, 3, <183801>Job 38:1, 2, <184005>Job 40:105, <184203>Job 42:3-6. But by that the temptations were ended, you find him better taught.

Yea, God doth ofttimes, even for this thing, as it were, take our graces from us, and so leave us almost quite to ourselves and to the tempter, that we may learn not to love the picture more than the person of his Son. See how he dealt with them in <26601>Ezekiel 16, and <28201>Hosea 2.

3. Perhaps thou hast been given too much to judge thy brother, to condemn thy brother, because a poor tempted man. And God, to bring down the pride of thy heart, letteth the tempter loose upon thee, that thou also mayst feel thyself weak. For

> "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (<20168>Proverbs 16:18).

4. It may be thou hast dealt a little too roughly with those that God hath this way wounded, not considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. And therefore God hath suffered it to come unto thee (<48601>Galatians 6:1).

5. It may be thou wast given to slumber and sleep, and therefore these temptations were sent to awake thee. You know that Peter's temptation came upon him after his sleeping; then, instead of watching and praying, then he denied, and denied, and denied his Master (<40260>Matthew 26).

6. It may be thou hast presumed too far, and stood too much in thine own strength, and therefore is a time of temptation come upon thee. This was also one cause why it came upon Peter — Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I. Ah! that is the way to be tempted indeed (<43336>John 13:36-38).

7. It may be God intends to make thee wise, to speak a word in season to others that are afflicted; and therefore he suffereth thee to be tempted. Christ was tempted that he might be able to succor them that are tempted (<58218>Hebrews 2:18).

8. It may be Satan hath dared God to suffer him to tempt thee; promising himself, that if he will but let him do it, thou wilt curse him to his face. Thus he obtained leave against Job; wherefore take heed, tempted soul, lest thou provest the devil's sayings true (<18011>Job 1:11).

9. It may be thy graces must be tried in the fire, that that rust that cleaveth to them may be taken away, and themselves proved, both before angels and devils, to be far better than of gold that perisheth; it may be also, that

thy graces are to receive special praises, and honor, and glory, at the coming of the Lord Jesus to judgment, for all the exploits that thou hast acted by them against hell, and its infernal crew, in the day of thy temptation (1 Peter 1:6, 7).

10. It may be God would have others learn by thy sighs, groans, and complaints, under temptation, to beware of those sins for the sake of which thou art at present delivered to the tormentors.

But to conclude this, put the worst to the worst — and then things will be bad enough — suppose that thou art to this day without the grace of God, yet thou art but a miserable creature, a sinner, that hath need of a blessed Savior; and the text presents thee with one as good and kind as heart can wish; who also for thy encouragement saith, "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

[APPLICATION OF OBSERVATION SECOND.]

To come, therefore, to a word of application. Is it so, that they that are coming to Jesus Christ are ofttimes heartily afraid that Jesus Christ will not receive them? Then this teacheth us these things —

1. That faith and doubting may at the same time have their residence in the same soul.

> "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"
> (Matthew 14:31).

He saith not, O thou of no faith! but, O thou of little faith! because he had a little faith in the midst of his many doubts. The same is true even of many that are coming to Jesus Christ. They come, and fear they come not, and doubt they come not. When they look upon the promise, or a word of encouragement by faith, then they come; but when they look upon themselves, or the difficulties that lie before them, then they doubt. "Bid me come," said Peter; "Come," said Christ. So he went down out of the ship to go to Jesus, but his hap was to go to him upon the water; there was the trial. So it is with the poor desiring soul. Bid me come, says the sinner; Come, says Christ, and I will in no wise cast thee out. So he comes, but his hap is to come upon the water, upon drowning difficulties; if, therefore, the wind of temptations blow, the waves of doubts and fears

will presently arise, and this coming sinner will begin to sink, if he has but little faith. But you shall find here in Peter's little faith, a twofold act; to wit, coming and crying. Little faith cannot come all the way without crying. So long as its holy boldness lasts, so long it can come with peace; but when it is so, it can come no further, it will go the rest of the way with crying. Peter went as far as his little faith would carry him: he also cried as far as his little faith would help, "Lord, save me, I perish!" And so with coming and crying he was kept from sinking, though he had but a little faith. "Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

2. Is it so, that they that are coming to Jesus Christ are ofttimes heartily afraid that Jesus Christ will not receive them? Then this shows us a reason of that dejection, and those castings down, that very often we perceive to be in them that are coming to Jesus Christ. Why, it is because they are afraid that Jesus Christ will not receive them. The poor world they mock us, because we are a dejected people; I mean, because we are sometimes so: but they do not know the cause of our dejection. Could we be persuaded, even then, when we are dejected, that Jesus Christ would indeed receive us, it would make us fly over their heads, and would put more gladness into our hearts than in the time in which their corn, wine, and oil increases (<190406Psalm 4:6, 7). But,

3. It is so, That they that are coming to Jesus Christ are ofttimes heartily afraid that he will not receive them. Then this shows that they that are coming to Jesus Christ are an awakened, sensible, considering people. For fear cometh from sense, and consideration of things. They are sensible of sin, sensible of the curse due thereto; they are also sensible of the glorious majesty of God, and of what a blessed, blessed thing it is to be received of Jesus Christ. The glory of heaven, and the evil of sin, these things they consider, and are sensible of. "When I remember, I am afraid." "When I consider, I am afraid" (<182106Job 21:6; <182315Job 23:15).

These things dash their spirits, being awake and sensible. Were they dead, like other men, they would not be afflicted with fear as they are. For dead men fear not, feel not, care not, but the living and sensible man, he it is that is ofttimes heartily afraid that Jesus Christ will not receive him. I say, the dead and senseless are not distressed. They presume; they are

groundlessly confident. Who so bold as blind Bayard? These indeed should fear and be afraid, because they are not coming to Jesus Christ. O! the hell, the fire, the pit, the wrath of God, and torment of hell, that are prepared for poor neglecting sinners! “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” (Hebrews 3:3). But they want sense of things, and so cannot fear.

4. Is it so, that they that are coming to Jesus Christ are ofttimes heartily afraid that he will not receive them? Then this should teach old Christians to pity and pray for young comers. You know the heart of a stranger; for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt. You know the fears, and doubts, and terrors, that take hold of them; for that they sometimes took hold of you. Wherefore pity them, pray for them, encourage them; they need all this: guilt hath overtaken them, fears of the wrath of God hath overtaken them. Perhaps they are within the sight of hell-fire; and the fear of going thither is burning hot within their hearts. You may know, how strangely Satan is suggesting his devilish doubts unto them, if possible he may sink and drown them with the multitude and weight of them. Old Christians, mend up the path for them, take the stumblingblocks out of the way; lest that which is feeble and weak be turned aside, but let it rather be healed (Hebrews 12).

[CHRIST WOULD HAVE COMERS NOT ONCE THINK THAT HE WILL CAST THEM OUT.]

Observation Third. — I come now to the next observation, and shall speak a little to that; to wit, That Jesus Christ would not have them, that in truth are coming to him, once think that he will cast them out.

The text is full of this: for he saith, “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Now, if he saith, I will not, he would not have us think he will. This is yet further manifest by these considerations.

First, Christ Jesus did forbid even them that as yet were not coming to him, once to think him such an one. “Do not think,” said he, “that I will accuse you to the Father” (John 5:45).

These, as I said, were such, that as yet were not coming to him. For he saith of them a little before, “And ye will not come to me;” for the respect

they had to the honor of men kept them back. Yet, I say, Jesus Christ gives them to understand, that though he might justly reject them, yet he would not, but bids them not once to think that he would accuse them to the Father. Now, not to accuse, with Christ, is to plead for: for Christ in these things stands not neuter between the Father and sinners. So then, if Jesus Christ would not have them think, that yet will not come to him, that he will accuse them; then he would not that they should think so, that in truth are coming to him. “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Second, When the woman taken in adultery, even in the very act, was brought before Jesus Christ, he so carried it both by words and actions, that he evidently enough made it manifest, that condemning and casting out were such things, for the doing of which he came not into the world. Wherefore, when they had set her before him, and had laid to her charge her heinous fact, he stooped down, and with his finger wrote upon the ground, as though he heard them not. Now what did he do by this his carriage, but testify plainly that he was not for receiving accusations against poor sinners, whoever accused by? And observe, though they continue asking, thinking at last to force him to condemn her; yet then he so answered, so that he drove all condemning persons from her. And then he adds, for her encouragement to come to him; “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more” (John 8:1-11).

Not but that he indeed abhorred the fact, but he would not condemn the woman for the sin, because that was not his office. He was not sent

> “into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17).

Now if Christ, though urged to it, would not condemn the guilty woman, though she was far at present from coming to him, he would not that they should once think that he will cast them out, that in truth are coming to him. “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Third, Christ plainly bids the turning sinner come; and forbids him to entertain any such thought as that he will cast him out.

> “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy

upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (<2907>Isaiah 4:7).

The Lord, by bidding the unrighteous forsake his thoughts, doth in special forbid, as I have said, viz., those thoughts that hinder the coming man in his progress to Jesus Christ, his unbelieving thoughts.

Therefore he bids him not only forsake his ways, but his thoughts. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." It is not enough to forsake one if thou wilt come to Jesus Christ; because the other will keep thee from him. Suppose a man forsakes his wicked ways, his debauched and filthy life; yet if these thoughts, that Jesus Christ will not receive him, be entertained and nourished in his heart; these thoughts will keep him from coming to Jesus Christ.

Sinner, coming sinner, art thou for coming to Jesus Christ? Yes, says the sinner. Forsake thy wicked ways then. So I do, says the sinner.

Why comest thou then so slowly? Because I am hindered. What hinders? Has God forbidden thee? No. Art thou not willing to come faster? Yes, yet I cannot. Well, prithee be plain with me, and tell me the reason and ground of thy discouragement. Why, says the sinner, though God forbids me not, and though I am willing to come faster, yet there naturally ariseth this, and that, and the other thought in my heart, that hinders my speed to Jesus Christ. Sometimes I think I am not chosen; sometimes I think I am not called; sometimes I think I am come too late; and sometimes I think I know not what it is to come. Also one while I think I have no grace; and then again, that I cannot pray; and then again, I think that I am a very hypocrite. And these things keep me from coming to Jesus Christ.

Look ye now, did not I tell you so? There are thoughts yet remaining in the heart, even of those who have forsaken their wicked ways; and with those thoughts they are more plagued than with anything else; because they hinder their coming to Jesus Christ; for the sin of unbelief, which is the original of all these thoughts, is that which besets a coming sinner more easily, than doth his ways (<580201>Hebrews 12:1-4). But now, since Jesus Christ commands thee to forsake these thoughts, forsake them, coming sinner; and if thou forsake them not, thou transgressest the commands of

Christ, and abidest thine own tormentor, and keepest thyself from establishment in grace.

"If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established"
(<2070 9Isaiah 7:9).

Thus you see how Jesus Christ setteth himself against such thoughts, that any way discourage the coming sinner; and thereby truly vindicates the doctrine we have in hand; to wit, that Jesus Christ would not have them, that in truth are coming to him, once think that he will cast them out. "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

[REASONS OF OBSERVATION THIRD.]

I come now to the reasons of the observation.

1. If Jesus Christ should allow thee once to think that he will cast thee out, he must allow thee to think that he will falsify his word; for he hath said, "I will in no wise cast out." But Christ would not that thou shouldst count him as one that will falsify his word; for he saith of himself, "I am the truth;" therefore he would not that any that in truth are coming to him, should once think that he will cast them out.

2. If Jesus Christ should allow the sinner that in truth is coming to him, once to think that he will cast him out, then he must allow, and so countenance the first appearance of unbelief; the which he counteth his greatest enemy, and against which he hast bent even his holy gospel. Therefore Jesus Christ would not that they that in truth are coming to him, should once think that he will cast them out. See <0143 1Matthew 14:31, <0212 1Matthew 21:21, <1112 3Mark 11:23, <2242 5Luke 24:25.

3. If Jesus Christ should allow the coming sinner once to think that he will cast him out; then he must allow him to make a question,

Whether he is willing to receive his Father's gift; for the coming sinner is his Father's gift; as also says the text; but he testifieth, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Therefore Jesus Christ would not have him, that in truth is coming to him, once to think that he will cast him out.

4. If Jesus Christ should allow them once to think, that indeed are coming to him, that he will cast them out, he must allow them to think that he will despise and reject the drawing of his Father. For no man can come to him but whom the Father draweth. But it would be high blasphemy, and damnable wickedness once to imagine thus. Therefore, Jesus Christ would not have him that cometh once think that he will cast him out.

5. If Jesus Christ should allow those that indeed are coming to him, once to think that he will cast them out, he must allow them to think that he will be unfaithful to the trust and charge that his Father hath committed to him; which is to save, and not to lose anything of that which he hath given unto him to save (<4869>John 6:39). But the Father hath given him a charge to save the coming sinner; therefore it cannot be, that he should allow, that such an one should once think that he will cast him out.

6. If Jesus Christ should allow that they should once think that are coming to him, that he will cast them out, then he must allow them to think that he will be unfaithful to his office of priesthood; for, as by the first part of it, he paid price for, and ransomed souls, so by the second part thereof, he continually maketh intercession to God for them that come (<5025>Hebrews 7:25). But he cannot allow us to question his faithful execution of his priesthood. Therefore he cannot allow us once to think that the coming sinner shall be cast out.

7. If Jesus Christ should allow us once to think that the coming sinner shall be cast out, then he must allow us to question his will, or power, or merit to save. But he cannot allow us once to question any of these; therefore not once to think, that the coming sinner shall be cast out.

> **(1.)** He cannot allow them to question his will; for he saith in the text, "I WILL in no wise cast out."
>
> **(2.)** He cannot allow us to question his power; for the Holy Ghost saith HE IS ABLE to save to the uttermost them that come.
>
> **(3.)** He cannot allow them to question the efficacy of his merit; for the blood of Christ cleanseth the comer from all sin, (<6107>1 John 1:7), therefore he cannot allow that he that is coming to him should once think that he will cast them out.

8. If Jesus Christ should allow the coming sinner once to think that he will cast him out, he must allow him to give the lie to the manifest testimony of the Father, Son, and Spirit; yea, to the whole gospel contained in Moses, the prophets, the book of Psalms, and that commonly called the New Testament. But he cannot allow of this; therefore, not that the coming sinner should once think that he will cast him out.

9. Lastly, If Jesus Christ should allow him that is coming to him, once to think that he will cast him out, he must allow him to question his Father's oath, which he in truth and righteousness hath taken, that they might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Jesus Christ. But he cannot allow this; therefore he cannot allow that the coming sinner should once think that he will cast him out (Hebrews 6).

[USE AND APPLICATION.]

I come now to make some GENERAL USE AND APPLICATION OF THE WHOLE, and so to draw towards a conclusion.

Use First. — The first use — A USE OF INFORMATION; and,

First, It informeth us that men by nature are far off from Christ. Let me a little improve this use, by speaking to these three questions.

1. Where is he that is coming [but has not come], to Jesus Christ?

2. What is he that is not coming to Jesus Christ?

3. Whither is he to go that cometh not to Jesus Christ?

1. Where is he?

[Answer.]

(1.) He is far from God, he is without him, even alienate from him both in his understanding, will, affections, judgment, and conscience (Ephesians 2:12; Ephesians 4:18).

(2.) He is far from Jesus Christ, who is the only deliverer of men from hell fire (Psalm 73:27).

(3.) He is far from the work of the Holy Ghost, the work of regeneration, and a second creation, without which no man shall see the kingdom of heaven (<43303>John 3:3).

(4.) He is far more righteous, [F69] from that righteousness that should make him acceptable in God's sight (<23462>Isaiah 46:12, 13).

(5.) He is under the power and dominion of sin; sin reigneth in and over him; it dwelleth in every faculty of his soul, and member of his body; so that from head to foot there is no place clean (<23006>Isaiah 1:6; <45309>Romans 3:9-18).

(6.) He is in the pest-house with Uzziah and excluded the camp of Israel with the lepers (<14621>2 Chronicles 26:21; <04502>Numbers 5:2; <18364>Job 36:14).

(7.) His "life is among the unclean." He is "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (<44823>Acts 8:28).

(8.) He is "in sin," "in the flesh," "in death," "in the snare of the devil," and is "taken captive by him at his will" (<46517>1 Corinthians 15:17; <45808>Romans 8:8; <62314>1 John 3:14; <55226>2 Timothy 2:26).

(9.) He is under the curse of the law, and the devil dwells in him, and hath the mastery of him (<48313>Galatians 3:13; <49202>Ephesians 2:2, 3; <44618>Acts 26:18).

(10.) He is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knows not whither he goes; for darkness has blinded his eyes.

(11.) He is in the broad way that leadeth to destruction; and holding on, he will assuredly go in at the broad gate, and so down the stairs to hell.

2. What is he that cometh not to Jesus Christ?

[Answer.]

(1.) He is counted one of God's enemies (<42914>Luke 19:14; <45807>Romans 8:7).

(2.) He is a child of the devil, and of hell; for the devil begat him, as to his sinful nature, and hell must swallow him at last, because he cometh not to Jesus Christ (<8:44 John 8:44; <6:38 1 John 3:8; <4:15 Matthew 23:15; <9:17 Psalm 9:17).

(3.) He is a child of wrath, an heir of it; it is his portion, and God will repay it him to his face (<9:01 Ephesians 2:1-3; <8:29 Job 21:29-31).

(4.) He is a self-murderer; he wrongeth his own soul, and is one that loveth death (<20:18 Proverbs 1:18; <20:36 Proverbs 8:36).

(5.) He is a companion for devils and damned men (<20:16 Proverbs 21:16; <25:41 Matthew 25:41).

3. Whither is he like to go that cometh not to Jesus Christ?

[Answer.]

(1.) He that cometh not to him, is like to go further from him; so every sin is a step further from Jesus Christ (<8:10 Hosea 11).

(2.) As he is in darkness, so he is like to go on in it; for Christ is the light of the world, and he that comes not to him, walketh in darkness (<8:12 John 8:12).

(3.) He is like to be removed at last as far from God, and Christ, and heaven, and all felicity, as an infinite God can remove him (<12:41 Matthew 12:41). But,

Second, This doctrine of coming to Christ informeth us where poor destitute sinners may find life for their souls, and that is in Christ. This life is in his Son; he that hath the Son, hath life. And again,

"Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord" (<20:35 Proverbs 8:35).

Now, for further enlargement, I will also here propound three more questions:

1. What life is in Christ?

2. Who may have it?

3. Upon what terms?

1. What life is in Jesus Christ?

[Answer.]

(1.) There is justifying life in Christ. Man by sin is dead in law; and Christ only can deliver him by his righteousness and blood from this death into a state of life.

"For God sent his Son into the world,
that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

That is, through the righteousness which he should accomplish, and the death that he should die.

(2.) There is eternal life in Christ; life that is endless; life for ever and ever. "He hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). Now, justification and eternal salvation being both in Christ, and nowhere else to be had for men, who would not come to Jesus Christ?

2. Who may have this life?

I answer, Poor, helpless, miserable sinners. Particularly,

(1.) Such as are willing to have it. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

(2.) He that thirsteth for it. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life" (Revelation 21:6).

(3.) He that is weary of his sins. "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing" (Isaiah 28:12).

(4.) He that is poor and needy. "He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy" (Psalm 72:13).

(5.) He that followeth after him, crieth for life. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

3. Upon what terms may he have this life?

[Answer.] Freely. Sinner, dost thou hear. Thou mayest have it freely. Let him take the water of life freely. I will give him of the fountain of the water of life freely. “And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both” (Luke 7:42). Freely, without money, or without price. “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). Sinner, art thou thirsty? art thou weary? art thou willing? Come, then, and regard not your stuff; for all the good that is in Christ is offered to the coming sinner, without money and without price. He has life to give away to such as want it, and that hath not a penny to purchase it; and he will give it freely. Oh what a blessed condition is the coming sinner in! But,

Third, This doctrine of coming to Jesus Christ for life, informeth us, that it is to be had nowhere else. Might it be had anywhere else, the text, and him that spoke it, would be but little set by; for what greater matter is there in “I will in no wise cast out,” if another stood by that could receive them? But here appears the glory of Christ, that none but he can save. And here appears his love, that though none can save but he, yet he is not coy in saving. “But him that comes to me,” says he, “I will in no wise cast out.”

That none can save but Jesus Christ, is evident from Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other;” and “he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 John 5:11). If life could have been had anywhere else, it should have been in the law. But it is not in the law; for by the deeds of the law, no man living shall be justified; and if not justified, then no life. Therefore life is nowhere to be had but in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3).

> **[Question]** But why would God so order it, that life should be had nowhere else but in Jesus Christ?

[Answer.] There is reason for it, and that both with respect to God and us.

1. With respect to God.

> **(1.)** That it might be in a way of justice as well as mercy. And in a way of justice it could not have been, if it had not been by Christ; because

he, and he only, was able to answer the demand of the law, and give for sin what the justice thereof required. All angels had been crushed down to hell for ever, had that curse been laid upon them for our sins, which was laid upon Jesus Christ; but it was laid upon him, and he bare it; and answered the penalty, and redeemed his people from under it, with that satisfaction to Divine justice that God himself doth now proclaim, That he is faithful and just to forgive us, if by faith we shall venture to Jesus, and trust to what he has done for life (Romans 3:24-26; John 1:4).

(2.) Life must be by Jesus Christ, that God might be adored and magnified, for finding out this way. This is the Lord's doings, that in all things he might be glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(3.) It must be by Jesus Christ, that life might be at God's dispose, who hath great pity for the poor, the lowly, the meek, the broken in heart, and for them that others care not for (Psalm 34:6; Psalm 138:6; 25; Psalm 51:17; Psalm 147:3).

(4.) Life must be in Christ, to cut off boasting from the lips of men. This also is the apostle's reason in Romans 3:19, 27 (Ephesians 2:8-10).

2. Life must be in Jesus Christ with respect to us.

(1.) That we might have it upon the easiest terms, to wit, freely: as a gift, not as wages. Was it in Moses' hand, we should come hardly at it. Was it in the pope's hand, we should pay soundly for it. [F70] But thanks be to God, it is in Christ, laid up in him, and by him to be communicated to sinners upon easy terms, even for receiving, accepting, and embracing with thanksgiving; as the Scriptures plainly declare (John 1:11, 12; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Hebrews 11:13; Colossians 3:13-15).

(2.) Life is in Christ FOR US, that it might not be upon so brittle a foundation, as indeed it would had it been anywhere else. The law itself is weak because of us, as to this. But Christ is a tried stone, a sure foundation, one that will not fail to bear thy burden, and to receive thy soul, coming sinner.

(3.) Life is in Christ, that it might be sure to all the seed. Alas! the best of us, was life left in our hand, to be sure we should forfeit it, over, and over, and over; or, was it in any other hand, we should, by our often backslidings, so offend him, that at last he would shut up his bowels in everlasting displeasure against us. But now it is in Christ, it is with one that can pity, pray for, pardon, yea, multiply pardons; it is with one that can have compassion upon us, when we are out of the way; with one that hath an heart to fetch us again, when we are gone astray; with one that can pardon without upbraiding. Blessed be God, that life is in Christ! For now it is sure to all the seed. But,

Fourth, This doctrine of coming to Jesus Christ for life informs us of the evil of unbelief; that wicked thing that is the only or chief hindrance to the coming sinner. Doth the text say, "Come?" Doth it say, "and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out?" Then what an evil is that that keepeth sinners from coming to Jesus Christ! And that evil is unbelief: for by faith we come; by unbelief we keep away. Therefore it is said to be that by which a soul is said to depart from God; because it was that which at first caused the world to go off from him, and that also that keeps them from him to this day. And it doth it the more easily, because it doth it with a wile.

[OF THE SIN OF UNBELIEF.]

This sin may be called the white devil, for it oftentimes, in its mischievous doings in the soul, shows as if it was an angel of light: yea, it acteth like a counselor of heaven. Therefore a little to discourse of this evil disease.

1. It is that sin, above all others, that hath some show of reason in its attempts. For it keeps the soul from Christ by pretending its present unfitness and unpreparedness; as want of more sense of sin, want of more repentance, want of more humility, want of a more broken heart.

2. It is the sin that most suiteth with the conscience: the conscience of the coming sinner tells him that he hath nothing good; that he stands indictable for ten thousand talents; that he is a very ignorant, blind, and hard-hearted sinner, unworthy to be once taken notice of by Jesus Christ. And will you, says Unbelief, in such a case as you now are, presume to come to Jesus Christ?

3. It is the sin that most suiteth with our sense of feeling. The coming sinner feels the workings of sin, of all manner of sin and wretchedness in his flesh; he also feels the wrath and judgment of God due to sin, and ofttimes staggers under it. Now, says Unbelief, you may see you have no grace; for that which works in you is corruption. You may also perceive that God doth not love you, because the sense of his wrath abides upon you. Therefore, how can you bear the face to come to Jesus Christ?

4. It is that sin, above all others, that most suiteth with the wisdom of our flesh. The wisdom of our flesh thinks it prudent to question awhile, to stand back awhile, to hearken to both sides awhile; and not to be rash, sudden, or unadvised, in too bold a presuming upon Jesus Christ. And this wisdom unbelief falls in with.

5. It is that sin, above all other, that continually is whispering the soul in the ear with mistrusts of the faithfulness of God, in keeping promise to them that come to Jesus Christ for life. It also suggests mistrust about Christ's willingness to receive it, and save it. And no sin can do this so artificially as unbelief.

6. It is also that sin which is always at hand to enter an objection against this or that promise that by the Spirit of God is brought to our heart to comfort us; and if the poor coming sinner is not aware of it, it will, by some evasion, slight, trick, or cavil, quickly wrest from him the promise again, and he shall have but little benefit of it.

7. It is that, above all other sins, that weakness our prayers, our faith, our love, our diligence, our hope, and expectations: it even taketh the heart away from God in duty.

8. Lastly, This sin, as I have said even now, it appeareth in the soul with so many sweet pretences to safety and security, that it is, as it were, counsel sent from heaven; bidding the soul be wise, wary, considerate, well-advised, and to take heed of too rash a venture upon believing. Be sure, first, that God loves you; take hold of no promise until you are forced by God unto it; neither be you sure of your salvation; doubt it still, though the testimony of the Lord has been often confirmed in you. Live not by faith, but by sense; and when you can neither see nor feel, then fear and mistrust, then doubt and question all. This is the devilish counsel of

unbelief, which is so covered over with specious pretences, that the wisest Christian can hardly shake off these reasonings.

[QUALITIES OF UNBELIEF AS OPPOSED TO FAITH.]

But to be brief. Let me here give thee, Christian reader, a more particular description of the qualities of unbelief, by opposing faith unto it, in these twenty-five particulars: —

1. Faith believeth the Word of God; but unbelief questioneth the certainty of the same (<19624>Psalm 106:24).

2. Faith believeth the Word, because it is true; but unbelief doubteth thereof, because it is true (<540803>1 Timothy 4:3; <430845>John 8:45).

3. Faith sees more in a promise of God to help, than in all other things to hinder; but unbelief, notwithstanding God's promise, saith, How can these things be? (<450419>Romans 4:19-21; <120702>2 Kings 7:2; <430311>John 3:11, 12).

4. Faith will make thee see love in the heart of Christ, when with his mouth he giveth reproofs; but unbelief will imagine wrath in his heart, when with his mouth and Word he saith he loves us (<401522>Matthew 15:22, 28; <041301>Numbers 13; <141409>2 Chronicles 14:3).

5. Faith will help the soul to wait, though God defers to give; but unbelief will take huff and throw up all, if God makes any tarrying (<192505>Psalm 25:5; <230817>Isaiah 8:17; <120633>2 Kings 6:33; <19406>Psalm 106:13, 14).

6. Faith will give comfort in the midst of fears; but unbelief causeth fears in the midst of comfort (<142020>2 Chronicles 20:20, 21; <400826>Matthew 8:26; <422405>Luke 24:26, 27).

7. Faith will suck sweetness out of God's rod; but unbelief can find no comfort in his greatest mercies (<192304>Psalm 23:4; Numbers 21).

8. Faith maketh great burdens light; but unbelief maketh light ones intolerably heavy (<470401>2 Corinthians 4:1; 14-18; <390112>Malachi 1:12, 13).

9. Faith helpeth us when we are down; but unbelief throws us down when we are up (<330708>Micah 7:8-10; <580411>Hebrews 4:11).

10. Faith bringeth us near to God when we are far from him; but unbelief puts us far from God when we are near to him (⁵⁸Hebrews 10:22; ⁵⁸Hebrews 3:12, 13).

11. Where faith reigns, it declareth men to be the friends of God; but where unbelief reigns, it declareth them to be his enemies (⁴³John 3:23; ⁵⁸Hebrews 3:18; ⁶⁶Revelation 21:8).

12. Faith putteth a man under grace; but unbelief holdeth him under wrath (⁴⁵Romans 3:24-26; ⁴⁵Romans 14:6; ⁴⁹Ephesians 2:8; ⁴³John 3:36; ⁶²1 John 5:10; ⁵⁸Hebrews 3:17; ⁴¹Mark 16:16).

13. Faith purifieth the heart; but unbelief keepeth it polluted and impure (⁴⁴Acts 15:9; ⁵⁶Titus 1:15, 16).

14. By faith, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; but by unbelief, we are shut up under the law to perish (⁴⁵Romans 4:23, 24; ⁴⁵Romans 11:32; ⁴⁸Galatians 3:23).

15. Faith maketh our work acceptable to God through Christ; but whatsoever is of unbelief is sin. For without faith it is impossible to please him (⁵⁸Hebrews 11:4; ⁴⁵Romans 14:23; ⁵⁸Hebrews 6:6).

16. Faith giveth us peace and comfort in our souls; but unbelief worketh trouble and tossings, like the restless waves of the sea (⁴⁵Romans 5:1; ⁵⁹James 1:6).

17. Faith maketh us to see preciousness in Christ; but unbelief sees no form, beauty, or comeliness in him (⁶⁰1 Peter 2:7; ²³Isaiah 53:2, 3).

18. By faith we have our life in Christ's fullness; but by unbelief we starve and pine away (⁴⁸Galatians 2:20).

19. Faith gives us the victory over the law, sin, death, the devil, and all evils; but unbelief layeth us obnoxious to them all (⁶²1 John 5:4, 5; ⁴²Luke 12:46).

20. Faith will show us more excellency in things not seen, than in them that are; but unbelief sees more in things that are seen, than in things that will be hereafter;. (⁴⁷2 Corinthians 4:18; ⁵⁸Hebrews 11:24-27; ⁴⁶1 Corinthians 15:32).

21. Faith makes the ways of God pleasant and admirable; but unbelief makes them heavy and hard (<480506>Galatians 5:6; <462012>1 Corinthians 12:10, 11; <430660>John 6:60; <190203>Psalm 2:3).

22. By faith Abraham, Isaiahac, and Jacob possessed the land of promise; but because of unbelief, neither Aaron, nor Moses, nor Miriam could get thither (<581109>Hebrews 11:9; 580319>Hebrews 3:19).

23. By faith the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea; but by unbelief the generality of them perished in the wilderness (<581129>Hebrews 11:29; <650105>Jude 1:5).

24. By faith Gideon did more with three hundred men, and a few empty pitchers, than all the twelve tribes could do, because they believed not God (<070716>Judges 7:16-22; <041411>Numbers 14:11, 14).

25. By faith Peter walked on the water; but by unbelief he began to sink (<401428>Matthew 14:28-30).

Thus might many more be added, which, for brevity's sake, I omit; beseeching every one that thinketh he hath a soul to save, or be damned, to take heed of unbelief; lest, seeing there is a promise left us of entering into his rest, any of us by unbelief should indeed come short of it.

Use Second. The second use — A USE OF EXAMINATION.

We come now to a use of examination. Sinner, thou hast heard of the necessity of coming to Christ; also of the willingness of Christ to receive the coming soul; together with the benefit that they by him shall have that indeed come to him. Put thyself now upon this serious inquiry, Am I indeed come to Jesus Christ?

Motives plenty I might here urge, to prevail with thee to a conscientious performance of this duty. As,

1. Thou art in sin, in the flesh, in death, in the snare of the devil, and under the curse of the law, if you are not coming to Jesus Christ.

2. There is no way to be delivered from these, but by coming to Jesus Christ.

3. If thou comest, Jesus Christ will receive thee, and will in no wise cast thee out.

4. Thou wilt not repent it in the day of judgment, if now thou comest to Jesus Christ.

5. But thou wilt surely mourn at last, if now thou shalt refuse to come.

6. And lastly, Now thou hast been invited to come; now will thy judgment be greater, and thy damnation more fearful, if thou shalt yet refuse, than if thou hadst never heard of coming to Christ.

Objection But we hope we are come to Jesus Christ.

Answer. It is well if it proves so. But lest thou shouldst speak without ground, and so fall unawares into hell-fire, let us examine a little.

First, Art thou indeed come to Jesus Christ? What hast thou left behind thee? What didst thou come away from, in thy coming to Jesus Christ?

When Lot came out of Sodom, he left the Sodomites behind him (Genesis 19). When Abraham came out of Chaldea, he left his country and kindred behind him (Genesis 12; Acts 7). When Ruth came to put her trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel, she left her father and mother, her gods, and the land of her nativity, behind her (Ruth 1:15-17; Ruth 2:11, 12). When Peter came to Christ, he left his nets behind him (Matthew 4:20). When Zaccheus came to Christ, he left the receipt of custom behind him (Luke 19). When Paul came to Christ, he left his own righteousness behind him (Philippians 3:7, 8). When those that used curious arts came to Jesus Christ, they took their curious books and burned them; though, in another man's eye, they were counted worth fifty thousand pieces of silver (Acts 19:18-20).

What sayest thou, man? Hast thou left thy darling sins, thy Sodomitish pleasures, thy acquaintance and vain companions, thy unlawful gain, thy idol-gods, thy righteousness, and thy unlawful curious arts, behind thee? If any of these be with thee, and thou with them, in thy heart and life, thou art not yet come to Jesus Christ.

Second, Art thou come to Jesus Christ? Prithee tell me what moved thee to come to Jesus Christ?

Men do not usually come or go to this or that place, before they have a moving cause, or rather a cause moving them thereto. No more do they come to Jesus Christ — I do not say, before they have a cause, but — before that cause moveth them to come. What sayest thou? Hast thou a cause moving thee to come? To be at present in a state of condemnation, is cause sufficient for men to come to Jesus Christ for life. But that will not do, except the cause move them; the which it will never do, until their eyes be opened to see themselves in that condition. For it is not a man's being under wrath, but his seeing it, that moveth him to come to Jesus Christ. Alas! all men by sin are under wrath; yet but few of that all come to Jesus Christ. And the reason is, because they do not see their condition. "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7). Until men are warned, and also receive the warning, they will not come to Jesus Christ.

Take three or four instances for this. Adam and Eve came not to Jesus Christ until they received the alarm, the conviction of their undone state by sin. (Genesis 3) The children of Israel cried not out for a mediator before they saw themselves in danger of death by the law (Exodus 20:18, 19). Before the publican came, he saw himself lost and undone (Luke 18:13). The prodigal came not, until he saw death at the door, ready to devour him (Luke 15:17, 18). The three thousand came not, until they knew not what to do to be saved (Acts 2:37-39). Paul came not, until he saw himself lost and undone (Acts 9:3-8, 11). Lastly, Before the jailer came, he saw himself undone (Acts 16:29-31). And I tell thee, it is an easier thing to persuade a well man to go to the physician for cure, or a man without hurt to seek for a plaster to cure him, than it is to persuade a man that sees not his soul-disease, to come to Jesus Christ. The whole have no need of the physician; then why should they go to him? The full pitcher can hold no more; then why should it go to the fountain? And if thou comest full, thou comest not aright; and be sure Christ will send thee empty away. "But he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Mark 2:17; Psalm 147:3; Luke 1:53).

Third, Art thou coming to Jesus Christ? Prithee tell me, What seest thou in him to allure thee to forsake all the world, to come to him?

I say, What hast thou seen in him? Men must see something in Jesus Christ, else they will not come to him.

1. What comeliness hast thou seen in his person? thou comest not, if thou seest no form nor comeliness in him (Isaiah 53:1-3).

2. Until those mentioned in the Song were convinced that there was more beauty, comeliness, and desirableness in Christ, than in ten thousand, they did not so much as ask where he was, nor incline to turn aside after him (Song of Solomon 5, Song of Solomon 6).

There be many things on this side heaven that can and do carry away the heart; and so will do, so long as thou livest, if thou shalt be kept blind, and not be admitted to see the beauty of the Lord Jesus.

Fourth, Art thou come to the Lord Jesus? What hast thou found in him, since thou camest to him?

Peter found with him the word of eternal life (John 6:68). They that Peter makes mention of, found him a living stone, even such a living stone as communicated life to them (1 Peter 2:4, 5). He saith himself, they that come to him, etc., shall find rest unto their souls; hast thou found rest in him for thy soul? (Matthew 11:28).

Let us go back to the times of the Old Testament.

1. Abraham found THAT in him, that made him leave his country for him, and become for his sake a pilgrim and stranger in the earth (Genesis 12; Hebrews 11).

2. Moses found THAT in him, that made him forsake a crown, and a kingdom for him too.

3. David found so much in him, that he counted to be in his house one day was better than a thousand; yea, to be a door-keeper therein was better, in his esteem, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness (Psalm 84:10).

4. What did Daniel and the three children find in him, to make them run the hazards of the fiery furnace, and the den of lions, for his sake? (Daniel 3, Daniel 6).

Let us come down to martyrs.

1. Stephen found that in him that made him joyful, and quietly yield up his life for his name (Acts 7).

2. Ignatius found that in Christ that made him choose to go through the torments of the devil, and hell itself, rather than not to have him. — Fox's Acts and Monuments, volume 1, Anno. 111. Edit. 1632.

3. What saw Romanus in Christ, when he said to the raging Emperor, who threatened him with fearful torments, Thy sentence, O Emperor, I joyfully embrace, and refuse not to be sacrificed by as cruel torments as thou canst invent? — Fox, volume 1.

4. What saw Menas, the Egyptian, in Christ, when he said, under most cruel torments, There is nothing in my mind that can be compared to the kingdom of heaven; neither is all the world, if it was weighed in a balance, to be preferred with the price of one soul? Who is able to separate us from the love of Jesus Christ our Lord? And I have learned of my Lord and King not to fear them that kill the body, etc.

5. What did Eulalia see in Christ, when she said, as they were pulling her one joint from another, Behold, O Lord, I will not forget thee. What a pleasure it is for them, O Christ! that remember thy triumphant victory?

6. What think you did Agnes see in Christ, when rejoicingly she went to meet the soldier that was appointed to be her executioner. I will willingly, said she, receive into my paps the length of this sword, and into my breast will draw the force thereof, even to the hilts; that thus I, being married to Christ my spouse, may surmount and escape all the darkness of this world?

7. What do you think did Julitta see in Christ, when, at the Emperor's telling of her, that except she would worship the gods, she should never have protection, laws, judgments, nor life, she replied, Farewell life, welcome death; farewell riches, welcome poverty: all that I have, if it were

a thousand times more, would I rather lose, than to speak one wicked and blasphemous word against my Creator?

8. What did Marcus Arethusius see in Christ, when after his enemies had cut his flesh, anointed it with honey, and hanged him up in a basket for flies and bees to feed on, he would not give, to uphold idolatry, one halfpenny to save his life?

9. What did Constantine see in Christ, when he used to kiss the wounds of them that suffered for him?

10. But what need I give thus particular instances of words and smaller actions, when by their lives, their blood, their enduring hunger, sword, fire, pulling asunder, and all torments that the devil and hell could devise, for the love they bare to Christ, after they were come to him?

What hast THOU found in him, sinner?

What! come to Christ, and find nothing in him! — when all things that are worth looking after are in him! — or if anything, yet not enough to wean thee from thy sinful delights, and fleshly lusts! Away, away, thou art not coming to Jesus Christ.

He that has come to Jesus Christ, hath found in him, that, as I said, that is not to be found anywhere else. As,

1. He that is come to Christ hath found God in him reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. And so God is not to be found in heaven and earth besides (2 Corinthians 5:19, 20).

2. He that is come to Jesus Christ hath found in him a fountain of grace, sufficient, not only to pardon sin, but to sanctify the soul, and to preserve it from falling, in this evil world.

3. He that is come to Jesus Christ hath found virtue in him; THAT virtue, that if he does but touch thee with his Word, or thou him by faith, life is forthwith conveyed into thy soul. It makes thee wake as one that is waked out of his sleep; it awakes all the powers of the soul (Psalm 30:11, 12; Song of Solomon 6:12).

4. Art thou come to Jesus Christ? Thou hast found glory in him, glory that surmounts and goes beyond.

"Thou art more glorious - than the mountains of prey"
(Psalm 76:4).

5. What shall I say? Thou hast found righteousness in him; thou hast found rest, peace, delight, heaven, glory, and eternal life.

Sinner, be advised; ask thy heart again, saying, Am I come to Jesus Christ? For upon this one question, Am I come, or, am I not? hangs heaven and hell as to thee. If thou canst say, I am come, and God shall approve that saying, happy, happy, happy man art thou! But if thou art not come, what can make thee happy? yea, what can make that man happy that, for his not coming to Jesus Christ for life, must be damned in hell?

Use Third. — The third use — A USE OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

Coming sinner, I have now a word for thee; be of good comfort, "He will in no wise cast out." Of all men, thou art the blessed of the Lord; the Father hath prepared his Son to be a sacrifice for thee, and Jesus Christ, thy Lord, is gone to prepare a place for thee (John 1:29; Hebrews 10). What shall I say to thee?

> [**First**,] Thou comest to a FULL Christ; thou canst not want anything for soul or body, for this world or that to come, but it is to be had in or by Jesus Christ. As it is said of the land that the Danites went to possess, so, and with much more truth, it may be said of Christ; he is such an one with whom there is no want of any good thing that is in heaven or earth. A full Christ is thy Christ.

1. He is full of grace. Grace is sometimes taken for love; never any loved like Jesus Christ. Jonathan's love went beyond the love of women; but the love of Christ passes knowledge. It is beyond the love of all the earth, of all creatures, even of men and angels. His love prevailed with him to lay aside his glory, to leave the heavenly place, to clothe himself with flesh, to be born in a stable, to be laid in a manger, to live a poor life in the world, to take upon him our sicknesses, infirmities, sins, curse, death, and the wrath that was due to man. And all this he did for a base, undeserving, unthankful people; yea, for a people that was at enmity with him.

> "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet

peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (⁴⁵Romans 5:6-10).

2. He is full of truth. Full of grace and truth. Truth, that is, faithfulness in keeping promise, even this of the text, with all other, "I will in no wise cast out" (⁴³John 14:6). Hence it is said, that his words be true, and that he is the faithful God, that keepeth covenant. And hence it is also that his promises are called truth: "Thou wilt fulfil thy truth unto Jacob, and thy mercy unto Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." Therefore it is said again, that both himself and words are truth: "I am the truth, the Scripture of truth" (²⁷Daniel 10:21). "Thy word is truth," (⁴³John 17:17; ¹⁰2 Samuel 7:28); "thy law is truth," (¹⁹Psalm 119:142); and "my mouth," saith he, "shall speak truth," (²⁰Proverbs 8:7); see also ²¹Ecclesiastes 12:10, ²³Isaiah 25:1, ³⁹Malachi 2:6, ⁴⁴Acts 26:25, ⁵¹2 Timothy 2:12, 13. Now, I say, his word is truth, and he is full of truth to fulfil his truth, even to a thousand generations. Coming sinner, he will not deceive thee; come boldly to Jesus Christ.

3. He is full of wisdom. He is made unto us of God wisdom; wisdom to manage the affairs of his church in general, and the affairs of every coming sinner in particular. And upon this account he is said to be "head over all things," (⁴⁶1 Corinthians 1; ⁴⁹Ephesians 1), because he manages all things that are in the world by his wisdom, for the good of his church; all men's actions, all Satan's temptations, all God's providences, all crosses, and disappointments; all things whatever are under the hand of Christ — who is the wisdom of God — and he ordereth them all for good to his church. And can Christ help it — and be sure he can — nothing shall happen or fall out in the world, but it shall, in despite of all opposition, have a good tendency to his church and people.

4. He is full of the Spirit, to communicate it to the coming sinner; he hath therefore received it without measure, that he may communicate it to every member of his body, according as every man's measure thereof is

allotted him by the Father. Wherefore he saith, that he that comes to him, “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (<40334>John 3:34; <56303>Titus 3:5, 6; <40201>Acts 2; <40733>John 7:33-39).

5. He is indeed a storehouse full of all the graces of the Spirit. “Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (<40116>John 1:16). Here is more faith, more love, more sincerity, more humility, more of every grace; and of this, even more of this, he giveth to every lowly, humble, penitent coming sinner. Wherefore, coming soul, thou comest not to a barren wilderness when thou comest to Jesus Christ.

6. He is full of bowels and compassion: and they shall feel and find it so that come to him for life. He can bear with thy weaknesses, he can pity thy ignorance, he can be touched with the feeling of thy infirmities, he can affectionately forgive they transgressions, he can heal thy backslidings, and love thee freely. His compassions fail not; “and he will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; he can pity them that no eye pities, and be afflicted in all thy afflictions” (<40241>Matthew 26:41; <58502>Hebrews 5:2; 2:18; <40902>Matthew 9:2; <28404>Hosea 14:4; <26165>Ezekiel 16:5, 6; <23639>Isaiah 63:9; <19788>Psalm 78:38; <19615>Psalm 86:15; <19304>Psalm 111:4; <19204>Psalm 112:4; <25322>Lamentations 3:22; <23408>Isaiah 42:3).

7. Coming soul, the Jesus that thou art coming to, is full of might and terribleness for thy advantage; he can suppress all thine enemies; he is the Prince of the kings of the earth; he can bow all men’s designs for thy help; he can break all snares laid for thee in the way; he can lift thee out of all difficulties wherewith thou mayest be surrounded; he is wise in heart, and mighty in power. Every life under heaven is in his hand; yea, the fallen angels tremble before him. And he will save thy life, coming sinner (<46124>1 Corinthians 1:24; <45828>Romans 8:28; <40818>Matthew 28:18; <66401>Revelation 4; <19193>Psalm 19:3; <19716>Psalm 27:5, 6; <18904>Job 9:4; <43702>John 17:2; <40829>Matthew 8:29; <42838>Luke 8:28; <59219>James 2:19).

8. Coming sinner, the Jesus to whom thou art coming is lowly in heart, he despiseth not any. It is not thy outward meanness, nor thy inward weakness; it is not because thou art poor, or base, or deformed, or a fool, that he will despise thee: he hath chosen the foolish, the base, and despised things of this world, to confound the wise and mighty. He will bow his ear to thy stammering prayers he will pick out the meaning of thy

inexpressible groans; he will respect thy weakest offering, if there be in it but thy heart (Matthew 11:20; Luke 14:21; Proverbs 9:4-6; Isaiah 38:14, 15; Song of Solomon 5:15; John 4:27; Mark 12:33, 34; James 5:11). Now, is not this a blessed Christ, coming sinner? Art thou not like to fare well, when thou hast embraced him, coming sinner? But,

> **Second**. Thou hast yet another advantage by Jesus Christ, thou art coming to him, for he is not only full, BUT FREE. He is not sparing of what he has; he is open-hearted and open-handed. Let me in a few particulars show thee this:

1. This is evident, because he calls thee; he calls upon thee to come unto him; the which he would not do, was he not free to give; yea, he bids thee, when come, ask, seek, knock. And for thy encouragement, adds to every command a promise, "Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and ye shall have; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If the rich man should say thus to the poor, would not he be reckoned a free-hearted man? I say, should he say to the poor, Come to my door, ask at my door, knock at my door, and you shall find and have; would he not be counted liberal? Why, thus doth Jesus Christ. Mind it, coming sinner (Isaiah 55:3; Psalm 50:15; Matthew 7:7-9).

2. He doth not only bid thee come, but tells thee, he will heartily do thee good; yea, he will do it with rejoicing;

> "I will rejoice over them, to do them good - with my whole heart, and with my whole soul" (Jeremiah 32:41).

3. It appeareth that he is free, because he giveth without twitting.

> "He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5).

There are some that will not deny to do the poor a pleasure, but they will mix their mercies with so many twits, that the persons on whom they bestow their charity shall find but little sweetness in it. But Christ doth not do so, coming sinner; he casteth all thine iniquities behind his back (Isaiah 38:17). Thy sins and iniquities he will remember no more (Hebrews 8:12).

4. That Christ is free, is manifest by the complaints that he makes against them that will not come to him for mercy. I say, he complains, saying,

> "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

I say, he speaks it by way of complaint. He saith also in another place,

> "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob" (Isaiah 43:22).

Coming sinner, see here the willingness of Christ to save; see here how free he is to communicate life, and all good things, to such as thou art. He complains, if thou comest not; he is displeased, if thou callest not upon him. Hark, coming sinner, once again; when Jerusalem would not come to him for safeguard, "he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:41, 42).

5. Lastly, He is open and free-hearted to do thee good, as is seen by the joy and rejoicing that he manifesteth at the coming home of poor prodigals. He receives the lost sheep with rejoicing; the lost goat with rejoicing; yea, when the prodigal came home, what joy and mirth, what music and dancing, was in his father's house! (Luke 15).

Third. Coming sinner, I will add another encouragement for thy help.

1. God hath prepared a mercy-seat, a throne of grace to sit on; that thou mayest come thither to him, and that he may from thence hear thee, and receive thee. "I will commune with thee," saith he, "from above the mercy-seat" (Exodus 25:22). As who shall say, sinner, When thou comest to me, thou shalt find me upon the mercy-seat, where also I am always found of the undone coming sinner. Thither I bring my pardons; there I hear and receive their petitions, and accept them to my favor.

2. God hath also prepared a golden altar for thee to offer thy prayers and tears upon. A golden altar! It is called a "golden altar," to show what worth it is of in God's account: for this golden altar is Jesus Christ; this altar sanctifies thy gift, and makes thy sacrifice acceptable. This altar, then, makes thy groans golden groans; thy tears golden tears; and thy

prayers golden prayers, in the eye of that God thou comest to, coming sinner (Revelation 8; Matthew 23:19; Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 2:5).

3. God hath strewed all the way, from the gate of hell, where thou wast, to the gate of heaven, whither thou art going, with flowers out of his own garden. Behold how the promises, invitations, calls, and encouragement's, like lilies, lie round about thee! take heed that thou dost not tread them under foot, sinner. With promises, did I say? Yea, he hath mixed all those with his own name, his Son's name; also, with the name of mercy, goodness, compassion, love, pity, grace, forgiveness, pardon, and what not, that may encourage the coming sinner.

4. He hath also for thy encouragement laid up the names, and set forth the sins, of those that have been saved. In this book they are fairly written, that thou, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, mightest have hope.

(1.) In this book is recorded Noah's maim and sin; and how God had mercy upon him.

(2.) In this record is fairly written the name of Lot, and the nature of his sin; and how the Lord had mercy upon him.

(3.) In this record thou hast also fairly written the names of Moses, Aaron, Gideon, Samson, David, Solomon, Peter, Paul, with the nature of their sins; and how God had mercy upon them; and all to encourage thee, coming sinner.

> **Fourth**. I will add yet another encouragement for the man that is coming to Jesus Christ. Art thou coming? Art thou coming, indeed? Why,

1. Then this thy coming is by virtue of God's call. Thou art called. Calling goes before coming. Coming is not of works, but of him that calleth. "He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would; and they came unto him" (Mark 3:13).

2. Art thou coming? This is also by virtue of illumination. God has made thee see; and, therefore, thou art coming. So long as thou wast darkness,

thou lovedst darkness, and couldst not abide to come, because thy deeds were evil; but being now illuminated and made to see what and where thou art, and also what and where thy Savior is, now thou art coming to Jesus Christ; “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,” saith Christ, “but my Father which is in heaven” (<4016 7>Matthew 16:17).

3. Art thou coming? This is because God hath inclined thine heart to come. God hath called thee, illuminated thee, and inclined thy heart to come; and, therefore, thou comest to Jesus Christ. It is God that worketh in thee to will, and to come to Jesus Christ. Coming sinner, bless God for that he hath given thee a will to come to Jesus Christ. It is a sign that thou belongest to Jesus Christ, because God has made thee willing to come to him (<1901 10>Psalm 110:3). Bless God for slaying the enmity of thy mind; had he not done it, thou wouldst as yet have hated thine own salvation.

4. Art thou coming to Jesus Christ? It is God that giveth thee power: power to pursue thy will in the matters of thy salvation, is the gift of God.

> “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do” (<5013 13>Philippians 2:13).

Not that God worketh will to come, where he gives no power; but thou shouldest take notice, that power is an additional mercy. The church saw that will and power were two things, when she cried, “Draw me, we will run after thee” (<2201 4>Song of Solomon 1:4). And so did David too, when he said, “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (<1913 32>Psalm 119:32). Will to come, and power to pursue thy will, is double mercy, coming sinner.

5. All thy strange, passionate, sudden rushings forward after Jesus Christ, coming sinners know what I mean, they also are thy helps from God. Perhaps thou feelest at some times more than at others, strong stirrings up of heart to fly to Jesus Christ; now thou hast at this time a sweet and stiff gale of the Spirit of God, filling thy sails with the fresh gales of his good Spirit; and thou ridest at those times as upon the wings of the wind, being carried out beyond thyself, beyond the most of thy prayers, and also above all thy fear and temptations.

6. Coming sinner, hast thou not now and then a kiss of the sweet lips of Jesus Christ, I mean some blessed word dropping like a honey-comb upon thy soul to revive thee, when thou art in the midst of thy dumps?

7. Does not Jesus Christ sometimes give thee a glimpse of himself, though perhaps thou seest him not so long a time as while one may tell twenty.

8. Hast thou not sometimes as it were the very warmth of his wings overshadowing the face of thy soul, that gives thee as it were a gload [F72] upon thy spirit, as the bright beams of the sun do upon thy body, when it suddenly breaks out of a cloud, though presently all is gone away? Well, all these things are the good hand of thy God upon thee, and they are upon thee to constrain, to provoke, and to make thee willing and able to come, coming sinner, that thou mightest in the end be saved.

CHRIST A COMPLETE SAVIOR

CHAPTER 1.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST EXPLAINED.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. ¾ ^{HEB}Hebrews 7:25.

THE apostle in this chapter presenteth us with two things, that is, with the greatness of the person, and of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus.

He presenteth us with the greatness of his Person: in that he preferreth him before Abraham, who is the father of us all; yea, in that he preferreth him before Melchizedek, who was above Abraham, and blessed him who had the promises.

As to his Priesthood; he showeth the greatness of that, in that he was made a priest, not by the law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life. Not without, but with an oath, by him that said, “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Wherefore this man, because he liveth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Now my text is drawn from this conclusion, namely, that Christ abideth a priest continually: “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

In these words I take notice of four things:

1. Of the intercession of Christ. “He maketh intercession.”

2. Of the benefit of his intercession. “Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost,” etc.

3. Of the persons interested in this intercession of Christ: and they are those “that come unto God by him.”

4. Of the certainty of their reaping this benefit by him, namely, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them: “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

1. We will begin with HIS INTERCESSION; and will show you,

1. What that is.

2. For what he intercedes; and,

3. What is also to be inferred from Christ’s making intercession for us.

I begin then with the first, that is, to show you *what* intercession is. Intercession is prayer; but all prayer is not intercession. Intercession then, is that prayer that is made by a third person, about the concerns that are between two. And it may be made either to set them at farther difference, or to make them friends. For intercession may be made *against*, as well as *for*, a person or people. “Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel?” But the intercession that we are now to speak of, is not an intercession of this kind; not an intercession against, but an intercession for a people. “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” The high priest is ordained for, but not to be against, the people. “For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people;” or “that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.” This then, is intercession, and the intercession of Christ is to be between two; between God and man, for man’s good. And,

Secondly, It *extendeth* itself unto these four things:

1. To pray that all the elect may be brought home to him, that is, to God.

2. To pray that their sins, committed after conversion may be forgiven them.

3. To pray that their graces, which they receive at conversion, may be maintained and supplied.

4. To pray that their persons may be preserved unto his heavenly kingdom.

This is the intercession of Christ, or that for which he doth make intercession.

(1.) He prays for all the elect, that they may be brought home to God, and so into the unity of the faith, etc. This is clear, for that he saith, "Neither pray I for these alone" (that is, for those only that are converted), "but for them also that shall believe on me through their word;" for all them that shall, that are appointed to believe; or, as you have it a little above, "for all them which thou hast given me." And the reason is, for that he hath paid a ransom. Christ therefore, when he maketh intercession for the ungodly (and all the unconverted elect are such), doth but ask for his own, his purchased ones, those for whom he died before, that they might be saved by his blood.

(2.) When any of them are brought home to God, he yet prays for them; namely, that the sins which, through infirmity, they after conversion may commit, may also be forgiven them.

This is showed us by the intercession of the high priest under the law, that was to bear away the iniquities of the holy things of the children of Israel; yea, and also by his atonement for them that sinned: for that it saith, "And the priest shall make an atonement for him, for the sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him."

This also is intimated even where our Lord doth make intercession, saying, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil."

That Christ prayed that the converted should be kept from all manner of commission of sin, must not be supposed, for that is the way to make his intercession, at least in some things, invalid, and to contradict himself; "for," saith he, "I know that thou hearest me always." But the meaning is, I pray that thou wouldst keep them from soul-damning delusions, such as are unavoidably such; also that thou wouldst keep them from the soul-destroying evil of every sin, of every temptation. Now this he doth by his prevailing, and by his pardoning grace.

(3.) In his intercession, he prayeth also that those graces which we receive at conversion may be maintained and supplied. This is clear where he saith, “Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Ay, may some say, he is said to pray here for the support and supply of *faith;* but doth it therefore follow, that he prayed for the maintaining and supply of *all* our graces? Yes, in that he prayed for the preservation of our faith, he prayed for the preservation of all our graces; for faith is the mother-grace, the root-grace, the grace that hath all others in the bowels of it, and that from the which all others grow; yea, it is that which gives being to all our other graces, and that by which all the rest do live. Let then faith be preserved, and all graces continue and live, that is, according to the present state, health, and degree of faith. So then Christ prayed for the preservation of every grace, when he prayed for the preservation of faith. That text also is of the same tendency, where he saith, “Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me:” that is, keep them in thy fear, in the faith, in the true religion, in the way of life, by grace, by thy power, by thy wisdom, etc. This must be much of the meaning of this place; and he that excludes this sense, will make but poor work of another exposition.

(4.) He also, in his intercession, prayeth that our persons be preserved, and brought safe unto his heavenly kingdom. And this he doth,

1. By pleading his interest in them.

2. By pleading that he had given, by promise, glory to them.

3. By pleading his own resolution to have it so.

4. By pleading the reason why it must be so. Observe,

He prays that their persons may come to glory, for that they are *his,* and that by the best of titles: “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” Father, I will have them: Father, I will have them, for they are mine: “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” What is mine, my wife, or my child, or my jewel, or my joy; sure I may have it with me. Thus

therefore he pleads, or cries in his intercession, that our persons might be preserved to glory: “They are mine, and thou gavest them me.”

He also pleads that he had given, given already (that is, in the promise) glory to them; and therefore they must not go without it. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” Righteous men, when they give a good thing by promise, design the performance of that promise; nay, they more than design it, they purpose, they determine it. As the mad prophet also saith of God, in another case, “Hath he said, and will he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” Hath Christ given us glory, and shall we not have it? Yea, hath the truth itself bestowed it upon us, and shall those to whom it is given, even given by the scriptures of truth, be yet deprived thereof?

He pleads, in his interceding that they might have glory, his own resolution to have it so: “Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” Behold ye here, he is resolved to have it so; it must be so; it shall be so; I will have it so. We read of Adonijah, that his father never denied him in any thing. How much more will our Father let our Lord Jesus Christ have his mind and his will in this, since he also is as willing to have it so, as is the Son himself: “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Resolution will drive things far, especially resolution to do that, which none shall oppose but they that cannot hinder. Why, this is the case, the resolution of our intercessor is, that we be preserved to glory; yea, and this resolution he pleads in his intercession: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am,” etc. Must it not therefore now be so?

He also, in the last place, in this his intercession, urges a reason why he will have it so, namely, “That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

And this is a reason to the purpose. It is as if he had said, ‘Father, these have continued with me in my temptations; these have seen me under all my disadvantages; these have seen me in my poor, low, contemptible condition; these have seen me, what scorn, reproach, slanders, and disgrace, I have borne for thy sake in the world: and now I will have them also be where they shall see me in my glory. I have told them that I am thy Son, and they have believed that; I have told them that thou lovest me, and

they have believed that; I have also told them that thou wouldst take me again to glory, and they have believed that: but they have not seen my glory: nor can they but be like the Queen of Sheba; they will but believe by the halves, unless their own eyes do behold it. Besides, Father, these are they that love me; and it will be an increase of their joy, if they may but see me in glory: it will be a heaven to their hearts, to see their Savior in glory.' "I will therefore that those which thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." This therefore is a reason why Christ Jesus our Lord intercedes to have his people with him in glory.

I come now to the third thing, namely, To show you *what is to be inferred* from Christ's making intercession for us.

1. This is to be inferred from hence, That *saints* (for I will here say nothing of those of the elect uncalled) *do ofttimes give occasion of offense to God,* even they that have received grace. For intercession is made to continue one in the favor of another, and to make up those breaches that at anytime shall happen to be made by one, to the alienating of the affections of the other. And thus Jesus makes reconciliation for iniquity. For reconciliation may be made for iniquity two ways; first, By paying a price; secondly, By insisting upon the price paid for the offender, by way of intercession. Therefore you read, that as a goat was to be killed, so his blood was to be brought by the priest within the vail, and in a way, of intercession to be sprinkled before, and upon the mercy-seat: "Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail; and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat. And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins. And so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation that remaineth among them in the midst of all their uncleanness." This was to be done as you see, that the tabernacle, which was the place of God's presence and graces, might yet remain among the children of Israel, notwithstanding their uncleannesses and transgressions. This also is the effect of Christ's intercessions; it is that the signs of God's presence and his grace might remain among his people, notwithstanding they have by their transgressions so often provoked God to depart from them.

2. By Christ's intercession I gather, that awakened men and women, such as the godly are, *dare not, after offense given, come in their own names* to make unto God an application for mercy. God in himself is a consuming fire, and sin has made the best of us as stubble is to fire: wherefore they may not, they cannot, they dare not approach God's presence for help, but by and through a mediator and intercessor. When Israel saw the fire, the blackness and darkness, and heard the thunder and lightning, and the terrible sound of the trumpet, they said to Moses, "Speak thou unto us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Guilt, and sense of the disparity that is betwixt God and us, will make us look out for a man that may lay his hand upon us both; and that may set us right in the eyes of our Father again. This, I say, I infer from the intercession of Christ. For, if there had been a possibility of our approaching God with advantage without, what need had there been of the intercession of Christ?

Absalom durst not approach, no not the presence of his father by himself, without a mediator and intercessor; wherefore he sends to Joab to go to the king and make intercession for him. Also, Joab durst not go upon that errand himself but by the mediation of another. Sin is a fearful thing; it will quash and quell the courage of a man, and make him afraid to approach the presence of him whom he has offended; though the offended is but a man. How much more then shall it discourage man, when once loaded with guilt and shame, from attempting to approach the presence of a holy, and a sin-revenging God! unless he can come to him through and in the name of an intercessor. But here now is the help and comfort of the people of God. There is, to help them under all their infirmities, an intercessor, prepared and at work: "He ever liveth to make intercession."

3. I also infer from hence, that should we, out of an ignorant boldness and presumption, attempt, when we have offended, by ourselves to approach the presence of God, *God would not accept us.* He told Eliphaz so. What Eliphaz thought, or was about to do, I know not; but God said unto him, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves (that is, by him) a burnt offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him I will accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing that

is right, like my servant Job." See here, an offense is a bar and an obstruction to acceptance with God, but by a mediator, but by an intercessor. He that comes to God by himself, God will answer him by himself, that is, without an intercessor: And I will tell you such are not like to get any pleasant or comfortable answer: "I will answer him that (so) cometh, according to the multitude of his idols. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb: and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

He that intercedes for another, with a holy and just God, had need to be clean himself; lest he with whom he so busieth himself say to him, First clear thyself, and then come and speak for thy friend. Wherefore this is the very description and qualification of this our high priest and blessed intercessor: "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins," etc. Had we not had such an intercessor, we had been but in a very poor case: but we have one that becomes us, one that fits us to the purpose; one against whom our God has nothing, can object nothing; one in whose mouth no guile could be found.

4. Since Christ is an intercessor, I infer, that *he has wherewith in readiness to answer to any demands* that may be propounded by him that hath been by us offended, in order to a renewing of peace, and letting out of that grace to us that we have sinned away, and yet have need of. Ofttimes the offended saith to the intercessor, 'Well, thou comest to me about this man; what interest he has in thee is one thing; what offense he has committed against me is another.' (I speak now after the manner of men.) Now, what can an intercessor do, if he is not able to answer this question? But now if he be able to answer this question, that is, according to law and justice, no question but he may prevail with the offended, for him for whom he makes intercession.

Why, this is our case; to be sure thus far it is, we have offended a just and a holy God, and Jesus Christ is become intercessor. He also knows full well, that for our parts, if it would save us from hell, we cannot produce, towards a peace with God, so much as poor two farthings; that is, not

anything that can by law and justice be esteemed worth a halfpenny: yet he makes intercession. It follows, therefore, that he has wherewith of his own, if that question before is propounded, to answer to every reasonable demand.

Hence it is said, that he has gifts as well as sacrifice for sin. “Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity, that this man have somewhat also to offer.” And observe it, that the apostle speaks here of Christ as in heaven, there ministering in the second part of his office: “for if he were on earth, he should not be a priest.” These gifts therefore, and this sacrifice, he now offereth in heaven by way of intercession, urging and pleading, as an intercessor, the valuableness of his gifts, for the pacifying of that wrath that our Father hath conceived against us for the disobedience that we are guilty of. “A gift in secret pacifieth anger; and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.”

What gifts these are, the scripture everywhere testifies. He gave himself, he gave his life, he gave his all, for us. These gifts, as he offered them up at the demand of justice, on Mount Calvary for us; so now he is in heaven, he presenteth them continually before God, as gifts and sacrifice, valuable for the sins, for all the sins that we through infirmity do commit, from the day of our conversion to the day of our death. And these gifts are so satisfactory, so prevalent with God, that they always prevail for a continual remission of our sins with him. Yea, they prevail with him, for more than for the remission of sins; we have, through their procurement our graces often renewed, the devil often rebuked, the snare often broken, guilt often taken away from the conscience, and many a blessed smile from God, and love-look from his life-creating countenance.

5. Since Christ is an intercessor, I infer, that *believers should not rest at the cross for comfort.* Justification they should look for there; but being justified by his blood, they should ascend up after him to the throne. At the cross you will see him in his sorrows and humiliations, in his tears and blood; but follow him to where he is now, and then you shall see him in his robes, in his priestly robes, and with his golden girdle about his breast. Then you shall see him wearing the breastplate of judgment, and with all your names written upon his heart. Then you shall perceive, that the whole family in heaven and earth is named by him, and how he prevaileth

with God, the Father of mercies, for you. Stand still a while, and listen, yea, enter with boldness into the holiest, and see your Jesus, as he now appears in the presence of God for you; what work he makes against the devil, and sin, and death, and hell, for you. Ah, it is brave, following Jesus Christ to the holiest! The vail is rent, you may see with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.

This then is our high priest; this is intercession; these the benefits of it. It lieth in our part to improve it; and wisdom to do that also comes from the mercy-seat or throne of grace, where he, even our high priest, ever liveth to make intercession for us. To whom be glory forever and ever.

CHAPTER 2.

BENEFITS OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

AND thus have I spoken of the first thing, namely, of the intercession of Christ.

And now I come more particularly to speak of the second, the benefits of his intercession, namely, that we are saved hereby. Wherefore he is able also to save them, seeing he maketh intercession for them. "He is able to save them to the uttermost."

In my handling of this head, I must show you,

1. What the apostle means here by "save:" "Wherefore he is able to save."

2. What he means here by "saving to the uttermost:"

"He is able to save to the uttermost."

3. And then, thirdly, we shall do as we did in that foregoing, that is, gather some inferences from the whole, and speak of them.

1. What doth the apostle mean here by "save?" "He is able to save them."

To "save" may be taken in two ways. In the general, I know it may be taken many ways; for there are many salvations that we enjoy, yea, that we never knew of, nor can know, until we come thither where all secret things shall be seen, and where that which has been done in darkness shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops. But I say there are two ways that this word may be taken, in particular.

1. To save in a way of justification. Or,

2. To save in a way of preservation.

Now Christ saves in both these ways; but which of these, or whether both of them are intended in this place, of that I shall tell you my thoughts anon; meanwhile I will show you, what it is to be saved in the first sense; and also how that is brought to pass.

To be saved is to be delivered from the *guilt* of sin, which is by the law, as it is the ministration of death and condemnation; or to be set free therefrom before God. This is to be saved; for he that is not set free therefrom, whatever he may think of himself, or whatever others may think concerning him, he is a condemned man. It saith not he shall be, but, he "is condemned already." The reason is; that he has deserved the sentence of "the ministration of condemnation" which is the law; yea, that law has already arraigned, accused, and condemned him before God, for it hath found him guilty of sin. Now he that is set free from this, (or, as the phrase is, 'being made free from sin,' that is, from the imputation of guilt,) there can to him be no condemnation, no condemnation to hell-fire; but the person thus made free, may properly be said to be saved. Wherefore, as sometimes it saith, we shall be saved, respecting saving in the second sense, or the utmost completing of salvation; so sometimes it saith we *are* saved, as respecting our being already secured from guilt, and so from condemnation to hell for sin, and so set safe, and quit from the second death before God.

Now, saving thus comes to us by what Christ did for us in this world; by what Christ did for us, as suffering for us. I say, it comes to us thus; that is, it comes to us by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ. And thus to be saved is called justification, justification to life; because one thus saved is, as I said, acquitted from guilt, and that everlasting damnation, to which, for sin, he had made himself obnoxious by the law.

Hence we are said to be saved by his death, justified by his blood, and reconciled to God by the death of his Son; all which must respect his offering of himself on the day he died, and not his improving of his so dying in a way of intercession; because in the same place the apostle reserveth a second, or an additional salvation, and applieth that to his intercession; "much more then being now, (or already) justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath, through him," that is through what he will further do for us: "for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled (that is, by his death), we shall be saved by his life," his intercession which he ever liveth to complete.

See here, we are said to be justified, reconciled already, and therefore shall be saved, justified by his blood and death, and saved through him by his life.

Now the saving intended in the text, is saving in this second sense; that is, a saving of us by preserving us, by delivering us from all those hazards that we run betwixt our state of justification and our state of glorification. Yea, such a saving as we that are justified need, to bring us into glory. Therefore,

2. When he saith "he is able to save, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession," he addeth saving to saving; saving by his life, to saving by his death; saving by his improving his blood, to saving by his spilling his blood. He gave himself a ransom for us, and now improves that gift in the presence of God, by way of intercession.

For, as I have hinted already, the high priests, under the law, took the blood of the sacrifices that were offered for sin, and brought it within the vail, and there sprinkled it before, and upon the mercy-seat, and by it made intercession for the people ¾ an additional way of saving them: the sum of which, Paul thus applies to Christ, when he saith he can save, "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession."

That also in the Romans is clear to this purpose "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died;" that is, Who is he that shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect to condemnation to hell, since Christ, by his death, has taken away the curse, from before God? Then he adds that there is nothing that shall yet happen to us, shall destroy us, since Christ also liveth to make intercession for us: "Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Christ then by his death saved us as we are sinners, enemies, and in a state of condemnation by sin; and Christ by his life saveth us as considered justified, and reconciled to God by his blood. So then, we have salvation from that condemnation that sin had brought us into, and salvation from those ruins that all the enemies of our souls would yet bring us unto, but cannot; for the intercession of Christ preventeth.

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law; whatever the law can take hold of to curse us for, that Christ has redeemed us from, by being made a curse for us. But this curse that Christ was made for us, must be confined to his sufferings, not to his exaltation; and consequently, not to his intercession, for Christ is made no curse but when he suffered: not in his intercession. So then, as he died, he took away the curse, and sin that was the cause thereof, by the sacrifice of himself, and by his life, his intercession, he saveth us from all those things that attempt to bring us into that condemnation again.

The salvation then that we have by the intercession of Christ as we said (I speak now of them that are capable of receiving comfort and relief by this doctrine), is salvation that follows upon, or that comes after justification. We that are saved as to justification of life, need yet to be saved with that which preserveth to glory. For though by the death of Christ we are saved from the curse of the law, yet attempts are made by many, that we may be kept from the glory that justified persons are designed for; and from these we are saved by his intercession.

A man then that must be eternally saved, is to be considered,

1. As an heir of wrath;

2. As an heir of God.

An heir of wrath he is in himself by sin: an heir of God he is by grace through Christ. Now, as an heir of wrath, he is redeemed, and as an heir of God he is preserved: as an heir of wrath he is redeemed by blood, and as an heir of God he is preserved by this intercession.

Christ by death, then, puts me (I being reconciled to God thereby) into a justified state, and God accepts me to grace and favor through him. Yet this doth not hinder, but that (all this notwithstanding) there are enemies, that would frustrate me of the end to which I am designed by this reconciliation to God, by redemption through grace; and from the malice of these enemies, I am saved by the blessed intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Objection 1. Perhaps some may say, we are not saved from all punishment of sin by the death of Christ; and if so, then not from all danger of damnation, by the intercession of Christ.

Answer. We are saved from all punishment in hell-fire, by the death of Christ. Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come. So that, as to this great punishment, God for his sake has forgiven us all trespasses. But we being translated from being slaves to Satan, to be sons of God, God reserveth yet this liberty in his hand to chastise us, if we offend, as a father chastiseth his son. This chastisement is not in legal wrath, but in fatherly affection; not to destroy us, but that we might be made still to get advantage thereby, even be made partakers of his holiness. This is done,

"that we might not be condemned with the world."
<6110>1 Corinthians 11.

As to the second part of the objection, there do (as we say, many things happen between the cup and the lip) many things attempt to overthrow the work of God, and to cause that we should perish through our weakness, notwithstanding the price that hath by Christ been paid for us. But what saith the scripture? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (as it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Thus the Apostle reckoneth up all the disadvantages that a justified person is incident to in this life, and by way of challenge declares, that not any of them, nor all together, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is towards us by Christ, by his death and his intercession.

Objection 2. It may be further objected, that the apostle doth here leave out *sin*, unto which we know the saints are subject, after justification. And sin of itself (we need no other enemies) is of that nature, as to destroy the whole world.

Answer. Sin is sin, in the nature of sin, wherever it is found. But sin, as to the damning effects thereof, is taken away from them, unto whom righteousness is imputed for justification. Nor shall any or all the things before mentioned (though there is a tendency in everyone of them to drive us into sin) drown us through sin, in perdition and destruction. I am persuaded, says Paul, they shall never be able to do that. The apostle therefore doth implicitly, though not expressly, challenge *sin*, yea, sin by all its advantages; and then glorieth in the love of God in Christ Jesus, from which he concludeth it shall never separate the justified. Besides, it would now have been needless to have expressly here put in sin by itself, seeing, before he had argued, that those he speaks of were freely justified therefrom.

One word more, before I go to the second head. The Father, as I told you, has reserved to himself a liberty to chastise his sons, namely, with temporal chastisements, if they offend. This still abideth to us, notwithstanding God's grace, Christ's death, or blessed intercession. And this punishment is so surely entailed to the transgressions that we who believe shall commit, that it is impossible that we should be utterly freed therefrom. Insomuch that the apostle positively concludeth them to be bastards (what pretences to sonship soever they have) that are not, for sin, partakers of fatherly chastisements.

And this is the cause why some that belong to God are yet so under the afflicting hand of God. They have sinned, and God, who is their Father, punisheth. Yea, and this is the reason why some, who are dear to God, have this kind of punishment never forgiven, but it abides with them to their lives' end, goes with them to the day of their death, yea, is the very cause of their death: by this punishment they are cut off out of the land of the living. But all this is, that they "might not be condemned with the world." [F75]

For the reversing of this punishment it is that we should pray, if perhaps God will remit it when we are taught to say, "Our Father, forgive us our trespasses."

2. I shall now show you something of what it is for Christ, by his intercession, to save "to the uttermost." "He is able to save them to the uttermost."

This is a great expression, and carrieth with it much. “Uttermost” signifieth, “to the outside, to the end, to the last, to the furthest part;” and it hath respect both to persons and things.

1. To *persons.* Some persons are, in their own apprehensions, even further from Christ than anybody else; afar off, a great way off, yet a-coming, as the prodigal was. Now these many times are exceedingly afraid; the sight of that distance that they think is betwixt Christ and them makes them afraid. As it is said in another place, “They that dwell in the uttermost parts, are afraid at thy tokens;” so these are afraid they shall not speed, nor obtain that for which they come to God. But the scripture says, “He is able to save to the uttermost (to the very hindermost) them that come to God by him.”

Two sorts of men seem to be far, very far from God.

1. The town-sinner.

2. The great backslider.

But both these, if they come, he is able to save to the uttermost. He is able to save them from all those dangers that they fear will prevent their obtaining the grace and mercy they would have to help them in time of need. The publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2. As this scripture respecteth persons, so it respecteth *things.* There are some things with which *some* are attended, that are coming to God by Christ, that make their coming hard, and very difficult.

(1.) There is a more than ordinary breaking out in some of the corruptions of their nature. It seems as if all their lusts and vile passions of the flesh were become masters, and might now do what they will with the soul. Yea, they take this man, and toss and tumble him like a ball in a large place. This man is not master of himself, of his thoughts, nor of his passions: his iniquities like the wind do carry him away. He thinks to go forward, but this wind blows him backward; he laboreth against this wind, but cannot find that he getteth ground: he takes what advantage opportunity doth minister to him; but all he gets is to be beat out of heart, out of breath, out of courage: he stands still, and pants and gaspeth as for life. “I opened my mouth, and panted,”

said David, “for I longed for thy commandments.” He sets forward again, but has nothing but labor and sorrow.

(2.) Nay, to help forward his calamity, Satan’s angels will not be wanting, both to trouble his head with the fumes of their stinking breath, or to throw up his heels in their dirty places. “And while he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down and tare him.” How many strange, hideous, and amazing blasphemies, have some of those that are coming to Christ, had injected and fixed upon their spirits against him! Nothing so common to such as to have some hellish wish or other against God whom they are coming to, and against Christ too by whom they would come to him. These blasphemies are like those frogs that I have heard of, that will leap up, and catch hold of, and hang by their claws. ‘Now help, Lord! now Lord Jesus, what shall I do? now Son of David have mercy upon me!’ I say, to say these words is hard work for such a one. But Christ is able to save to the uttermost this comer unto God by him.

(3.) There are also the oppositions of sense and reason hard at work, for the devil, against the soul. The men of his own house are risen up against him. One’s sense and reason, one would think, should not fall in with the devil against ourselves; and yet nothing more common, nothing more natural, than for our own sense and reason to turn unnatural, and war both against our God and us. And now it is hard coming to God. Better can a man hear, and deal with any objections against himself, than with those that himself doth make against himself. They lie close, stick fast, speak aloud, and will be heard; yea, will haunt and hunt him (as the devil doth some) in every hole and corner. But come, man; come to Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost.

(4.) Now guilt is the consequence and fruit of all this; and what so intolerable a burden as guilt? They talk of the stones, and of the sands of the sea, but it is guilt that breaks the heart with its burden. And Satan has the art of making the uttermost of every sin; he can blow it up, make it swell, make every hair of the head as big as a cedar. He can tell how to make it a heinous offense, an unpardonable offense, an offense of that continuance, and committed against so much light, that

(says he) ‘it is impossible it should ever be forgiven.’ But, soul, Christ is able to save to the uttermost; he can do “exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.”

(5.) Join to all this, the rage of persecuting men; which thing of itself, is sufficient to quash and break to pieces all desires to come to God by Christ; yea, and it doth do so to thousands that are not willing to go to hell. Yet thou art kept, and made to go panting on; a whole world of men, and devils, and sin, are not able to keep thee from coming. But how comes it to pass that thou art so hearty, that thou settest thy face against so much wind and weather? I dare say it arises not from thyself, nor from any of thine enemies. This comes from God, though thou art not aware thereof; and is obtained for thee by the intercession of the blessed Son of God, who is also able to save thee to the uttermost, that comes to God by him.

(6.) And for conclusion as to this, I will add, that there is much of the honor of the Lord Jesus engaged, as to the saving of the coming man to the uttermost. “I am glorified in them,” saith he. He is exalted to be a savior; and if the Blessed One doth count it an exaltation to be a savior, surely it *is* an exaltation to be a savior, and a great one. “They shall cry unto the Lord because of their oppressors; and he shall send them a savior, and a great one, and he shall deliver them.” If it is a glory to be a savior, a great savior, then it is a glory for a savior, a great one, to save, and save” and save *to the uttermost;* to the uttermost man, to the uttermost sin, to the uttermost temptation. And hence it is, that he saith again, speaking of the transgressions, sins, and iniquities, that he would pardon, that it should turn to him for a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations. He therefore counts it an honor to be a great savior; to save men to the uttermost.

When Moses said, “I beseech thee show me thy glory,” the answer was, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.” And when he came indeed to make proclamation, then he proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and

that will by no means clear the guilty;" that is, and that will by no means clear them that will not come to me, that they may be saved.

See here, if it is not by himself accounted his glory, to make his goodness, all his goodness pass before us: and how can that be, if he sayeth not to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? For goodness is by us nowise seen, but by those acts by which it expresseth itself to be so. And I am sure, to save, to save to the uttermost, is one of the most eminent expressions by which we understand it is great goodness. I know goodness has many ways to express itself to be what it is, to the world; but then it expresseth its greatness, when it pardons and saves to the uttermost. 'My goodness, says Christ, extends not itself to my Father, but to my saints; my Father has no need of my goodness, but my saints have; and therefore it shall reach forth itself for their help, in whom is all my delight.' "And O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"

It is therefore that which tendeth to get Christ a name, a fame, and glory, to be able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him.

But some may say, 'What is the meaning of this word, "able?" "Wherefore he is *able* to save." "He is *able* to save to the uttermost." How comes it to pass that his power to save is rather put in than his willingness? For willingness, saith the soul, would better have pleased me.'

I will speak two or three words in answer to this question. And,

1. By this word "able" is suggested to us *the sufficiency of his merit;* the great worthiness of his merit: for, as intercessor, he sticks fast by his merit. All his petitions, prayers, or supplications, are grounded upon the worthiness of his person as mediator, and on the validity of his offering, as priest. This is the more clear, if you consider the reason why those priests and sacrifices under the law, could not make the worshippers perfect: it was, I say, because there wanted in them worthiness, and merit in their sacrifices. But Christ, when he came and offered his sacrifice, did by that one act "perfect for ever them that are sanctified," or set apart for glory. Wherefore this man, after he had offered up one sacrifice for sin, forever sat down on the right hand of God.

When Moses prayed for the people of Israel, he thus said, “And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken.” But what had he spoken? “The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt, even until now.”

2. Has he but power, *we know he is willing,* else he would not have promised: it is also his glory to pardon and save. So then, in his ability lies our safety. What if he were ever so willing; if he were not of ability sufficient, what would his willingness do? But he has showed, as I said, his willingness by promising, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;” so that now our comfort lies in his power, in that he is able to make good his word. And this also will then be seen, when he hath saved them that come to God by him; when he hath saved them to the uttermost; not to the uttermost of his ability, but to the uttermost of our necessity. For to the uttermost of his ability, I believe he never will be put to it to save his church; not that he is loath so to save, but because there is no need so to save. He shall not need to put out all his power, and to press the utmost of his merit for the saving of his church. Alas! there is sufficiency of merit in him, to save a thousand times as many as are like to be saved by him. “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Measure not therefore what he can do, by what he has done, doth, or will do; neither do thou interpret this word “to the uttermost,” as if it related to the uttermost of his ability, but rather as it relateth (for so it doth indeed) to the greatness of thy necessity: for as he is able to save thee, though thy condition be, as it may be supposed to be, the worst that ever man was in that was saved; so he is able to save thee though thy condition were ten times worse than it is.

What! Shall not the worthiness of the Son of God be sufficient to save from the sin of man? or shall the sin of the world be of that weight to destroy, that it shall put Christ Jesus to the uttermost of the worth of his person and merit, to save therefrom? I believe it is blasphemy to think so. We can easily imagine that he can save all the world, that is, that he is of ability to do it. But we cannot imagine that he can do more than we think he can. But our imagination and thoughts set no bound to his ability: “He

is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think;" but what that is, I say, no man can think, no man can imagine. So then, Jesus Christ can do more than ever any man thought he could do, as to saving: he can do, we know not what.

This therefore should encourage comers to come to him, and them that come to hope. This, I say, should encourage them to let out, to lengthen and heighten their thoughts by the word, "to the uttermost;" seeing he can "save to the uttermost them that come to God by him."

CHAPTER 3.

SOME IMPORTANT INFERENCES.

AND now I come to the third thing that I told you I should speak of, and that is, of those inferences that may be gathered from these words.

1. Are they that are justified by Christ's blood such as have need yet to be saved by his intercession? Then from hence it follows, that *justification will stand with imperfection.* It doth not therefore follow, that a justified man is without infirmity; for he that is without infirmity, that is, perfect with absolute perfection, has no need to be saved by an act yet to be performed by a mediator, and his mediation.

When I say justification will stand with imperfection, I do not mean, that it will allow, countenance, or approve thereof; but I mean, there is no necessity of our perfection, of our personal perfection, as to our justification, and that we are justified without it; yea, that that imperfection in justified persons remains.

Again, when I say that justification will stand with imperfection, I do not mean that as to our justification we are imperfect; for in that we are complete: we are complete in him who is our justice. If otherwise, the imperfection is in the matter that justifieth us, which is the righteousness of Christ; yea, and to say so, would conclude that wrong judgment proceedeth from him that imputeth that righteousness to us to justification, since an imperfect thing is imputed to us for justification. But far be it from any (that believe that God is true) to imagine such a thing: all his works are perfect, there is nothing wanting in them as to the present design.

But what then do we mean when we say, justification will stand with a state of imperfection?

Answer. Why, I mean, that justified men are *yet sinners in themselves,* are yet full of imperfections, yea, sinful imperfections. Justified Paul said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." While we are yet sinners, we are justified by the blood of Christ; hence again, it is said,

he “justifies the ungodly.” Justification then, only covereth our sin from the sight of God; it maketh us not perfect with inherent perfection. But God, for the sake of that righteousness which, by his grace, is imputed to us, declareth us quit and discharged from the curse, and sees sin in us no more to condemnation.

And this is the reason, or one reason, why they that are justified have need of an intercessor; namely, to save us from the evil of the sin that remains in our flesh, after we are justified by grace, through Christ, and set free from the law as to condemnation. Therefore, as it is said; we are saved, so it is said, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

The godly (for now we will call them the godly, though there is yet abundance of sin in them) *feel in themselves many things*, even after justification, by which they are convinced they are still attended with personal sinful imperfections. For example,

(1.) They often feel unbelief, fear, mistrust, doubting, despondings, murmurings, blasphemies, pride, lightness, foolishness, avarice, fleshly lusts, heartlessness to good, wicked desires, low thoughts of Christ, too good thoughts of sin, and, at times too great an itching after the worst of immoralities.

(2.) They feel in themselves an aptness to incline to errors; as to lean to the works of the law for justification; to question the truth of the resurrection and judgment to come; to dissemble and play the hypocrite in profession and in performance of duties; to do religious duties rather to please man than God, who trieth the heart.

(3.) They feel an inclination in them, in times of trial, to faint under the cross; to seek too much to save themselves; to dissemble the known truth, for obtaining a little favor with men; and to speak things that they ought not, that they may sleep in a whole skin.

(4.) They feel, at times, wearisomeness in religious duties, but a natural propensity to things of the flesh. They feel a desire to go beyond bounds, both at board, and bed, and bodily exercise, and in all lawful recreation.

(5.) They feel in themselves an aptness to take the advantage of using things that are lawful ¾ as food, raiment, sleep, talk, estates, relations, beauty, wit, parts, and graces ¾ to unlawful ends. These things, with many more of the like kind, the justified man finds, and feels in himself, to his humbling, and often casting down: and to save himself from the destroying evil of these, Christ ever liveth to make intercession for him.

Again, the justified man is imperfect in his *graces;* and therefore needeth to be saved, by the intercession of Christ, from the bad fruits that that imperfection yields.

Justifying righteousness is accompanied with graces, the graces of the Spirit. Though these graces are not that matter by and through which we are justified, nor any part thereof, (that being only the obedience of Christ imputed to us of mere pleasure and goodwill); yet, I say, they come when justification comes; and though they are not so easily discerned at the first, they show forth themselves afterwards. But, I say, how many soever they are, and how fast soever they grow, their utmost arrivement here is but to a state short of perfection.

None of the graces of God's Spirit in our hearts, can do their work in us without shortness; and that because of their own imperfections, and also because of the opposition that they meet with from our flesh. Take for example,

(1.) Faith, which is the root grace, the grand grace; its shortness is sufficiently manifest, by its shortness of apprehension of things pertaining to the person, offices, relations, and works of Christ, now in the heavenly place, for us. It is also very defective in its fetching comfort from the word to us, and continuing it with us, when, at any time, we attain unto it; in its receiving strength to subdue sin, and in its purifyings of the heart. Though indeed it doth what it doth in reality, yet how short is it of doing it thoroughly? Oftentimes, were it not for supplies, by virtue of the intercession of Christ, faith would fail of performing its office in any measure.

(2.) There is hope, another grace of the Spirit, bestowed upon us; and how often is that also, as to the excellency of working, made to flag! "I

shall perish," said David; "I am cut off from before thine eyes." And now, where was his hope, in the right gospel-discovery of it? Also, all our fear of men, and fears of death, and fears of judgment, arise from the imperfections of hope. But from all those faults Christ saves us by his intercession.

(3.) There is love, that should be in us as hot as fire. It is compared to fire, to fire of the hottest sort; yea, it is said to be hotter than "the coals of juniper." But who finds this heat in love, so much as for one poor quarter of an hour together? Some little flashes, perhaps some, at some times, may feel; but where is that constant burning of affection, that the word, the love of God, and the love of Christ, call for? yea, and that the necessities of the poor and afflicted members of Christ call for also? Ah! love is cold in these frozen days, and short when it is at the highest.

The grace of humility, where is it? Who has a thimble-full thereof? Where is he that is clothed with humility, and that does what he is commanded "with all humility of mind?"

For zeal, where is that? Zeal for God against sin, profaneness, superstition, and idolatry. I speak now to the godly, who have this zeal in the root and habit; but, Oh! how little of it puts forth itself into action, in such a day as this is!

There are reverence, fear, and standing in awe of God's word and judgments: where are the excellent workings thereof to be found? And where there are most, how far short of perfect acts are they?

Simplicity, and godly sincerity also, with how much alloy are they mixed in the best, especially among those of the saints that are rich, who have got the poor and beggarly art of complimenting! For the more compliment, the less sincerity. Many words will not fill a bushel; "but in the multitude of words there lacks not sin." Plain men are thin come up in this day; to find a mouth without fraud and deceit now, is a rare thing.

Thus might one count up all the graces of the Spirit, and show wherein every one of them is scanty, and wanting perfection. Now, look, what they want of perfection is supplied with sin and vanity; for there is a fullness of flesh and sin at hand, to fill up all the vacant places in our

souls. There is no place in the souls of the godly, but it is filled up with darkness, when the light is wanting, and with sin, so far forth as grace is wanting. Satan also diligently waiteth to come in at the door, if Careless has left it a little ajar.

But, Oh! the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and by so doing, saves us from all the evils of our imperfect graces, and from all the advantages that flesh, and sin, and Satan, get upon us thereby.

Further, as Christ Jesus our Lord doth save us, by his intercession, from that hurt that would unavoidably come upon us by these; so also, by that we are saved from the evil that is at any time found in any or all our holy *duties*, or those performances that it is our duty daily to be found in. That our duties are imperfect, follows upon what was discoursed before; for if our graces be imperfect, how can our duties but be so too?

Our prayers, how imperfect are they? With how much unbelief are they mixed? How apt is our tongue to run in prayer before our hearts? With how much earnestness do our lips move, while our hearts lie within as cold as a clod? Yea, and ofttimes it is to be feared, we ask for that with our mouth, that we care not whether we have or no. Where is the man that pursues, with all his might, what but now he seemed to ask for with all his heart? Prayer is become a shell, a piece of formality, a very empty thing, as to the spirit and life of prayer, at this day. I speak now of the prayers of the godly.

I once met with a poor woman, that in the greatest of her distresses, told me, she did use to rise in the night, in cold weather, and pray to God, while she sweat with fears of the loss of her prayer, and desires that her soul might be saved. I have heard of many that have prayed, but of few that have prayed till they have sweat, by reason of their wrestling with God for mercy in that duty.

There is the duty of almsgiving, another gospel performance; but how poorly is it done in our days? We have so many foolish ways to lay out money in toys, and fool’s baubles for our children, that we can spare none, or very little, for the relief of the poor. Also, do not many give that to their dogs, yea, let it lie in their houses until it stinks so vilely that neither

dog nor cat will eat it, which had it been bestowed well in time, might have been a succor and nourishment to some poor member of Christ?

There is hearing of the word; but, alas! the place of hearing is the place of sleeping, with many a fine professor. I have often observed, that those that keep shops can briskly attend upon a two penny customer; but when they come themselves to God's market, they spend their time too much in letting their thoughts wander from God's commandments, or in a nasty drowsy way. The heads, also, and hearts of most hearers, are to the word, as the sieve is to water; they can hold no sermons, remember no text, bring home no proofs, produce none of the discourse to the edification and profit of others. And do not the best take up too much in hearing, and mind too little, what the word of God calls for at their hands, to perform it with a good conscience?

There is faithfulness in callings, faithfulness to brethren, faithfulness to the world, faithfulness to children, to servants, to all according to our place and capacity. Oh! how little of it is there found in the mouths and lives, to speak nothing of the hearts, of professors!

I will proceed no farther in this kind of repetition of things; only thus much give me leave to say over again, even many of the truly godly are very faulty here. But what would they do if there were not one always at the right hand of God, by intercession taking away this kind of iniquities?

2. Are those that are justified by the blood of Christ such, after that, as have need also of a daily saving by Christ's intercession? From hence then we may infer, that *as sin, so Satan will not give over from assaulting the best of the saints.*

It is not justification that can secure us from being assaulted by Satan: "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you."

There are two things that do encourage the devil to set upon the people of God.

> **(1.)** He knows not who are the elect; for all that profess are not; and therefore he will make trial if he can get them into his sieve, whether he can cause them to perish. And great success he hath had this way. Many a brave professor has he overcome: he has cast some of the stars

from heaven to earth. He picked one out from among the apostles, and one, as it is thought from among the seven deacons, and many from Christ's disciples. But how many think you now-a-days doth he utterly destroy with his net?

(2.) If it so happeneth that he cannot destroy, because Christ by his intercession prevaileth; yet will he set upon the church to defile and afflict it. For if he can but get us to fall with Peter, then he has obtained that dishonor he brought to God, the weak to be stumbled, and the world offended, and the gospel vilified and reproached. Or if he cannot throw up our heels, yet by buffeting us, he can grieve us, afflict us, put us to pain, fright us, drive us to many doubts, and make our life very uncomfortable unto us, and make us go groaning to our Father's house. But blessed be God for his Christ, and that "he ever liveth to make intercession for us."

3. Are those that are justified by the blood of Christ, such as, after that, have need to be saved by Christ's intercession? Then hence I infer, that *it is dangerous going about anything in our own name and strength.*

If we would have helps from the intercession of Christ, let us have a care that we do what we do according to the word of Christ. Do what he bids us, as well as we can, as he bids us: then we need not doubt but to have help and salvation in those duties, by the intercession of Christ. "Do all," says the apostle, "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." 'O but then the devil and the world will be most of all offended.' Well well; but if you look to Christ and do nothing but as in his fear, by his word, in his name, you may be sure of what help his intercession can afford you; and that can afford you much help, not only to begin, but to go through with your work, in some good measure, as you should. By that also you shall be secured from those dangers, if not temptations to dangers, that those that go out about business in their own names and strength shall be sure to meet withal.

4. Are those that are justified by the blood of Christ, such as, after that, have need of being saved by Christ's intercession? Then hence I infer again, that *God has a great dislike of the sins of his own people*, and would fall upon them in judgment and anger, much more severe than he doth, were it not for Christ's intercession.

The gospel is not, as some think, a loose and licentious doctrine, nor God's discipline of his church a negligent and careless discipline; for though those that believe already, have also an intercessor, yet God to show his detestation against sin, doth often make them feel to purpose the weight of his fingers. The sincere, that fain would walk with God, have felt what I say, and that to the breaking of their bones full oft. The loose ones, and those that God loves not, may be utter strangers as to this; but those that are his own indeed, do know it is otherwise: "You have I known above all others," says God, "therefore you will I punish for your iniquities."

God keeps a very strict house among his children. David found it so; Heman found it so; Job found it so; and the church of God has ever found it so. And I know not that his mind is ever the less against sin, notwithstanding we have an intercessor. True, our intercessor saves us from damning evils, from damning judgments; but he neither doth, nor will, secure us from temporal punishment, from spiritual punishment, unless we watch, deny ourselves, and walk in his fear. I would to God, that those who are otherwise minded, did but feel, for three or four months, something of what I have felt for several years together, for base, sinful thoughts. I wish it, I say, if it might be for their good, and for the better regulating their understandings. But whether they obtain my wish or no, sure I am, that God is no countenancer of sin; no, not in his own people: nay, he will bear it least of all in them. And as for others, however he may, for awhile, have patience towards them, if perhaps his goodness may lead them to repentance; yet the day is coming, when he will pay the carnal and hypocrites home, with devouring fire for their offenses.

But if our holy God will not let us go altogether unpunished, though we have so able and blessed an intercessor, that has always to present God with, on our behalf, so valuable a price of his own blood, now before the throne of grace; what should we have done, if there had been no days-man, none to plead for us, or to make intercession on our behalf? Read <2801>Jeremiah 30:11. "For I am with thee, saith the Lord to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." If it be so, I say, what had become of us, if we had no intercessor? and what will become of them concerning

whom the Lord has said already, “I will not take up their names in my lips” ¾ “I pray not for them?”

5. Are those that are already justified by the blood of Christ, yet such as have need of being saved by his intercession? Then hence I infer, that *Christ is not only the beginner, but the completer of our salvation.*

He is, as the Holy Ghost calls him, The author and finisher of our faith; or, as he calls him again, The author of our eternal salvation; of salvation throughout, from the beginning to the end, from first to last. His hands have laid the foundation of it, in his own blood; and his hands shall finish it, by his intercession. As he has laid the beginning fastly, so he shall bring forth the head stone with shoutings; and we shall cry, Grace, grace! at the last; salvation belongeth only to the Lord!

Many there be that begin with grace, and end with works, and think that this is the only way. Indeed works will save from temporal punishments, when their imperfections are purged from them by the intercession of Christ; but to be saved and brought to glory, to be carried through this dangerous world, from my first moving after Christ, until I set my foot within the gates of paradise, this is the work of my Mediator, of my high priest and intercessor. It is he that fetches us again when we are run away; it is he that lifteth us up when the devil and sin have thrown us down; it is he that quickeneth us when we grow cold; it is he that comforteth us when we despair; it is he that obtains fresh pardon when we have contracted sin; and he that purges our consciences when they are loaded with guilt.

I know also, that rewards do wait for them in heaven, that do believe in Christ, and shall do well on earth; but this is not a reward of merit, but of grace. We are saved by Christ; brought to glory by Christ; and all our works are no otherways made acceptable to God, but by the person and personal excellences and works of Christ. Therefore whatever the jewels are, and the bracelets, and the pearls, that thou shalt be adorned with as a reward of services done for God in the world; for them thou must thank Christ, and before all, confess that he was the meritorious cause thereof. He saves us and saves our services too. They would be all cast back as dung in our faces were they not rinsed and washed in the blood, were they not sweetened and perfumed in the incense, and conveyed to God himself through the white hand of Jesus Christ; for that is his golden censer; from

thence alone ascends the smoke that is in the nostrils of God of such a sweet savor.

6. Are those that are already justified by the blood of Christ, such as do still stand in need of being saved by his intercession? Then hence I infer again, that *we that have been saved hitherto, and preserved from the dangers that we have met with since our first conversion to this moment, should ascribe the glory to Jesus Christ ¾ to God by Jesus Christ.*

"I have prayed that thy faith fail not." ¾ "I pray that thou wouldst keep them from the evil," ¾ here is the true cause of our standing, and of our continuing in the faith and holy profession of the gospel to this very day. Wherefore we must give the glory of all to God by Christ. "I will not trust in my bow (saith David), neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." "He causeth us always to triumph in Christ;" "We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Thus you see, that both in the Old and New Testament, all the glory is given to the Lord, as well for preservation to heaven, as for justification to life. And he that is well acquainted with himself, will do this readily; though light-heads, and such as are not acquainted with the desperate evil that is in their natures, will sacrifice to their own net. But such will so sacrifice but awhile. Soon Death is coming, and he will put them into the view of what they see not now, and will feed sweetly upon them, because they made not the Lord their trust. And therefore ascribe thou the glory of the preservation of thy soul in the faith hitherto, to that salvation which Christ Jesus our Lord obtaineth for thee by his intercession.

7. Are those that are already justified by the blood of Christ, such as do still stand in need of being saved by his intercession? then is this also to be inferred from hence, that *saints should look to him for that saving that they shall yet have need of, betwixt this and their day of dissolution, yea, from henceforward, even to the day of judgment.* I say they should still look to him for the remaining part of their salvation, or for that of their salvation which is yet behind; and let them look for it with confidence, for it is in a faithful hand.

And for thy encouragement, to look and hope for the completing of thy salvation in glory, let me present thee with a few things.

Remember that the hardest or worst part of the work of thy Savior is over. His bloody work, his bearing of thy sin and curse, his loss of the light of his Father's face for a time, his dying upon the cursed tree, ¾ that was the worst, the sorest, the hardest, and most difficult part of the work of redemption; and yet this he did willingly, cheerfully, and without thy desires; yea, this he did as considering those for whom he did it in a state of rebellion and enmity to him.

Consider also, that he has made a beginning with thy soul to reconcile thee to God, and to that end has bestowed his justice upon thee, put his Spirit within thee, and begun to make the unwieldable mountain and rock, thy heart, to turn towards him, and desire after him, to believe in him, and rejoice in him.

Consider also, that some comfortable pledges of his love thou hast already received; namely, such as to feel the sweetness of his love; as to see the light of his countenance; as to be made to know his power, in raising thee when thou wast down; and how he has made thee stand while hell has been pushing at thee, utterly to overthrow thee.

Thou mayest consider also, that what remains behind of the work of thy salvation in his hands, as it is the most easy part, so the most comfortable, and that part which will more immediately issue in his glory; and therefore he will mind it.

That which is behind is also more safe in his hand, than if it was in thine own. He is wise, he is powerful, he is faithful, and therefore will manage that part that is lacking to our salvation, well, until he has completed it. It is his love to thee that has made him put no trust in thee. He knows that he can himself bring thee to his kingdom most surely, and therefore has not left that work to thee, no, nor any part thereof.

Live in hope then, in a lively hope, that since Christ is risen from the dead, he lives to make intercession for thee; and that thou shalt reap the blessed benefit of this two-fold salvation that is wrought, and that is working out for thee, by Jesus Christ our Lord. And thus have we treated of the benefit

of his intercession, in that he is able to save to the uttermost. And this leads me to the third particular.

CHAPTER 4.

THE PERSONS INTERESTED IN CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

THE third great thing is to show who are the persons interested in this intercession of Christ. And they are those that come to God by him. "Wherefore he is able also to save them," ¾ "to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

A little first to comment upon the order of the words, "that come unto God by him."

1. There are that come unto God, but not *by him;* and these are not included in this text ¾ have not a share in this privilege. Thus the Jews came to God; the unbelieving Jews, who had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. These submitted not to Christ, the righteousness of God, but thought to come to him by works of their own, or at least, as it were, by them, and so came short of salvation by grace, for that reigns to salvation only in Christ. To these Christ's person and undertakings were a stumbling stone; for at him they stumbled, and did split themselves to pieces, though they indeed were such as came to God for life.

2. As there are that come to God, but not by Christ; so there are that come to Christ, but not to *God* by him. Of this sort are they, who hearing that Christ is Savior, therefore come to him for pardon; but cannot abide to come to God by him, for that he is holy, and so will check their lusts, and will change their hearts and natures. Mind me what I say: There are a great many that would be saved by Christ, but love not to be sanctified by God through him. These make a stop at Christ, and will go no further. Might such have pardon, they care not whether ever they went to heaven or not. Of this kind of coming to Christ, I think it is, of which he warneth his disciples, when he saith, "In that day you shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." As if he should say, 'When you ask for any thing, make not a stop at me, but come to my Father by me. For they that come

to me, and not to my Father, through me, will have nothing of what they come for.'

Righteousness shall be imputed to us, if we believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. To come to Christ for a benefit, and stop there, and not come to God by him, prevaileth nothing. Here the mother of Zebedee's children erred, and about this it was that the Lord Jesus cautioned her: "Lord (saith she) grant that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left in thy kingdom." But what is the answer of Christ? "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of my Father." As if he should say, 'Woman, of myself I do nothing; my Father worketh with me. Go therefore to him by me, for I am the way to him: what thou canst obtain of him by me, thou shalt have; that is to say, what of the things that pertain to eternal life, whether pardon or glory.'

It is true, the Son has power to give pardon and glory, but he gives it not by himself, but by and according to the will of his Father. They therefore that come to him for an eternal good, and look not to the Father by him, come short thereof. I mean now pardon and glory. And hence, though it be said the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, that is, to show the certainty of his Godhead, and the excellency of his mediation; yet forgiveness of sin is said to lie more particularly in the hand of the Father, and that God for Christ's sake forgiveth us.

The Father, as we see, will not forgive, unless we come to him by the Son; why then should we conceit that the Son will forgive those that come not to the Father by him?

So then, justifying righteousness is in the Son, and with him also is intercession; but forgiveness is with the Father; yea, the gift of the Holy Ghost, yea, and the power of imputing of the righteousness of Christ is yet in the hand of the Father. Hence Christ prays to the Father to forgive, prays to the Father to send the Spirit, and it is God that imputeth righteousness to justification to us. The Father then doth nothing but for the sake of, and through the Son; the Son also doth nothing derogating from the glory of the Father. But it would be a derogation to the glory of the Father, if the Son should grant to save them that come not to the Father by him. Wherefore you that cry, Christ, Christ, delighting

yourselves in the thoughts of forgiveness, but care not to come by Christ to the Father for it, you are not at all concerned in this blessed text; for he only saves by his intercession them that come to God by him.

There are three sorts of people that may be said to come to Christ, but not to God by him.

1. They whose utmost design in coming is only that guilt and fear of damning may be removed from them. And there are three signs of such a one.

(1.) It is he that takes up in a belief of pardon, and so goes on in his course of carnality, as he did before.

(2.) He whose comfort in the belief of pardon standeth alone, without other fruits of the Holy Ghost.

(3.) He that having been washed, can be content, as the sow, to tumble in the mire again, or as the dog that did spew, to lick up his vomit again.

2. They may be said to come to Christ, but not to God by him, who do pick and choose doctrines; itching only after that which sounds of grace, but secretly abhorring that which presseth to moral goodness. These did never see God, what notions soever they may have of the Lord Jesus, and of forgiveness from him.

3. They surely did never come to God by Christ, however they may boast of the grace of Christ, that will from the freeness of gospel-grace plead an indulgence for sin.

And now to speak a few words of coming to God, of coming such as the text intends. And in speaking of this, I must touch upon two things.

1. Concerning God.

2. Concerning the frame of the heart of him that comes to him.

1. Of God. God is the chief good: good so as nothing is but himself. He is in himself most happy; yea, all good, and all true happiness is only to be found in God, as that which is essential to his nature; nor is there any good, or any happiness in or with any creature or thing, but what is

communicated to it by God. God is the only desirable good; nothing without him is worthy of our hearts. Right thoughts of God are able to ravish the heart; how much more happy is the man that has interest in God! God alone is able by himself to put the soul into a more blessed, comfortable, and happy condition, than can the whole world; yea, and more than if all the created happiness of all the angels of heaven did dwell in one man's bosom. God is the upholder of all creatures, and whatever they have that is a suitable good to their kind, it is from God. By God all things have their subsistence, and all the good that they enjoy. I cannot tell what to say. I am drowned. The life, the glory, the blessedness, the soul-satisfying goodness that is in God, is beyond all expression.

2. Now there must be in us something of suitableness of spirit to this God, before we can be willing to come to him.

Before, therefore, God has been with a man, and has left some impression of his glory upon him, that man cannot be willing to come to him aright. Hence it is said concerning Abraham, that, in order to his coming to God (and following him) aright, the Lord himself did show himself unto him. "Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father, Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee."

It was this God of glory, the sight and vision of this God of glory, that provoked Abraham to leave his country and kindred to come after God. The reason why men are so careless and so indifferent about their coming to God, is because they have their eyes blinded, because they do not perceive his glory. God is so blessed a one, that did he not hide himself, and his glory, the whole world would be ravished with him: but he has, I will not say reasons of state, but reasons of glory; glorious reasons, why he hideth himself from the world, and appeareth but to particular ones. Now, by his thus appearing to Abraham, down fell Abraham's vanity, and his idolatrous fancies and affections; and his heart began to turn unto God, for that there was in this appearance an alluring and soul-instructing voice. Hence that which Moses calls here an appearing, Christ calls a hearing, and a teaching, and a learning. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the

Father, cometh unto me:" that is, to God by me. But, I say, what must they hear and learn of the Father, but that Christ is the way to glory, the way to the God of glory? This is a drawing doctrine: wherefore that which in this verse is called, teaching and learning, is called in the verse before, the drawing of the Father, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him;" that is, with powerful proposals, and alluring conclusions, and heart-subduing influences.

Having thus touched upon this, we will now proceed to show you what kind of people they are that come to God by Christ; and then shall draw some inferences from this also.

There are therefore three sorts of people that come to God by Christ.

1. Men newly awakened.

2. Men turned back from backsliding.

3. The sincere and upright believer.

1. Men *newly awakened.* By awakened, I mean awakened thoroughly. So awakened as to be made to see themselves, what they are; the world, what it is; the law, what it is; hell, what it is; death, what it is; Christ, what he is; and God, what he is; and also what judgment is.

A man that will come to God by Christ aright, must needs, precedent to his so coming, have a competent knowledge of things of this kind.

First, He must know himself, what a wretched and miserable sinner he is, before he will take one step forward in order to his coming to God by Christ. This is plain from a great many scriptures: as that of the parable of the prodigal, that account of the three thousand, that of the jailer, and those of many more besides. "The whole have no need of the physician." They were not the sound, and whole, but the lame and diseased, that came to him to be cured of their infirmities; and it is not the righteous, but the sinners, that do well know themselves to be such, that come to God by Christ.

It is not in the power of all the men on earth to make one man come to God by Christ, because it is not in their power to make men see their state by nature. And what should a man come to God for, that can live in the

world without him? Reason says so, experience says so, the scripture beareth witness that so it is of a truth. It is a sight of what I am that must unroost me; that must shake my soul, and make me leave my present rest. No man comes to God by Christ, but he that knows himself, and what sin hath done to him. That is the first.

Secondly, As he must know himself, and what a wretch he is; so he must know the world, and what an empty thing it is. Cain did see himself, but saw not the emptiness of this world; and therefore, instead of going to God by Christ, he went to the world, and there did take up to his dying-day. The world is a great snare to the soul, even to the souls of awakened sinners, by reason of its big looks, and the fair promises that it makes to those that will please to entertain it. It will also make as though it could do as much to the quieting of the spirit, as either sermon, Bible or preacher. Yea, and it has its followers ready at its heels continually to blow its applause abroad, saying, "Who will show us any (other) good?" And though this their way is their folly, yet their posterity approveth their sayings. So that unless a man, under some awakenings, sees the emptiness of the world, he will take up in the good things thereof, and not come to God by Christ. Many there be now in hell that can seal to this truth. It was the world that took awakened Cain, awakened Judas, awakened Demas. Yea, Balaam, though he had some kind of visions of God, yet was kept by the world from coming to him aright. See with what earnestness the young man in the gospel came to Jesus Christ, and that for eternal life. He ran to him, he kneeled down to him, and asked (and that before a multitude) "Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And yet when he was told that, he could not come; for the world soon steps betwixt that life and him, and persuades him to take up in itself; and so, for aught we know, he never looked after life more.

There are four things in the world that have a tendency to lull an awakened man asleep, if God also makes him not afraid of the world.

1. There is the bustle and cumber of the world, that will call a man off from looking after the salvation of his soul. This is intimated by the parable of the thorny ground. Worldly cumber is a devilish thing. It will hurry a man from his bed without prayer; to a sermon, and from it again, without prayer. It will choke prayer, it will choke the word, it will choke

convictions, it will choke the soul, and cause that awakening shall be to no saving purpose.

2. There is the friendship of this world, to which if a man is not mortified, there is no coming for him to God by Christ. And a man can never be mortified to it, unless he shall see the emptiness and vanity of it. Whosoever makes himself a friend of this world, is the enemy of God: and how then can he come to him by Christ?

3. There are the terrors of the world; if a man stands in fear of them, he also will not come to God by Christ. “The fear of man brings a snare.” How many have, in all ages, been kept from coming to God aright, by the terrors of the world? yea, how many are there, who to one’s thinking, have almost got to the gates of heaven, and have been scared, and driven quite back again, by nothing but the terrors of this world? This is that which Christ so cautioned his disciples about; for he knew it was a deadly thing. Peter also bids the saints beware of this, as of a thing very destructive.

4. There is also the glory of the world, namely, honors, and greatness, and preferments: an absolute hindrance to convictions and awakenings. “How can ye believe,” saith Christ, “that receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God?” If therefore a man is not in his affections crucified to these, it will keep him from coming to God aright.

Thirdly, As a man must know himself, how vile he is, and know the world, how empty it is; so he must know the law, how severe it is; else he will not come to God by Jesus Christ our Lord.

A man that is under awakenings, is under a double danger of falling short of coming to God by Christ, if he knows not the severity of the law.

> **1.** He is either in danger of slighting its penalty; or,
>
> **2.** Of seeking to make amends to it by doing good works; and nothing can keep him from splitting his soul upon one of these two rocks, but a sound knowledge of the severity of the law.

He is in danger, I say, of slighting the penalty. This is seen by the practice of all the profane in the world. Do they not know the law? Verily, many of them can say the ten commandments without book. But they do not know the severity of the law; and therefore when at any time awakenings

come upon their consciences, they strive to drive away the guilt of one sin, by wallowing in the filth of another.

But would they do thus, if they knew the severity of the law? They would as soon eat fire. The severity of the law would be an intolerable, unsupportable burden to their consciences. It would drive them, and make them fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.

Or, if he slights not the penalty, he will seek to make amends to it, by doing good works, for the sins he has committed. This is manifest by the practice of the Jews and Turks, and all that swerve on that hand, namely, to seek life and happiness by the law. Paul also was here before he met with Jesus in the way. This is natural to consciences that are awakened, unless also they have it given to see the true severity of the law. The which that thou mayest do, if my mite will help, I will cast in for thy conviction these four things:

1. The law charges thee with its curse, as well for the pollution of thy nature, as for the defilements of thy life; yea, and if thou hadst never committed sinful acts, thy pollution of nature must stand in the way to life, if thou comest not to God for mercy by Christ.

2. The law takes notice of and charges thee with its curse, as well for sinful thoughts, as for vile and sinful actions. The very "thought of foolishness is sin," though it never breaks out into act, and will as surely merit the damnation of the soul, as will the greatest transgression in the world.

3. If now thou couldst keep all the commandments, that will do thee no good at all for life, because thou hast sinned first: "And the soul that sinneth, shall die." Unless then thou canst endure the curse, and so in a legal way, overcome it, for the sins that thou hast committed, thou art gone, if thou comest not to God by Christ for mercy and pardon.

4. And never think of repentance, thereby to stop the mouth of the law. For the law calleth not for repentance, but life; nor will it accept of any, shouldst thou mourn and weep for thy sins till thou hast made a sea of blood with tears. This, I say, thou must know, or thou wilt not come to God by Christ for life. For the knowledge of this will cause that thou shalt neither slight the severity of the law, nor trust to the works thereof for life. Now when thou doest neither of these, thou canst not but speed thee

to God by Christ for life; for now thou hast no stay; pleasures are gone, all hope in thyself is gone. Thou now diest, and that is the way to live; for this inward death is, or feels, like a hunger-bitten stomach, that cannot but crave meat and drink. Now it will be as possible for thee to sleep with thy finger in the fire, as to forbear craving mercy, so long as this knowledge remains.

Fourthly, As a man must know himself, the emptiness of this world, and the law of God; so it is necessary for him to know that there is a hell, and how insupportable the torments of it are: for all threatenings, curses, and determinations to punish in the next world will prove but fictions and scarecrows, if there be no woeful place, no woeful state, for the sinner to receive his wages in for sin, when his days are ended in this world. Wherefore this word, *saved,* supposeth such a place and state. “He is able to save” from hell, from the woeful place, from the woeful state of hell, them that come unto God by him.

Christ therefore often insinuates the truth of a hell, in his invitations to the sinners of this world to come to him: as where he tells them, they shall be saved if they do; they shall be damned if they do not. As if he had said, There is a hell, a terrible hell, and they that come to me I will save them from it; but they that come not, the law will damn them in it. Therefore, that thou mayest indeed come to God by Christ for mercy, believe there is a hell, a woeful, terrible place. Hell is God’s prison; he hath made it deep and large! the punishments are by the power of his wrath, which will issue from his mouth like a stream of burning brimstone, ever kindling itself upon the soul. Thou must know this by the word, and fly from it, or thou shalt know it by thy sins, and lie and cry in it.

I might enlarge, but if I did I should be swallowed up; for we are, while here, no more able to set forth the torments of hell, than we are, while here, to set forth the joys of heaven. Only this may and ought to be said, that God is able, as to save, so to cast into hell: and as he is able to make heaven sweet, pleasurable, and glorious, beyond thought; so he is able to make the torments of hell so exquisite, so hot, so sharp, so intolerable, that no tongue can utter it, no, not the damned in hell themselves.

If thou lovest thy soul, slight not the knowledge of hell, for that, and the law, are the spurs which Christ useth to prick souls forward to himself

withal. What is the cause that sinners can play so delightfully with sin? It is that they forget that there is a hell for them to descend into for their so doing, when they go out of this world. For here usually he gives a stop to our sinful course; we perceive that hell hath opened her mouth before us. Lest thou shouldst forget, I beseech thee another time, to retain a knowledge of hell in thine understanding, and apply the burning-hot thoughts thereof to thy conscience. This is one way to make thee gather up thy heels, and mend thy pace in coming to Jesus Christ, and to God the Father by him.

Fifthly, It is also necessary, that he that cometh to God by the Lord Jesus, should know what death is, and the uncertainty of its approaches upon us. Death is, as I may call it, the feller, the cutter down. Death is that which puts a stop to a further living here, and that which lays man where it finds him: if he is in the faith in Jesus, it lays him down there to sleep, till the Lord comes: if he be not in the faith, it lays him down in his sins, until the Lord comes. Again, if thou hast some beginnings that look like good, and death should overtake thee before those beginnings are ripe, thy fruit will wither, and thou wilt fall short of being gathered into God's barn. Some men are cut off like the tops of the ears of corn, and some are even nipped by death in the very bud of their spring: but the safety is, when a man is ripe, and shall be gathered to his grave, as a shock of corn to the barn in its season.

Now, if death should surprise and seize thee before thou art fit to die, all is lost. For there is no repentance in the grave; or rather, as the wise man has it, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Death is God's sergeant, God's bailiff, and he arrests in God's name when he comes, but seldom gives warning before he clappeth us on the shoulder. And when he arrests us, though he may stay a little while, and give us leave to pant, and tumble, and toss ourselves for a while upon a bed of languishing, yet at last he will prick our lungs, and let out our life, and then our soul will be poured upon the ground, yea, into hell, if we are not ready and prepared for the life everlasting. He that doth not watch for, and is not afraid lest death should prevent him, will not make haste to God by

Christ. What Job said of temporal afflictions, such a one will death be, if thou art not aware: “When I looked for good, evil came. The day of affliction prevented me.” If thou lookest, or beginnest to look for good, and the day of death shall cut thee off before thou hast found that good thou lookest for, all is lost, soul, and life, and heaven and all. Wherefore it is convenient that thou conclude the grave is thy house, and that thou make thy bed once a day in the grave: also that thou say unto corruption, “Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.” I say, be acquainted with the grave and death. The feel puts the evil day far away, but the wise man brings it nigh. Better be ready to die seven years before death comes, than want one day, one hour, one moment, one tear, one sorrowful sigh, at the remembrance of the ill-spent life that I have lived. This then is that which I admonish thee of, namely, that thou know death, what it is, what it doth, when it comes; also that thou consider well the danger that death leaves that man in, to whom he comes before he is ready, and prepared to be laid by it in the grave.

Sixthly, Thou must also be made by thy awakenings to see what Christ is. This is of absolute necessity: for how can or shall a man be willing to come to Christ, that knows not what he is, what God has appointed him to do? He is the Savior: every man will say so. But to sense, smell, and taste, what *saving* is, and so to understand the nature of the office and work of a Savior, is a rare thing, kept close from most, known but by some. Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior, or the reconciler of men to God, in the body of his flesh, through death. This is he whose business in coming from heaven to earth was to save his people from their sins. Now, as was said, to know how he doth this, is that which is needful to be inquired into: for some say he doth it one way, some he doth it another; (and it must be remembered, that we are now speaking of the salvation of that man, that from new or first awakenings is coming to God by Christ for life.)

1. Some say he doth it by giving us precepts and laws to keep, that we might be justified thereby.

2. Some say that he doth it by setting himself a pattern for us to follow him.

3. Some again hold, that he doth it by our following the light within.

But thou must take heed of all these, for he justifies us by none of these means (and thou dost need to be justified); I say, he justifieth us not, either by giving laws unto us, or by becoming our example, or by our following him in any sense, but by his blood shed for us. His blood is not laws, nor ordinances, nor commandments, but a price, a redeeming price. He justifies us, by bestowing upon us, not by expecting from us. He justifies us by his grace, not by our works. In a word, thou must be well grounded in the knowledge of what Christ is, and how men are justified by him, or thou wilt not come unto God by him.

As thou must know him, and how men are justified by him, so thou must know the readiness that is in him to receive and to do for those, what they need, that come unto God by him. Suppose his merits were ever so efficacious, yet if it could be proved, that there is a loathness in him that these merits should be bestowed upon the coming ones, there would but few adventure to wait upon him. But now, as he is full, so he is free. Nothing pleases him better, than to give what he has away, than to bestow it upon the poor and needy. And it will be convenient that thou, who art a coming soul, should know this for thy comfort to encourage thee to come to God by him. Take two or three sayings of his for the confirming of what is now said: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” “I am not come to call the righteous but sinners, to repentance.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

Seventhly, As a man that would come to God by Christ, must, antecedent to his so coming, know himself, what he is; the world, how empty it is; the law, how severe it is; death and what it is; and Christ and what he is; so also he must know God. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.” God he must know, else how can the sinner propound him as his end, his ultimate end? for so doth everyone that indeed doth come to Christ aright. He comes to Christ, because he is the way; he comes to God, because he is the end. But I say, if he knows him not, how can he propound him as the end? The end is that for the sake of which I propound to myself anything, and for the sake of which I use any means.

Now then, I would be saved; but why? Even because I would enjoy God. I come to Christ to be saved; and why? because I would enjoy God. I am sensible that sin has made me come short of the glory of God, and that Christ Jesus is he (the only one) that can put me into a condition to obtain the glory of God; and therefore I come to God by him.

But I say again, who will propound God for his end, that knows him not, that knows him not aright? yea, that knows him not to be worth being propounded as his end, in coming to Jesus Christ? and he that thus knows him, must know him to be above all, best of all, and him in whom the soul shall find that content, that bliss, that glory and happiness, that can by no means be found elsewhere. And, I say, if this be not found in God, the soul will never propound him to himself as the only, the highest, and ultimate end in its coming to Jesus Christ; but it will propound something else, even what it shall imagine to be the best good: perhaps heaven, perhaps ease from guilt, perhaps to be kept out of hell, or the like. I do not say but a man may propound all these to himself, in his coming to Jesus Christ; but if he propound these as his ultimate end, as the chiefest good that he seeks; if the presence and enjoyment of God, of God's glorious majesty, be not a chief design, he is not concerned in the salvation that is propounded in our text. "He is able," and so will "save to the uttermost them that come unto *God* by him."

What is heaven without God? What is ease without the peace and enjoyment of God? What is deliverance from hell, without the enjoyment of God? The propounding therefore these, and only these, to thyself for thy happiness, in thy coming to Jesus Christ, is a proposal not a hair's breadth higher than what a man without grace can propound. What, or who is he that would not go to heaven? What, or who is he that would not also have ease from the guilt of sin? And where is the man that chooseth to go to hell? But many there be that cannot abide God; no, they like not to go to heaven, because God is there. If the devil had a heaven to bestow upon men, a vicious and a beastly heaven, (if it be lawful thus to speak) I durst pawn my soul upon it, were it a thousand times better than it is, that upon a bare invitation the foul fiend would have twenty to God's one. They, I say, cannot abide God; nay, for all the devil has nothing but a hell for them, yet how thick men go to him, but how thinly to God Almighty! The nature of God lieth cross to the lusts of men. A holy God, a glorious

holy God, an infinitely holy God; this spoils all. But to the soul that is awakened, and that is made to see things as they are, to him God is what he is in himself, the blessed, the highest, the only eternal good, and he without the enjoyment of whom all things would sound but empty in the ears of that soul.

Now then, I advise thee that hast a mind to come to God by Christ, that thou seek the knowledge of God: “If thou seekest wisdom as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”

And to encourage thee yet further, he is so desirous of communion with men, that he pardoneth sins for that. Hence he is called, not only loving, but love. “God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.”

Methinks, when I consider what glory there is, at times, upon the creatures, and that all their glory is the workmanship of God, O Lord Jesus, say I, What is God himself? He may well be called the God of glory, as well as the glorious Lord; for as all glory is from him, so in him is an inconceivable well-spring of glory, of glory to be communicated to them that come by Christ to him. Wherefore let the glory, and love, and bliss, and eternal happiness that is in God, allure thee to come to him by Christ.

Eighthly, As thou shouldst, nay, must, have a good knowledge of all these, so thou must have it of judgment to come. They that come to God by Christ, are said to fly from the wrath to come, to fly for refuge ¾ to lay hold on the hope set before them.

The judgment to come, is a warm thing to be thought of, an awakening thing to be thought of: it is called the eternal judgment, because it is, and will be, God’s final conclusion with men. This day is called the great and notable day of the Lord; the day that shall burn like an oven; the day in which the angels shall gather the wicked together, as tares in bundles, to burn them, but the rest into his kingdom and glory. This day will be it in which all bowels of love and compassion shall be shut up to the wicked, and that in which the floodgates of wrath shall be opened, by which a plentiful reward shall be given to evil doers, but glory to the righteous. This is the day in which men, if they could, would creep into the ground

for fear; but because they cannot, therefore they will call and cry to the mountains to fall upon them, but they shall not; therefore they stand bound to bear their judgment.

This day will be the day of breaking up closet-councils, cabinet-councils, secret purposes, hidden thoughts; yea, God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. I say he shall do it then, for he will "both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." This is the day that is appointed to put them to shame and contempt, that have in this world been bold and audacious in their vile and beastly ways. At this day God will cover all such bold and brazen faces with shame. Now they will blush till the blood is ready to burst through their cheeks. O the confusion and shame that will cover their faces, while God is discovering to them what a vile, what a beastly, what an uncomely, and what an unreasonable life they lived in the world! They shall see the contemned God that fed them, that clothed them, that gave them life and limb, and that maintained their breath in their nostrils. But, Oh! when they see the gulf before them then, and all things ready to receive them in thither, then they will know what sinning against God means!

And I say, Thou that art for coming to God by Christ, must know this, and be well assured of this, or thou wilt never come to God by him.

What of the glory of God shall be put upon them that do indeed come to him, will also help in this spiritual journey, if it be well considered by thee: but perhaps terror and unbelief will suffer thee to consider but little of that. However, the things aforementioned will be goads, and will serve to prick thee forward; and if they do so, they will be God's great blessing unto thee, and that for which thou wilt give him thy thanks forever.

Thus I have in few words spoken something as to the first sort of comers to God by Christ; namely, of the coming of the newly awakened man. And I say again, if any of the things aforenamed be wanting, and are not with his heart, it is a question whether, notwithstanding all the noise that he may make about religion, he will ever come to God by Christ.

If he knows not himself and the badness of his condition, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not the world and the emptiness and vanity thereof, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not the law and the severity thereof, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not hell and the torments thereof, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not what death is, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not the Father and the Son, how can he come?

And to know that there is a judgment to come, is as necessary to his coming, as most of the rest of the things propounded. Coming to God by Christ is for shelter, for safety, for advantage, and everlasting happiness. But he that knows not that, understands not the things aforementioned ¾ sees not this need of taking shelter, of flying for safety, of coming for advantage to God by Christ.

I know there are degrees of this knowledge; and he that has it most warm upon him, in all likelihood, will make most haste, or, as David saith, will haste his escape from the windy storm and tempest; and he that sees least, is in danger of being the loiterer, and so of losing the prize. For all that run do not obtain it; all that fight do not win it; and all that strive for it have it not.

2. I shall now come to the second man mentioned, namely, *the man that is turned back from his backsliding,* and speak something also about his coming again to God by Christ.

There are two things remarkable in the returning of a backslider to God by Christ. The first is, that he gives a second testimony to the truth of all things spoken of before. He also gives a second testimony of the necessity of coming to God by Christ.

Of the manner of his coming to God by Christ, perhaps I also may speak a word or two. But,

1. The returning again of the backslider, gives *a second testimony* to the truth of man's state being by nature miserable, of the vanity of this world, of the severity of the law, certainty of death, and terribleness of judgment to come. His first coming told them so, but his second coming tells them

so with a double confirmation of the truth. ‘It is so,’ saith his first coming. ‘Oh! it is so,’ saith his second. The backsliding of a Christian comes through the overmuch persuading of Satan and lust that the man was mistaken, and that there was no such horror in the things from which he fled, nor so much good in the things to which he hasted. ‘Turn again, fool,’ says the devil, ‘turn again to thy former course. I wonder what frenzy it was that drove thee to thy heels, and that made thee leave so much good behind thee, as other men find in the lusts of the flesh and the good of the world. As for the law, and death, and an imagination of the day of judgment, they are but mere scarecrows, set up by politic heads, to keep the ignorant in subjection.’ ‘Well,’ says the backslider, ‘I will go back again and see.’ So, fool as he is, he goes back, and has all things ready to entertain him; his conscience sleeps, the world smiles, flesh is sweet, carnal company compliments him, and all that can be got is presented to this backslider to accommodate him. But, behold, he doth again begin to see his own nakedness, and he perceives that the law is whetting his axe. As for the world, he perceives it is a bubble. He also smells the smell of brimstone; for God hath scattered it upon his tabernacle, and it begins to burn within him. ‘Oh! saith he, I am deluded. Oh! I am ensnared. My first sight of things was true. I see it is so again.’ Now he begins to be for flying again to his first refuge, ‘O God, saith he, I am undone! I have turned from thy truth to lies! I believed them such at first, and find them such at last. Have mercy upon me, O God!’

This, I say, is a testimony, a second testimony by the same man, as to the miserable state of man, the severity of the law, the emptiness of the world, the certainty of death, and the terribleness of judgment. This man has seen it, and seen it again.

A returning backslider is a great blessing (I mean intended to be so) to two sorts of men.

1. To the elect uncalled.

2. To the elect that are called, and that at present stand their ground.

The uncalled are made to hear him and consider; the called are made to hear him, and are afraid of falling. Behold therefore the mystery of God’s wisdom, and how willing he is that spectators should be warned and made

take heed. Yea, he will permit that some of his own shall fall into the fire, to convince the world that hell is hot, and to warn their brethren to take heed that they slip not with their feet. I have often said in my heart, that this was the cause why God suffered so many of the believing Jews to fall, namely, that the Gentiles might take heed. 'O brethren,' saith the backslider that is returned, 'did you see how I left my God? did you see how I turned again to those vanities from which some time before I fled? Oh! I was deluded; I was bewitched; I was deceived: for I found all things from which I fled at first, still worse by far when I went to them the second time. Do not backslide. Oh! do not backslide. The first ground of your departing from them was good; never tempt God a second time.'

2. And as he gives us a second testimony, that the world and himself are so as at first he believed they were; so by this his returning, he testifies that God and Christ are the same, and *much more* than ever he believed at first they were. This man has made a proof before, and a proof after conviction, of the evil of the one and good of the other. This man has made a proof by feeling and seeing, and that before and after grace received. This man God has set up to be a witness. This man is two men; has the testimony of two men; must serve in the place of two men. He knows what it is to be fetched from a state of nature by grace; but this all Christians know as well as he. Ay, but he knows what it is to be fetched from the world, from the devil, and hell, the second time; and that but few professors know: for few that fall away return to God again. Ay, but this man is come again, wherefore there is news in his mouth; sad news, dreadful news, and news that is to make the standing saint to take heed lest he fall.

The returning backslider therefore is a rare man, a man of worth and intelligence, a man to whom the men of the world should flock, and of whom they should learn to fear the Lord God. He also is a man of whom the saints should receive both caution, counsel, and strength in their present standing; and that should, by his harms, learn to serve the Lord with fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

This man has the second time also had a proof of God's goodness in his Christ unto him ¾ a proof which the standing Christian has not. I would not tempt him that stands to fall; but the good that a returning backslider

has received at God's hands, and at the hand of Christ, is a double good; he has been converted twice; fetched from the world and from the devil, and from himself twice (oh grace!), and has been made to know the stability of God's covenant, the unchangeableness of God's mind, the sure and lasting truth of his promise in Christ, and of the sufficiency of the merits of Christ, over and over.

Of the manner of this man's coming to God by Christ, I shall also speak a word or two.

He comes as the newly awakened sinner comes, and that from the same motives and the knowledge of things. But he hath over and above (which he had as good have been without) that which the newly awakened sinner has not, namely, the guilt of his backsliding, which is a guilt of a worse complexion, of a deeper dye, and of a heavier nature than is any guilt else in the world. He is also attended with fears and doubts that arise from other reasons and considerations, than do the doubts and fears of the newly awakened man; doubts built upon the vileness of his backsliding. He has also more dreadful scriptures to consider, and they will look more wishfully in his face (yea, and will also make him take notice of their grim physiognomy) than has the newly awakened man. Besides, as a punishment of his backsliding, God sometimes seems to withhold the sweet influences of his Spirit, and is as if he would not suffer him to pray, nor to repent anymore; as if he would now take all away from him, and leave him to those lusts and idols that he left his God to follow. Swarms of his new rogueries shall haunt him in every place and that not only in the guilt, but in the filth and pollution of them.

None knows the things that haunt the backslider's mind; his new sins are all turned talking devils, threatening devils, roaring devils, within him. Besides, he doubts of the truth of his first conversion; consequently he has it lying upon him, as a strong suspicion, that there was nothing of truth in all his first experience; and this also adds lead to his heels, and makes him come, as to sense and feeling, more heavy, and with the greater difficulty, to God by Christ. As the faithfulness of other men kills him, he cannot see an honest, humble, holy, faithful servant of God, but he is pierced and wounded at the heart. 'Ay,' says he, within himself, 'That man fears God; that man hath faithfully followed God; that man, like the elect angels, has

kept his place; but I am fallen from my station like a devil. That man honoreth God, edifieth the saints, convinceth the world, and condemneth them, and is become heir of the righteousness which is by faith. But I have dishonored God, stumbled and grieved saints, made the world blaspheme, and, for aught I know, been the cause of the damnation of many.'

These are the things, I say, together with many more of the same kind, that come with him, yea, they will come with him, yea, and will stare him in the face, will tell him of his baseness, and laugh him to scorn, all the way that he is coming to God by Christ (I know what I say); and this makes his coming to God by Christ hard and difficult to him. Besides, he thinks saints will be aware of him, will be shy of him, will be afraid to trust him, yea, will tell his Father of him, and make intercession against him, as Elias did against Israel, or as the men did that were fellow servants with him that took his brother by the throat. Shame covereth his face all the way he comes. He doth not know what to do; the God he is returning to, is the God that he has slighted ¾ the God before whom he has preferred the vilest lust; and he knows God knows it, and has before him his ways. The man that has been a backslider, and is returning to God, can tell strange stories, and yet such as are very true. No man was in the whale's belly, and came out again alive, but backsliding and returning Jonah; consequently no man could tell how he was there, what he felt there, what he saw there, and what workings of heart he had when he was there, so well as he.

3. I come now to the third man, namely, to *the sincere and upright believer*, that cometh to God by Christ. And although this may in some sense be applicable to the two former, for his coming is not worthy to be counted coming to God, that is not in sincerity and uprightness; yet, by such a one, I now mean one that has been called to the faith, and that has in some good measure of sincerity and uprightness therein abode with God.

This man also comes to God by Christ; but his coming is to be distinguished, I mean in the main of it, from the coming of the other two.

The other two come for the knowledge of forgiveness, a thing that the upright and faithful Christian for the most part has a comfortable faith of, and that for which he is often helped to give thanks to God. I do not say

he doubteth not, or that he has not his evidences sometimes clouded. Nor do I say that the knowledge of his reconciliation to God by Christ Jesus is so high, so firm, so fixed, and steadfast, that it cannot be shaken, or that he needs no more. I will then explain myself. He comes not to God as an unconverted sinner comes; he comes not as a backslider comes when he is returning to God from his backslidings: but he comes as a son, as one of the household of God, and he comes as one that has not, since conviction, wickedly departed from his God.

He then comes to God with that access and *godly boldness* that is only proper to such as himself, that is, to them that walk with God. Thus everyone that shall be saved doth not do; thus everyone that shall be saved cannot do: for instance, the two spoken of before.

He comes to God by Christ *constantly*, by prayer, by meditation, by every ordinance; for therefore he maketh use of ordinances, because by them, through Christ, he getteth into the presence of God.

He comes to God through Christ *earnestly*, because he judgeth that God only is that good, that blessedness, that happiness, that is worth looking after; that good, and that blessedness, that alone can fill the soul to the brim; that good, and that happiness, that is worthy of our hearts, and souls, and spirits. Hence David expressed his coming to God, by panting, by thirsting, by tears, saying, “My soul panteth after thee, O God.” And again, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” And again, “I will go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.” And hence it was that he so envied the swallow and sparrow, even because they could come to the altar of God, where he had promised to give his presence, when he, (as I think) by the rage of Saul, was forced to abide remote. “My soul longeth,” saith he, “even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee.” Then after a few more words he saith, “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper (I would choose rather to sit at the threshold) in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” ¾ and then renders the

reason. “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly.”

The presence of God, and the glory and soul-ravishing goodness of that presence, is a thing that the world understands not, nor can they, as such, desire to know what it is. But men of the sort I speak of, understand it.

Good men come to God upon other accounts also: for so it is, that they have many concerns with God.

They come to him for *a more clear discovery of themselves* to themselves: for they desire to know how frail they are; because the more they know that, the more they are engaged in their souls to take heed to their ways, and to fear lest they should tempt their God to leave them.

They come to God by Christ for *the weakening of their lusts and corruptions;* for they are a sore, yea, a plague to a truly sanctified soul. Those, to be rid of which, if it might be, a godly man chooseth rather to die than to live. This David did mean, when he cried, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” And Paul, when he cried out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

They come to God by Christ, for *the renewing and strengthening of their graces.* The graces that the godly have received, are, and they feel they are, subject to decay, yea, they cannot live without a continual supply of grace. This is the meaning of those texts. “Let us have grace;” and “Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help, in time of need.”

They come to God by Christ, *to be helped against temptations*, that they may meet withal. They know that every new temptation has a new snare, and a new evil in it: but what snare, and what evil, that at present they know not; but they know their God knows, and can deliver out of temptation when we are in, and keep us out while we are out.

They come to God by Christ for *a blessing upon the means of grace* which God has afforded for the succor of the soul, and the building of it up in the faith; knowing that as the means, so a blessing upon it, is from God.

And for this they have encouragement, because God has said, “I will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread.”

They come to God by Christ for *the forgiveness of daily infirmities,* and for continuing their souls in the light of his countenance, notwithstanding. That he also would always accept them and their services, and grant that an answer of peace may be returned from their Father in their bosoms; for this is the life of their souls.

There are a great many such things that the sincere and upright man comes to God for, too many here to mention. But besides what he asks for himself, I must tell you,

This man also comes to God to beseech him for *the flourishing of Christ’s kingdom;* which he knows will never be until Antichrist is dead, and till the Spirit be more plentifully poured upon us from on high. Therefore he also cries to God for the downfall of the first, and for the pouring out of the other.

He comes to God for *hastening the gathering in of his elect;* for it is an affliction to him to think that so many of those for whom Christ died should be still in a posture of hostility against him.

He comes to God for *a spirit of unity* to be poured out among believers; for, “for the divisions of Reuben he has great thoughts of heart.”

He comes to God to p*ray for magistrates,* and that God would make speed to set them all to that work that is so desirable to his church, that is, to “hate the whore of Babylon, to eat her flesh, to make her desolate, and burn her with fire.”

He comes to God to beg that he would *hasten that great and notable day,* the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus; for he knows that Christ will never be exalted as he must be till then; yea, he also knows that God’s church will never be as she would, and shall be, till then.

But the main meaning, if I may so call it, of this high text, is this: That they that come to God by him, are those that come by Christ to God, to *enjoy him;* by faith and spirit here, and by open vision and unspeakable possession of him in the next world. This is the great design of the soul in its coming to God by Jesus Christ; and it comes to him by Jesus Christ,

because it dares not come by itself, and because God himself has made him the way, the new and living way.

Here, as I said, the Father meets with that which pleaseth him, and the soul with that which saveth her. Here are righteousness and merit to spare, even righteousness that can justify the ungodly. Here is always, how empty soever we be, a fullness of merit always presented to God by Christ, for my obtaining of that which at anytime I want, whether wisdom, grace, spirit, or any good thing soever. Only since I was upon this subject, I thought a little to touch upon things in this order, for the enlarging of thy thoughts, for the conviction of thy spirit, for the stirring of thee up to God, and for showing thee the good signs of grace, where it is, where it is abused, and where any are seeking after it.

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSIONS TOUCHING THESE PERSONS.

AND now I come to draw some inferences from this point also, as I have already done from those going before it.

You see that I have now been speaking to you of the man that cometh to God, both with respect to the way he comes, as also with respect to the manner of spirit in which he comes. And hence I may well infer,

First, that *he is no fool* (no fool according to the best judgment) *that cometh to God by Christ.* The world, indeed, will count him one: for the things that be of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them. But, indeed, and in the verdict of true judgment, he is not so. For he now seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom. He has chosen to be concerned with the very head and fountain of wisdom. For Christ is the wisdom of God; and the way to the Father by Christ is the greatest of mysteries; and to choose to walk in that way, the fruit of the most sage advice. Wherefore he is not a fool that thus concerns himself.

It is not a sign of foolishness, timely to prevent ruin, is it? They are the prudent men that foresee an evil and hide themselves, and the fools that go on and are punished. Why, this man foresees an evil, the greatest evil, sin, and the punishment of the soul for sin in hell, and flies to Christ, who is the refuge that God has provided for penitent sinners; and is this a sign of a fool? God make me such a fool, and thee that reddest these lines such a fool! and then we shall be wiser than all men that are counted wise by the wisdom of this world.

Is it a sign of a fool to agree with one’s adversary, while we are in the way with him, even before he delivereth us to the judge? nay, it is a piece of the highest wisdom.

Is he a fool that chooseth for himself long lasters, or he whose best things will rot in a day? Sinners, “before your pot can feel the thorns (before you can see where you are) God shall take you away with a whirlwind, both living and in his wrath.” But this man has provided for things: like the

tortoise, he has got the shell on his back, so strong and sound, that he fears not to suffer a loaded cart go over him. The Lord is his rock, his defense, his refuge, his high tower, unto which he doth continually resort.

Was the unjust steward a fool in providing for himself for hereafter? for providing friends to receive him to harbor, when others should turn him out of their doors? No more is he that gets another house for his harbor, before death shall turn him out of doors here.

Again, as he that cometh to God by Christ is no fool, so he is no little-spirited fellow. There is a generation of men in this world, that count themselves men of the largest capacities, when yet the greatest of their desires lift themselves no higher than to things below. If they can, with their net of craft and policy, encompass a bulky lump of earth, oh! what a treasure have they engrossed to themselves! Meanwhile, the man in the text has laid siege to heaven; has found out the way to get into the city; and is resolved, in and by God's help, to make that his own. Earth is a drossy thing in this man's account; earthly greatness and splendors are but like vanishing bubbles in this man's esteem; none but God, as the end of his desires, none but Christ, as the means to accomplish this his end, are the things counted great by this man. No company now is acceptable to this man, but the Spirit of God; Christ, and angels, and saints, as fellow heirs with himself. All other men and things he deals with as strangers and pilgrims are wont to do. This man's mind soars higher than the eagle or stork of the heavens. He is for musing about things that are above, and their glory, and for thinking what shall come to pass hereafter.

But as I have showed you what he is not; so now let me, by a few words, tell you plainly what he is.

He is a man concerned for his soul, for his immortal soul. The soul is a thing, though of most worth, least minded by most. The souls of most lie waste, while all other things are enclosed. But this man has got it by the end, that his soul is of more value than the world; wherefore he is concerned for his soul. Soul concerns are concerns of the highest nature, and concerns that arise from thoughts most deep and ponderous. He never yet knew what belonged to great and deep thoughts that is a stranger to soul concerns. Now, the man that comes to God by Christ, is a man that is engaged in soul concerns.

He is also a man whose spirit is subjected in love to spiritual things. For a carnal mind cannot suit with, and be delighted with these things. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” This is the man that God has tamed, and *keeps tame by himself*, while all others run wild, as the asses upon the mountains. If birds could speak, surely they would tell, that those that are kept in the cage have with them another temper than they that range the air, and fly in the fields and woods. Yea, and could those kept tame express themselves to the rest, they would tell that they have white bread, and milk, and sugar; while those without make a life of maggots and worms. They are also in a place where there are better things, and their companions are the children of men. Besides, they learn such notes, and can whistle such tunes, as other birds are strangers to. Oh! the man whose spirit is subjected to God, betwixt whom and God there is a reconciliation, not only as to a difference made up, but also as to a oneness of heart ¾ none knows what lumps of sugar God gives that man, nor what notes and tunes God learns that man. “He hath put a new song in my mouth,” saith David, “even praises to our God: many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord.”

Secondly, Is there a man that comes to God by Christ? Thence I infer, that *there is a man that believes there is a world to come.*

No man looks after that, which he yet believes is not. Faith must be, before coming to Christ will be: coming is the fruit of faith. He that comes must believe, antecedent to his coming: wherefore it is said, “We walk by faith;” that is, we come to God, through Christ, by faith. And hence I learn two things:

1. That faith is of a strong and forcible quality.

2. That they who come not to God by Christ, have no faith.

1. Faith is of a strong and forcible quality, and that whether it be true or false.

A *false* faith has done great things; it has made men believe lies, plead for them, and stand to them, to the damnation of their souls. “God shall send them strong delusion that they shall believe a lie,” to their damnation. Hence it said, men make lies their refuge. Why? Because they will trust in

a lie. A lie, if believed ¾ if a man has faith in it, it will do great things, because faith is of a forcible quality. Suppose thyself to be twenty miles from home, and there some man comes and possesses thee, that thy house, thy wife and children, are all burned with the fire: if thou believest it, though indeed there should be nothing of truth in what thou hast heard, yet will this lie drink up thy spirit, even as if the tidings were true. How many are there in the world, whose heart Satan hath filled with a belief that their state and condition for another world is good? and these are made to live by lying hope that all should be well with them; and so are kept from seeking for that which will make them happy indeed. Man is naturally apt and willing to be deceived, and therefore a groundless faith is the more taking and forcible. Fancy will help to confirm a false faith, and so will conceit, and idleness of spirit. There is also in man a willingness to take things upon trust, without searching into the ground and reason of them. Nor will Satan be behindhand to prompt and encourage, to thy believing of a lie; for that he knows will be a means to bring thee to that end to which he greatly desires thou shouldst come. Wherefore let men beware, and O that they would! of a false and lying faith.

But if a false faith is so forcible, what is a *true?* What force, I say, is there in a faith that is begotten by truth, managed by truth, fed by truth, and preserved by the truth of God? Faith will make invisible things visible; not fantastically so, but substantially so. “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” True faith carrieth along with it an evidence of the certainty of what it believeth, and that evidence is the infallible word of God. ‘There is a God of love, a Christ, a heaven,’ saith the faith that is good; ‘for the word of God doth say so. The way to this God, and this heaven, is by Christ; for the word of God doth say so. If I run not to this God by this Christ, this heaven shall never be my portion; for the word of God doth say so.’ So then, thus believing makes the man come to God by him. His thus believing then it is that carries him away from this world, that makes him trample upon this world, and that gives him the victory over this world. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. This is he that came by water and blood,

even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

2. Now, if this be true, that faith, true faith, is so forcible a thing, as to take a man from his seat of ease, and make him come to God by Christ, as before; then is it not truly inferred from hence, that they that come not to God by Christ have no faith? What! is man such a fool as to believe things, and yet not look after them; to believe great things, and yet not to concern himself with them? Who would knowingly go over a pearl, and yet not count it worth stooping for? Believe thou art what thou art; believe hell is what it is; believe death and judgment are coming as they are; and believe that the Father and the Son are, as by the Holy Ghost in the word they are described, ¾ and still sit in thy sins, if thou canst. Thou canst not sit still. Faith is forcible. Faith is grounded upon the voice of God in the word, upon the teaching of God in the word. And it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; for believing makes them heartily close in with and embrace what by the word is set before them, because it seeth the reality of them.

Shall God speak to man's soul, and shall man believe? Shall man believe what God says, and nothing at all regard it? It cannot be. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And we know that when faith is come, it purifies the heart of what is opposite to God, and the salvation of the soul.

So then those men that are at ease in a sinful course, or that come not to God by Christ, are such as have no faith, and must therefore perish with the vile and unbelievers.

The whole world is divided into two sorts of men, believers and unbelievers. The godly are called believers. And why believers? but because they are they that have given credit to the great things of the gospel of God. These believers are here in the text called also comers, or they that come to God by Christ, because who so believes, will come; for coming is a fruit of faith in the habit, or, if you will, it is faith in exercise; yet faith must have a being in the soul, before the soul put it into act.

This, therefore, further evidences, that they that come not, have no faith ¾ are not believers, belong not to the household of faith, and must perish. "For he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Nor will it be any boot to say, 'I believe there is a God, and a Christ;' for still thy sitting still doth demonstrate, that either thou liest in what thou sayest, or that thou believest with a worse than a false faith. 'But the object of my faith (you say) is true.' I answer, So is the object of the faith of devils; for they believe that there is one God, and one Christ; yet their faith, as to the root and exercise of it, notwithstanding that, is no such faith as is *that* faith that saves, or that is intended in the text, and that by which men come to God through Christ.

Wherefore still, O thou slothful one, thou deceivest thyself! Thy not coming to God by Christ, declareth to thy face, that thy faith is not good, consequently that thou feedest on ashes, and thy deceived heart has turned thee aside, that thou canst not deliver thy soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Thirdly, Is there a man that comes to God by Christ? Thence I infer, that *the world to come is better than this;* yea, so much better, as to quit cost, and bear charges of coming to God, from this, by Christ, to that. Though there is a world to come; yet if it was no better than this, one had as good stay here, as seek that; or if it were better than this, and would bear charges if a man left this for that, *and that was all*, still the one would be as good as the other. But the man that comes to God by Christ, has chosen the world that is infinitely good, a world betwixt which and this there can be no comparison. This must be granted, because he that comes to God by Christ, is said to have made the best choice, even to choose a city that has foundations. There are several things that make it manifest enough, that be that comes to God by Christ, has made the best market, or chosen the best world.

1. That is the world which God commendeth, but this, that he slighteth and contemneth. Hence that is called the kingdom of God, but this an evil world. Now, let us conclude, that since God made both, he is able to judge which of the two is best; yea, best able so to judge thereof. I choose the rather to refer you to the judgment of God in this matter; for should I put you upon asking of him, that is coming to God by Christ, as to this,

perhaps you would say, he is as little able to give an account of this matter as yourselves. But I hope you think God knows, and therefore I refer you to the judgment of God, which you have in the scriptures of truth. Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. I hope you will say here is some difference. The Lord is the God of that; the devil the god and prince of this. Thus also it appears there is some difference between them.

2. That world, and those that are counted worthy of it, shall all be everlasting; but so shall not this nor the inhabitants of it. The earth, with the works thereof, shall be burned up, and the men that are of it shall die in like manner. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. This world, with the lovers of it, will end in a burning hell; but the world to come fadeth not away.

3. The world that we are now in, has its best comforts mixed either with crosses or curses; but that to come with neither. There shall be no more curse; and as for crosses, all tears shall be wiped from the eyes of them that dwell there. There will be nothing but ravishing pleasures and holy. There will be no cessation of joys, nor any speck of pollution. “In thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.”

There men shall be made like angels; neither can they die anymore. There shall they behold the face of God and his Son, and move on in the enjoyment of them forever.

There men shall see themselves beyond all misery, and shall know that it will be utterly impossible that either anything like sorrow, or grief, or sickness, or discontent, should touch them more.

There men shall be rewarded of God for what they have done and suffered, according to his will, for his sake; there they shall eat and drink their comforts, and wear them to their everlasting consolation.

They are all kings that go to that world, and so shall be proclaimed there. They shall also be crowned with crowns, and they shall wear crowns of life and glory, crowns of everlasting joy, crowns of loving-kindness; yea, in that day the Lord of hosts himself shall be for a crown of glory to those that are his people. <580207 > Hebrews 2:7; <23510 Isaiah 35:10; <19304 Psalm 103:4;

[2385]Isaiah 28:5. Now if that world (though no more could be said for it than is said in these few lines) is not infinitely better far than what the present world is, I have missed my thoughts. But the coming man, the man that comes to God by Christ, is satisfied, knows what he does; and if his way, all his way thither, were strewed with burning coals, he would choose, God helping him, to tread that path, rather than to have his portion with them that perish.

Fourthly, If there be a world to come, and such a way to it, so safe and good, and if God is there to be enjoyed by them that come to him by Christ; then this shows *the great madness of the most of men;* madness, I say, of the highest degree; for that they come not to God by Christ, that they may be inheritors of the world to come. It is a right character which Solomon gives of them: “The heart,” saith he, “of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.”

A madman is intent upon his joys, upon anything but that about which he should be intent; and so are they that come not to God by Jesus Christ. A madman has neither ears to hear, nor a heart to do what they that are in their right wits advise him for the best: no more have they that come not to God by Christ. A madman sets more by the straws and cock’s feathers, by which he decks himself, than he does by all the pearls and jewels in the world. And they that come not to God by Christ, set more by the vanishing bubbles of this life, than they do by that glory that the wise man shall inherit. “The wise shall inherit glory: but shame,” says Solomon, “shall be the promotion of fools.” What a shame it is to see God’s jewels lie unregarded of them that yet think none are wiser than themselves!

I know the wise men of this world will scorn one should think of them that they are mad; but verily it is so. The more wise for this world, the more fool in God’s matters, and the more obstinately they stand in their way, the more mad.

When Solomon gave himself to backsliding, he saith he gave himself to “folly and madness.” And when he went about to search out what man is since the fall, he went about to search out foolishness and madness. And is it not said, that when the Jews were angry with Jesus, because he did good on the sabbath, that that anger did flow from their being filled with

madness? Doth not Paul also plainly tell us that while he opposed himself against Christ, the gospel and professors thereof, he did it even from the highest pitch of madness? “And being exceeding mad against them, I persecuted them, even unto strange cities.” Now, if it is exceeding madness to do thus, how many at this day must be counted exceeding mad, who yet count themselves the only sober men? They oppose themselves; they stand in their own light; they are against their own happiness; they cherish and nourish cockatrices in their own bosoms; they choose to themselves those paths which have written upon them, in large characters, ‘These are the ways of death and damnation.’ They are offended with them that endeavor to pull them out of their ditch, and choose rather to lie and die there, than to go to God by Christ, that they may be saved from wrath through him: yea, so mad are they, that they count the most sober, the most godly, the most holy man, the mad one; the most earnest for life, the more mad; the more in the Spirit, the more mad; the more desirous to promote the salvation of others, the more mad. But is not this a sign of madness ¾ of madness to perfection? And yet thus mad are many; and mad are all they that while it is called to-day, while their door is open, and while the golden scepter of the golden grace of the blessed God is held forth, stand in their own light, and come not to God by Christ. That is the fourth inference.

Fifthly, A fifth inference that I gather from this text is, That *the end that God will make with men, will be according as they come or come not to God by Christ.* They that come to God by Christ, have taken shelter, and have hid themselves; but they that come not to God by Christ, lay themselves open to the windy storm and tempest that will be in that day. And the wind then will be high, and the tempest strong, that will blow upon them that shall be found in themselves. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.”

And now, what will be found in that day to be the portion of them that in this day do not come to God by Christ, none knows but God, with whom the reward of unbelievers is.

But writing and preaching is in vain as to such. Let men say what they will, what they can, to persuade to come, ¾ to dissuade from neglecting to come, they are resolved not to stir. They will try if God will be so faithful to himself, and to his word, as to dare to condemn *them to* hell fire, that have refused to hear and comply with the voice of him that speaketh from heaven.

Yet this is but a desperate venture. Several things declare, that he is determined to be at a point in this matter.

1. The gallows is built: hell is prepared for the wicked.

2. There are those already in chains, and stand bound over to the judgment of that day, that are, as to creation, higher and greater than men, namely, the angels that sinned. Let sinners then look to themselves.

3. The judge is prepared and appointed; and it hath fallen out to be he that thou hast refused to come to God by; and that predicts no good to thee; for then will he say of all such, “Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”

But what a surprise will it be to them that now have come to God by Christ, to see themselves in heaven indeed, saved indeed, and possessed of everlasting life indeed! For alas! what is faith to possession? Faith that is mixed with many tears, that is opposed with many assaults, and that seems sometimes to be quite extinguished; I say, what is that to a seeing of myself in heaven? Hence it is said, that Christ shall then come to be admired in them that now believe. Because they did here believe the testimony. Then they shall admire that it was their lot to believe when they were in the world. They shall also admire to think, to see, and behold, what believing has brought them to, while the rest for refusing to come to God by Christ, drink their tears mixed with burning brimstone.

Repentance will not be found in heaven among them that come to God by Christ. No! Hell is the place of untimely repentance! It is there where the tears will be mixed with gnashing of teeth; while they consider how mad, and worse, they were, in not coming to God by Jesus Christ. Then will their hearts and mouths be full of, “Lord, Lord, open unto us!” But the

answer will be, ‘Ye shut me out of doors; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: besides, you refused to come to my Father by me; wherefore now you must go from my Father by me.’

They that will not be saved by Christ, must be damned by Christ. No man can escape one of the two. Refuse the first they may, but shun the second they cannot.

And now they that would not come unto God by Christ, will have leisure and time enough (if I may call it time) to consider what they have done, in refusing to come to God by Christ. Now they will meditate warmly on this thing; now their thoughts will be burning hot about it, and, “It is too late,” will be in each thought such a sting, that like a bow of steel, it will continually strike them through. Now they will bless those whom formerly they have despised, and commend those they once contemned. Now would the rich man willingly change places with poor Lazarus, though he preferred his own condition before his in the world.

The day of judgment will bring the worst to rights in their opinions. They will not be capable of misapprehending anymore. They will never after that day put bitter for sweet, or darkness for light, or evil for good anymore. Their madness will now be gone. Hell will be the unbelievers’ bedlam-house, and there God will tame them as to all those bedlam tricks and pranks which they played in this world; but not at all to their profit or advantage. The gulf that God has placed and fixed between heaven and hell, will spoil all as to that.

But what a joy will it be to the truly godly, to think now that they are come to God by Christ! It was their mercy to begin to come; it was their happiness that they continued coming; but it is their glory that they are come, that they are come to God by Christ. To God! Why? He is all; all that is good ¾ essentially good, and eternally good. To God! the infinite ocean of good. To God in friendly wise, by the means of reconciliation; for the other now will be come to him to receive his anger, because they came not to him by Jesus Christ. Oh! that I could imagine ¾ Oh! that I could think, that I might write more effectually to thee of the happy estate of them that come to God by Christ!

CHAPTER 6.

UNFAILING EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

BUT thus have I passed through the three former things, namely,

1. That of the INTERCESSION of Christ.

2. That of the BENEFIT of his intercession.

3. That of the PERSONS that are interested in this intercession.

4. Wherefore now I come to the last head, and that is to show you the CERTAINTY of their reaping the benefit of his intercession:

"Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The certainty of their reaping the benefit of being saved, that come unto God by Christ, is thus expressed: "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The intercession of Christ, and the lastingness of it, is a sure token of the salvation of them that come unto God by him.

Of his intercession, what it is, and for whom, we have spoken already. Of the success and prevalency of it, we have also spoken before; but THE REASON OF ITS SUCCESSFULNESS, of that we are to speak now. And that reason, as the apostle suggesteth, lies in the *continuance* of it: "Seeing he *ever* liveth to make intercession." The apostle also makes very much of the continuation of the priesthood of Christ, in other places of this epistle: "He abides a priest continually: "Thou art a priest for ever:" "He hath an unchangeable priesthood:" and here, "He ever liveth to make intercession."

Now, by the text is shown the reason why he so continually harpeth upon the durableness of it, namely, because by the unchangeableness of his priesthood we are saved; nay, saved demonstratively, apparently. It is evident we are. "He is also able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, *seeing* he ever liveth to make intercession for them." For,

1. The durableness of his intercession proves, that *the covenant* (in which those that come to God by him are concerned and wrapped up) *is not shaken, broken, or made invalid by all their weakness and infirmities.*

Christ is a priest according to the new covenant, Hebrews 8 and in all his acts of mediation he hath regard to that covenant. So long as that covenant abides in its strength, so long Christ's intercession is of worth. Hence, when God cast the old high priest out of doors, he renders this reason for his so doing, "Because they continued not in my covenant," that is, neither priests, nor people. Therefore were they cast out of the priesthood, and the people pulled down, as to a church state, yea, that covenant was utterly abolished.

Now, in the new covenant by which Christ acts as a priest, so far as we are concerned therein, he also himself acteth our part, being indeed the head and mediator of the body. Wherefore, though we sin, God doth not count that the new covenant is broken, if Christ Jesus our Lord is found to do by it, what by the law is required of us. Therefore he saith (Psalm 89.), "If his children break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, I will visit their sins with the rod," etc. But their sins shall not shake my covenant with my beloved, nor cause that I forever should reject them: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. His seed will I make to endure for ever, his seed shall endure for ever." Hence it is clear, that the covenant stands good to us, as long as Christ stands good to God, or before his face; for he is not only our Mediator by covenant, but he himself is our *condition* to God-ward. Therefore HE is said to be "the covenant of the people," or that which the holy God by law required of us. Hence again, he is said to be "our righteousness;" namely, that which answereth to what is required of us by the law. He is "made unto us of God," so; and in our room, and in our stead presenteth himself to God.

So then, if any ask me, by what Christ's priesthood is continued? I answer, by covenant: and for that the covenant by which he is made priest, abideth of full force. If any ask, whether the church is concerned in that covenant? I answer, Yes: yet, so as that all points and parts thereof, that concern life and death everlasting, are laid upon his shoulders, and he alone is the doer of them. He is the Lord our righteousness, and he is the

Savior of the body. So that my sins break not the covenant; but notwithstanding them, God's covenant stands fast with *him* ¾ with him forevermore. And good reason, if no fault can be found with Christ, who is the person that did strike hands with his Father upon our account, and for us; that is, to do what was meet should be found upon us, when we came to appear before God by him.

And that God himself doth so understand this matter, is evident, because he also, by his own act, giveth and imputeth to us that good that we never did, that righteousness which we never wrought out; yea, and for the sake of that, transmitted our sins unto Christ, as to one that had not only well satisfied for them, but could carry them so far, both from us and from God, that they should never again come to be charged on the committers, to death and damnation. The scriptures are so plentiful for this, that he must be a Turk, or a Jew, or an Atheist, that denies it. Besides, God's commanding that men should believe in his Son "unto righteousness," well enough proveth this thing; and the reason of this command doth prove it with an over and above; namely, "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Hence comes out that proclamation from God, at the rising again of Christ from the dead, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

If this be so (as indeed it is), then here lieth a great deal of the force of this conclusion, "He ever liveth to make intercession," and of the demonstration of the certain salvation of them that come to God by him, "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." For if Christ Jesus is a priest by covenant, and so abides as the covenant abides; and if, since the covenant is everlasting, his priesthood is unchangeable, then the man that cometh to God by him, must needs be certainly saved. For if the covenant ¾ the covenant of salvation ¾ is not broken, none can show a reason why he that comes to Christ should be damned, or why the priesthood of Jesus Christ should cease. Hence, after the apostle had spoken of the excellency of his person and priesthood, he then shows that the benefit of

the covenant of God remaineth with *us,* namely, that grace should be communicated unto us, for his priesthood's sake, and that our sins and our iniquities God would remember no more. [3000]Hebrews 8.

Now, as I also have already hinted, if this new covenant, of which the Lord Jesus is mediator and high priest, has in the bowels of it, not only grace and remission of sins, but a promise that we shall be partakers thereof through the blood of his priesthood (for so it comes to us); then why should not we have boldness, not only to come to God by him, but to enter also into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way?

2. But further, *this priesthood* (as to the unchangeableness of it) *is confirmed unto him by an oath,* by him that said to him, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever." This oath seems to me to be for the confirmation of the covenant, as it is worded before by Paul to the Hebrews, when he speaks of it with respect to that establishment that is also had on Christ's part, by the sacrifice which he offered to God for us; yea, he then speaks of the mutual confirmation of it both by the Father and the Son. Now, I say, since by this covenant he stands and abides a priest; and since the Lord swear, and will not repent, saying, "Thou art a priest for ever;" we are still further confirmed in the certain salvation of him that cometh to God by Christ.

The Lord by swearing confirmeth to Christ, and so to us in him, the immutability of his counsel, and that he is utterly unchangeable in his resolutions to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by Christ. And this also shows, that this covenant, and so the promise of remission of sins, is steadfast and immovable.

And it is worth your noting the manner and nature of this oath, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent." It is as much as to say, 'What I have now sworn, I bind me for ever to stand to; or, I determine never to revoke; and that is, "Thou art a priest *for ever."* Now, as we said before, since his priesthood stands by covenant, and this covenant of his priesthood is confirmed by an oath, it cannot be, but that he that comes by him to God must be accepted of him; for should such a one be rejected, it must be either for the greatness of his sins, or for want of merit in the sacrifice presented, and urged, as to the merit of it, before the mercy-seat. But let

the reason specified, be what it will, the consequence falls harder upon the sacrifice of Christ that it can do anywhere else, and so on upon the covenant, and at last upon God himself, who has sworn, and will not repent, that he is a priest forever. I thus discourse, to show you what dangerous conclusions follow from a conceit, that some that come to God by Christ shall not be saved, though he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

And this I have further to say, That the Lord by swearing (since the manner of the oath is such as it is, and that it also tendeth to establish to Christ his priesthood to be unchangeable) declareth, that as to the excellency of Christ's sacrifice he is eternally satisfied in the goodness and merit of it; and that he will never deny him anything that he should ask for at his hands, for his sufferings' sake. For this oath doth not only show God's firm resolution to keep his part of the covenant, in giving to Christ that which was covenanted for by him; but it declareth, that, in the judgment of God, Christ's blood is able to save *any* sinner, and he will *never* put stop nor check to his intercession, how great soever the sinners be that at anytime he shall intercede for. So that the demonstration is clearer and clearer, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

3. This unchangeableness of the priesthood of Christ *dependeth also upon his own life.* "This man because *he* continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." Now, although perhaps at first much may not appear in this text, yet the words that we are upon take their ground from them. "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also," that is, by his unchangeable priesthood, "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The life of Christ, then, is a ground of the lastingness of his priesthood, and so a ground of the salvation of them that come unto God by him. "We shall be saved by his life." Wherefore, in another place, this his life is spoken of with great emphasis, he is made a priest, "not after the law of a carnal commandment but after *the power of an endless life."* An endless life is then a powerful thing; and indeed two things are very considerable in it,

1. That it is above death, and so above him that hath the power of death, the devil.

2. In that it capacitates him to be the last in his own cause, and to have the casting voice.

We will speak to the first, and for the better setting of it forth, we will show what life it is of which the apostle here speaks; and then, how, as to life, it comes to be so advantageous, both with respect to his office of priesthood, and with respect to us.

(1.) What *life* is it that is thus the ground of his priesthood? It is a life *taken*, ¾ his own life rescued from the power of the grave; a life that *we* had forfeited, he being our surety; and a life that *he* recovered again, being the captain of our salvation. "I lay down my life (saith he) that I may take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." It is a life then that was once laid down as the price of man's redemption, and a life won, gained, taken, or recovered again, as the token or true effect of the completing, by so dying, that redemption. Wherefore, it saith again, "In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." He liveth *as having pleased God by dying for our sins*, as having merited his life by dying for our sins. Now, if this life of his is a life merited and won, by virtue of the death that he died (as Acts 2:24, doth clearly manifest); ¾ and if this life is the ground of the unchangeableness of this part of his priesthood, as we see it is, ¾ then it follows, that this second part of his priesthood, which is called here intercession, is grounded upon *the demonstration of the virtue of his sacrifice*, which demonstration is his life taken to live again. So then, he holds this part of his priesthood, not by virtue of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life, ¾ by the power of a life rescued from death, and eternally exalted above all that anyways would yet assault it. For "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."

Hence Christ brings in his *life* (the life that he won to himself by his death) to comfort John withal, when he fainted under the view of that overcoming glory that he saw upon Christ in his vision of him at Patmos. "And he laid his right hand upon me (saith he), saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth; and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for

evermore, Amen." Why should Christ bring in his life to comfort John, if it was not a life advantageous to *him?* But the advantageousness of it to John doth lie, not merely in the being of life in Christ, but in that it was a life laid down for *his* sins, and a life taken up again for *his* justification; a life lost to ransom him, and a life won to save him. As also the text affirmeth, saying, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever *liveth to make intercession for them.*

Again, it is yet more manifest, that Christ's receiving his life again, *was the death and destruction of the enemy of his people.* And to manifest that it was so, therefore (after he had said, "And, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen), he adds, And have the keys of hell and of death." 'I have the power over them: I have them under me: I tread them down, by being a victor, a conqueror, and one that has got the dominion of life (for he is now the Prince of Life), one that lives for evermore, Amen.' Hence it is said again, "he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." He hath abolished death by his death. By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and *brought life* ¾ (a very emphatical expression) ¾ and brought it from whence? From God, who raised him from the dead; and brought it *to light,* to our view and sight, by the word of the truth of the gospel.

So then, the life that he now hath, is a life once laid down as the price of our redemption; a life obtained and taken to him again as the effect of the merit that was in the laying down thereof; a life by the virtue of which death and sin, and the curse, are overcome; and so a life that is above them forever. This is the life that he liveth (namely, this meriting, purchasing, victorious life), and that he improveth, while he ever so lives, to make intercession for us.

This life then, is a continual plea and argument with God, for them that come to him by Christ, should he make no other intercession, but only show to God that he liveth; because his thus living, saith that he has satisfied for the sins of them that come unto God by him. It testifies, moreover, that those enemies, death, the grave, and hell, are overcome by him for them; because indeed he liveth, and hath their keys. But now, add to *life* ¾ to a life meritorious ¾ *intercession,* or an urging of this meritorious life by way of prayer for his, and against all those that seek to

destroy them (since they themselves also have been already overcome by his *death*), and what an encouraging consideration is here for all them that come to God by him, to hope for life eternal! But,

(2.) Let us speak a word to the second point; namely, that his living forever capacitates him to be last in his own cause, and to have the casting voice; and that is an advantage next to what is chiefest.

His cause! What is his cause, but that the death that he died when he was in the world, was, and is, of merit sufficient to secure all those from hell, or, as the text has it, to save them that come unto God by him; to save them to the uttermost? Now, if this cause be *faulty*, why doth he live? Yea, he liveth by the power of God, by the power of God towards us; or with a respect to our welfare; for he liveth to make intercession ¾ intercession against Satan our accuser ¾ for us. Besides, he liveth *before* God, and *to* God, and that *after* he had given his life a ransom for us. What can follow more clearly from this, but that amends was made by him for those souls for whose sins he suffered upon the tree? Wherefore, since his Father has given him his life and favor, and that after he died for our sins, it cannot be thought but that the life he now liveth, is a life that he received as the effect of the merit of his passion for us.

God is just; and yet Christ liveth ¾ and yet Christ liveth in heaven! God is just; and yet Christ our passover liveth there, do what our foes can to the contrary!

And this note, by the way, that though the design of Satan against *us*, in his laboring continually to accuse us to God, and to prevail against our salvation, seems to terminate here; yet indeed it is *also* laid against the very life of Christ, and that his priesthood might be utterly overthrown, and in conclusion, that God also might be found unjust, in receiving those whose sins have not been satisfied for, and so whose souls are yet under the power of the devil. For he that objects against *him for whom Christ intercedes*, objects against *Christ* and his merits; and he that objects against Christ's intercession, objects against *God* who has made him a priest forever. Behold you therefore, how the cause of God, of Christ, and of the souls that come to God by him, are interwoven! They are wrapped up in one bottom. Mischief *one*, and you mischief *all;* overthrow that soul, and you overthrow his intercession; and overthrow him, and you overthrow

even him that made him a priest forever! For the text is *without restriction.* "He is able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him." He saith not now and then one, or sinners of an inferior rank in sin, but them that come to God by him, how great soever their transgressions are; as is clear in that it addeth this clause, "to the uttermost?" "He is able to save them to the uttermost."

But if he were not satisfied, why did the King send, yea, come and loose him, and let him go free? Yea, admit him into his presence; yea, make him Lord over all his people, and deliver all things into his hand?

But he liveth! he ever liveth, and is admitted to make intercession; yea, is ordained of God so to do! Therefore, he is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

This therefore, that he liveth (seeing he liveth to God and his judgment, and in justice is made so to do), is chiefly with reference to his life *as mediator,* for their sakes for whom he makes intercession. "He liveth to make intercession." And in that it is said he liveth *ever,* what is it but that he must live, and outlive all his enemies? For he must live, yea, *reign,* till all his enemies are put under his feet! Yea, his very intercessions must live till they are all as good as dead and gone: for the devil and sin must not live forever, I mean not forever *to accuse.* Time is coming when due course of law will have an end, and all cavilers will be cast over the bar; but then, and after that, Christ our high-priest shall live, and so shall his intercessions; yea, and also all them for whom he makes intercession, seeing they come unto God by him.

Now, if he lives, and outlives all, and if his intercession has the casting voice; since also he pleadeth in his prayers a sufficient merit before a just God, against a lying, malicious, clamorous, and envious adversary, he must needs carry the cause, the cause for himself and his people, to the glory of God and their salvation. So then, his life and intercession must prevail; there can be no withstanding it. Is not this then, a demonstration, clear as the sun, that they that come to God by him shall be saved, "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them?"

4. The duration of Christ's intercession, as it is grounded upon a covenant betwixt God and him, upon an oath also, and upon his life; *so it is*

grounded upon the validity of his merits. This has been promiscuously touched before, but since it is an essential to the lastingness of his intercession, it will be to the purpose to lay it down by itself.

Intercession then, I mean Christ's intercession, is, that those for whom he died with full intention to save them, might be brought into that inheritance which he hath purchased for them. Now then, his intercession must, as to length and breadth, reach no further than his merits. For he may not pray for those for whom he died not. Indeed if we take in the utmost extent of his death, then we must beware. For his death is *sufficient* to save the whole world; but his intercessions are kept within a narrower compass. The altar of burnt-offerings was a great deal bigger than the altar of incense, which was a figure of Christ's intercession. But this, I say, his intercession is for those for whom he died, *with full intention to save them:* wherefore it must be grounded upon the validity of his sufferings. And indeed, his intercession is nothing else that I know of, but a presenting of what he did in the world *for us* unto God, and pressing the value of it for our salvation. The blood of sprinkling is that which speaketh meritoriously; it is by the value of that, that God measureth out, and giveth unto us grace and life eternal; wherefore Christ's intercessions also must be ordered and governed by merit. "By his own blood he entered into the holy place, having (before by it) obtained eternal redemption for us," for our souls.

Now, if by blood he entered in thither, by blood he must also make intercession there. His blood made way for *his* entrance thither, his blood must make way for *our* entrance thither. Though here again we must beware; for his blood did make way for *him* as priest to intercede, his blood makes way for *us*, as for those redeemed by it, that we might be saved.

This then, shows sufficiently the worth of the blood of Christ, even his ever living to make intercession for us; for the merit of his blood lasts all the while that he doth, and for all them for whom he ever liveth to make intercession. O precious blood! O lasting merit!

Blood must be pleaded in Christ's intercession, because of justice ¾ and to stop the mouth of the enemy ¾ and also to encourage us to come to God by him. Justice, since that is of the essence of God, must concur in

the salvation of the sinner. But how can that be, since it is said at first, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;” unless a plenary satisfaction be made for sin, to the pleasing of the mighty God? ¾ The enemy also would else never let go his objecting against our salvation. ¾ But now God has declared, that our salvation is grounded on justice, because merited by blood. And though God needed not to have given his Son to die for us, that he might save us, and stop the mouth of the devil in so doing; yet this way of salvation has done both, and so it is declared. “We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” So then, here is also a ground of intercession, even the blood shed for us before.

And that you may see it yet the more for your comfort, God did at Christ’s resurrection, to show what a price he set upon his blood, bid him ask of him the heathen, and he would give him the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. His blood then has value enough in it to ground intercession upon; yea, there is more worth in it than Christ will plead or improve for men by way of intercession. I do not at all doubt but there is virtue enough in the blood of Christ, would God Almighty so apply it, to save the souls of the whole world. But it is the blood of Christ, his own blood, and he may do what he will with his own. It is also the blood of God, and he also may restrain its merits, or apply it as he sees good. But the *coming soul* shall find and feel the virtue thereof, even the soul that comes to God by Christ; for he is the man concerned in its worth; and Christ ever liveth to make intercession for him.

Now, seeing the intercession of Christ is grounded upon a covenant, an oath, a life, and also upon the validity of his merits, it must of necessity be prevalent, and so drive down all opposition before it. This therefore is the last part of the text, and that which demonstrateth that he that comes to God by Christ shall be saved, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for him.

CHAPTER 7.

LESSONS TAUGHT BY THIS PART.

I HAVE now done what I intend upon this part of the subject, when I have drawn a few inferences from this also.

First, then, hence I infer, that *the souls saved by Christ, are in themselves in a most deplorable condition.* Oh! what ado, as I may say, is there, before *one* sinner can be eternally saved! Christ must die; but this is not all. The Spirit of grace must be given unto us; but that is not all. Christ must also ever live to make intercession for us; and as he doth this for all, so he doth it for each *one*. He interceded for *me* before I was born, that I might in time, at the set time, come into being: after that he also made intercession for me, that I might be kept from hell in the time of my unregenerate state, until the time of my call and conversion; yet again he then intercedes, that the work now begun in my soul may be perfected, not only to the day of my dissolution, but unto the day of Christ, that is, until he comes to judgment. So that as he began to save me before I had being, so he will go on to save me when I am dead and gone, and will never leave off to save me, until he has set me before his face forever.

But, I say, what a deplorable condition has our sin put us into, that there must be all this ado to save us! Oh! how hardly is sin got out of the soul, when once it is in! Blood takes away the guilt; inherent grace weakens the force; but the grave is the place, at the mouth of which, sin and the saved must have a perfect and final parting. Not that the grave of itself is of a sin-purging quality, but God will follow Satan home to his own door (for the grave is the door or gate of hell) and will there, where the devil thought to have swallowed us up, even there by the power of his mercy, make us, at our coming thence, shine like the sun, and look like angels! Christ all this while ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Secondly, Hence also I infer, that *as Satan thought he struck home at first,* (when he polluted our nature, and brought our souls to death); *so he is marvelously loath to lose us,* and to suffer his lawful captives now to escape his hands.

He is full of fire against us ¾ full of the fire of malice ¾ as is manifest, not only by his first attempt upon our first parents, but, behold, when the Deliverer came into the world, how he roared! He sought his death while he was an infant; he hated him in his cradle; he persecuted him while he was but a bud and blossom.

When he was come to riper years, and began to manifest his glory, yet, lest the world should be taken with him, how politicly did this old serpent, called the devil and Satan, work? He possessed people to think that Christ had a devil, and was mad, and a deceiver; that he wrought his miracles by magic art, and by Beelzebub; that the prophets spake nothing of him, and that he sought to overthrow the government, which was God's ordinance. And not being contented with all this, he pursued him to the death, and could never rest until he had spilt his blood upon the ground like water. Yea, so insatiable was his malice, that he set the soldiers to forgo lies about him to the denial of his resurrection, and so managed that matter, that what they said has become a stumbling-block to the Jews to this very day.

When Jesus was ascended to God, and so was out of his reach, yet how busily went Satan about to make war with his people! Yea, what horrors and terrors, what troubles and temptations, has God's church met with from that day till now! Nor is he content with persecutions, and general distress; but, oh! how he doth haunt the spirits of Christians with blasphemies and troubles, with darkness and frightful fears; sometimes to their distraction, and often to the filling the church with outcries.

Satan's malice is yet in the pursuit; and now his boldness will try what it can do with God, either to tempt him to reject his Son's mediation, or to reject them that come to God by him for mercy. And this is one cause among many, why Christ ever liveth to make intercession for them that come to God by him. For if Satan cannot overthrow; if he knows he cannot overthrow them, yet, he cannot forbear but vex and perplex them, even as he did their Lord, from the day of their conversion to the day of their ascension to glory.

Thirdly, Hence I infer, that *the love of Christ to his, is an unwearied love* (and it must needs be so), *an undaunted love*, and it must needs be so. Who but Jesus Christ would have undertaken such a task as the salvation

of the sinner is, if Jesus Christ had passed us by? It is true which is written of him, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.” If he had not set his face like a flint, the greatness of this work would surely have daunted his mind.

For do but consider what *sin* is, from which they must be saved. Do but consider what the devil and the curse are from which they must be saved. And it will then easily be concluded by you, that it is he that full rightly deserveth to have his name called “Wonderful,” and his love such as verily “passeth knowledge.”

Consider again, by what *means* these souls are saved, even with the loss of his life, and together with it, the loss of the light of his Father’s face. I pass by here, and forbear to speak of the matchless contradiction of sinners which he endured against himself, which could not but be a great grief, or as himself doth word it, a breaking of heart unto him; but all this did not, could not hinder.

Join to all this, *his everlasting intercession for us,* and the effectual management thereof with God for us; and withal, the infinite number of times that we, by sin, provoke him to spew us out of his mouth, instead of interceding for us; and the many times also that his intercession is repeated by the repeating of our faults ¾ and this love still passes knowledge, and is by us to be wondered at.

What did, or what doth, the Lord Jesus see in us to be at all this care, and pains, and cost to save us? What will he get from us by the bargain, but a small pittance of thanks and love? For so it is, and ever will be, when compared with his matchless and unspeakable love and kindness toward us.

Oh! how unworthy are we of this love! How little do we think of it! But most of all, the angels may be astonished to see how little we are affected with that of it which we pretend to know. But neither can this prevail with him, to put us out of the scroll in which all the names of them are written, for whom he doth make intercession to God. Let us cry, ‘Grace, grace, unto it!’

Fourthly, Hence again I infer, that *they shall be saved that come to God by Christ, when the devil and sin have done what they can to hinder it.*

This is clear, for *the strife is now, who shall be Lord of all;* whether Satan, the prince of this world, or Christ Jesus the Son of God, ¾ or, which can lay the best claim to God's elect; he that produceth their sins against them, or he that laid down his heart's blood a price of redemption for them. Who then shall condemn when Christ has died, and doth also make intercession? Stand still, angels! and behold how the Father divideth the Son a portion with the great, and how he divideth the spoil with the strong: "because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and did bear the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The grace of God, and blood of Christ, will, before the end of the world, make brave work among the sons of men. They shall come even to a wonderment, to God by Christ, and be saved by a wonderment for Christ's sake. "Behold (says the prophet) these shall come from afar; and, lo, these from the north, and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim." [F76] Behold these, and these, and these shall come; and lo, these, and these, and these from the land of Sinim. This is to denote the abundance that shall come in to God, by Christ, towards the latter end of the world, that is, when Antichrist is gone to bed in the side of the pit's mouth. Then shall the nations come in and be saved, and shall walk in the light of the Lord.

But, I say, what encouragement would there be for sinners thus to do, if the Lord Jesus, by his intercession, were not able to save, even to the uttermost, them that came unto God by him?

Fifthly, Hence again, I infer, that *here is ground for confidence to them that come to God by Christ.* Confidence to the end becomes us who have such a high priest, such an intercessor as Jesus Christ. Who, by doubting, would dishonor such a Jesus, that all the devils in hell cannot discourage by all their wiles? He is a tried stone, he is a sure foundation: A man may confidently venture his soul in his hand, and not fear but he will bring him safe home. Ability, love to the person, and faithfulness to trust committed to him, will do all; and all these are with infinite fullness in him. He has been a Savior near six thousand years already; two thousand before the

law, two thousand in time of the law, besides the many hundred years that he has in his flesh above continued to make intercession for them that come unto God by him. Yet the day is yet to come, yea, will never come, that he can be charged with any fault or neglect of the salvation of *any* of them that *at any time* have come unto God by him. What ground then is here for confidence that Christ will make a good end with me, since I come unto God by him, and since he ever liveth to make intercession for me! Let me then honor him, I say, by setting on his head the crown of his undertakings for me; by believing that he is able to save me, even to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for me.

Sixthly, Hence also I infer, that *Christ ought to bear and wear the glory of our salvation forever.* He has done it, he has wrought it out. “Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength.” Do not sacrifice to your own inventions; do not give glory to the work of your own hands. Your reformations, your works, your good deeds, and all the glory of your doing, cast them at the feet of this high priest and confess the glory belongs unto him. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” “And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father’s house; the offspring and the issue; all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.” Oh! the work of our redemption by Christ is such, as wanteth not provocation to us, to bless and praise him. Glorify him, then, in your body and in your souls, who has bought you with a price, and glorify God and the Father by him.

CHAPTER 8.

THE USE: CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS.

I COME now to make some use of this discourse on the efficacy of Christ's Intercession: And,

First, Let me exhort you *to the study of this,* as of the other truths of our Lord Jesus. The priestly office of Christ is the first and great thing that is presented to us in the gospel; namely, how that he died for our sins, and gave himself to the cross, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us through him. But now because this priestly office of his is divided into two parts; and because one of them, namely, this of his intercession, is accomplished for us within the veil; therefore (as we say among men, "Out of sight, out of mind") he is too much as to this forgotten by us. We satisfy ourselves with the slaying of the sacrifice; we look not enough after our Aaron as he goes into the holiest, there to sprinkle the mercy-seat with blood upon our account.

God forbid that the least syllable of what I say should be intended by me, or construed by others, as if I sought to diminish the price paid by Christ for our redemption in this world. But since his dying is his laying down his price, and his intercession the urging and managing the worthiness of it in the presence of God against Satan, there is glory to be found therein, and we should look after him into the holy place.

The second part of the work of the high priest under the law had great glory and sanctity put upon it, forasmuch as the holy garments were provided for him to officiate in within the veil; also it was there that the altar stood on which he offered incense. There was the mercy-seat. And there also were the cherubims of glory, which were figures of the angels, that love to be continually looking and prying into the management of this second part of the priesthood of Christ in the presence of God. For although themselves are not the persons so immediately concerned therein as we, yet the management of it, I say, is with so much grace, and glory, and wisdom, and effectualness, that it is a heaven to the angels to see it. Oh! to enjoy the odorous scent, and sweet memorial, and heart-refreshing

perfumes that ascend continually from the mercy-seat to the place where God is, and also to behold how effectual it is to the end for which it is designed, is glorious; and he that is not somewhat led into this by the grace of God, there is a great thing lacking to his faith, and he misseth of many a sweet bit that he might otherwise enjoy.

Wherefore, I say, be exhorted to the study of this part of Christ's work in the managing of our salvation for us. And the ceremonies of the law may be a great help to you as to this; for though they be out of use now as to practice, yet the signification of them is rich, and that from which many believers of the gospel have got much. Wherefore I advise you that you read the five books of Moses often; yea read, and read again, and do not despair of help to understand something of the will and mind of God therein, though you think they are fast locked up from you. Neither trouble your heads though you have not commentaries and expositions; pray and read, and pray and read; for a little from God is better than a great deal from men; also what is from men is uncertain, and is often lost and tumbled over and over by men, but what is from God is fixed as a nail in a sure place. I know there are times of temptation; but I speak now as to the common course of Christianity. There is nothing that so abides with us, as what we receive from God; and the reasons why Christians at this day are at such a loss, as to some things, is because they are content with what comes from men's mouths, without searching and kneeling before God, to know of him the truth of things. Things that we receive at God's hand, come to us as things from the minting house; though old in themselves, yet new to us, if they come to us with the smell of heaven upon them.

I speak not this because I would have people despise their ministers; but to show that there is now a-days so much idleness among professors, as hinders them from a diligent search after things, and makes them take up short of that that is sealed by the Spirit of testimony to the conscience. Witness the great decays at this day among us, and the strange revolting from truth once professed by us.

Secondly, As I would press you to an earnest study and search after this great truth, so I would press you *to a diligent improvement of it to yourselves, and others.* To know truth for knowledge' sake, is short of a

gracious disposition of soul; and to communicate truth out of a desire of praise and vain-glory for so doing, is also a swerving from godly simplicity; but to improve what I know, for the good of myself and others, is true Christianity indeed.

Now, truths received may be improved with respect to myself and others, and that several ways.

1. To *myself,* when I search after the power that belongs to those notions that I have received of truth. There belongs to every true notion of truth a power. The notion is the shell; the power, the kernel and life. Without this last, truth doth me no good, nor those to whom I communicate it. Hence Paul said to the Corinthians, "When I come to you again, I will not know the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Search then, after the power of what thou knowest; for it is the power that will do thee good. Now, this will not be got but by earnest prayer, and much attending upon God. Also thy heart must not be stuffed with cumbering cares of this world; for they are of a choking nature.

Take heed, moreover, of slighting that little that thou hast. A good improvement of a little is the way to make that little thrive; and the way to obtain additions thereto. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

2. Improve them to *others;* and that by laboring to instill them into their hearts by good and wholesome words, presenting all to them with the authority of the scriptures. Labor also to enforce those instillings on them, by showing them by thy life, the peace they bring, and the glorious effects that they have upon thy soul.

Lastly, *Let this doctrine give thee boldness to come to God.* Shall Jesus Christ be interceding in heaven? O then, be thou a praying man on earth; yea, take courage to pray. Think thus with thyself, 'I go to God ¾ to God before whose throne the Lord Jesus is ready to hand my petitions to him; yea, he ever lives to make intercession for me.' This is a great encouragement to come to God by prayers and supplications for

ourselves, and by intercessions for our families, our neighbors, and enemies. Farewell.

THE NEW BIRTH.

BUNYAN'S LAST SERMON:

PREACHED IN LONDON, JULY, 1688.

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¾ ^{KJV}John 1:13.

THESE words have a dependence on what goes before, and therefore I must direct you to it for the right understanding of them. You have it thus: "He (Christ) came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

In the words before us, you have two things.

1. Some of Christ's own nation rejecting him when he offered himself to them.

2. Others of his own receiving him, and making him welcome.

Those that reject him, he also passes by; but those "that receive him, he gives them power to become the sons of God." Now, lest anyone should look upon it as good luck or fortune, he says, "They were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They that did not receive him, were only born of flesh and blood; but those that did receive him, they that receive the doctrine of Christ with a vehement desire, they have God to their father.

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW BIRTH. "NOT OF BLOOD," ETC.

1. I'll show you what he means by blood. They that believe are born to it, as an heir is to an inheritance; they are born of God, not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Not of blood, that is, not by generation, not born to the kingdom of heaven by the flesh; not because I am the son of a godly

man or woman. That is meant by blood. (<4172>Acts 17:26.) “He hath made of one blood all nations.” But when he says here, “Not of blood,” he also rejects all carnal privileges they did boast of. They boasted they were Abraham’s seed: “No, no,” says he, “it is not of blood. ‘Think not to say you have Abraham to your father,’ “ You must be born of God, if you go to the kingdom of heaven.

2. “Nor of the will of the flesh:” What must we understand by that? It is taken often for those vehement inclinations that are in man, to all manner of looseness; “fulfilling the desires of the flesh.” But that must not be understood here. Men are not made the children of God by fulfilling their lustful desires. It must be understood here in the best sense. There is not only in carnal men a will to be vile, but there is in them a will to be saved also, a will to go to heaven also. But this will not do: it will not privilege a man in the things of the kingdom of God. Natural desires after the things of another world, are not an argument to prove a man shall go to heaven whenever he dies. I am not a free-willer, I do abhor it, yet there is not the wickedest man, but he desires some time or other to be saved; he will read some time or other, or it may be, pray; but this will not do, “It is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that shows mercy;” there is willing and running, and yet to no purpose. <4509>Romans 9:16. “Israel which followed after the law of righteousness have not obtained it.” Here I do not understand, as if the apostle had denied a virtuous course of life to be the way to heaven; but that a man without grace, though he have natural gifts, yet he shall not obtain privilege to go to heaven, and be a son of God. Though a man without grace may have a will to be saved, yet he cannot have that will in God’s way; nature cannot know anything but the things of nature; the things of God knows no man, but by the Spirit of God. Unless the Spirit of God be in you, it will leave you on this side the gates of heaven.

3. “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of *man*, but of God.” It may be some may have a will, a desire that Ishmael may be saved; know this, it will not save thy child. If it was of our will, I would have you all go to heaven. How many are there in the world that pray for their children, and cry, and are ready to die for them, and all this will not do? God’s will is the rule of all. It is only through Jesus Christ. “Which were

born not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Now I come to the doctrine.

MEN THAT BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST TO THE EFFECTUAL RECEIVING OF JESUS CHRIST, ARE BORN TO IT. He does not say they shall be born to it, but they are born to it. A man is born of God unto God, and the things of God, before he receives Christ to eternal salvation. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now unless he be born of God he cannot see it. Suppose the kingdom of God be what it will, he cannot see it before he be begotten of God; suppose it be the gospel, he cannot see it before he be brought into a state of regeneration; believing is the consequence of the new birth: "Not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

II. I WILL GIVE YOU A CLEAR DESCRIPTION OF THIS NEW BIRTH UNDER A SIMILITUDE OR TWO:

A child before it be born into the world is in the dark dungeon of its mother's womb; so a child of God before he be born again is in the dark dungeon of sin, and sees nothing of the kingdom of God. Therefore it is called a new birth. The same soul has love one way in its carnal condition, another way when it is born again.

As it is compared to a birth, resembling a child in his mother's womb; so it is compared to a man being raised out of the grave; and to be born again, is the same as to be raised out of the grave of sin ¾ "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." To be raised from the grave of sin, is by a figure to be begotten and born. There is a famous instance of Christ: He is "the first-begotten from the dead," (GOOD Revelation 1:5;) he is "the first-born from the dead," unto which our regeneration alludeth, that is, if you be born again by seeing those things that are above. Then there is a similitude betwixt Christ's resurrection and the new birth. "Which were born," which were restored out of this dark world, and translated out of the kingdom of this dark world into the kingdom of his dear Son. This makes us live a new life; this is to be born again. As he that is delivered from the mother's womb, it is by the help of the mother; so he that is born of God, it is by the Spirit of God.

III. I MUST GIVE YOU A FEW CONSEQUENCES OF A NEW BIRTH.

1. A child you know is incident to cry as soon as it comes into the world; for if there be no noise, they say it is dead. You that are called born of God, and Christians, if you be not criers, there is no spiritual life in you; if you be born of God, you are crying ones; as soon as he has raised you out of the dark dungeon of sin, you cannot but cry to God, “What must I do to be saved?” As soon as ever God had touched the jailer he cries out, “Men and brethren what must I do to be saved?” Oh! how many prayerless professors are there in London, that never pray? Coffee-houses will not let you pray, trades will not let you pray, looking-glasses will not let you pray; but if you were born of God, you would.

2. It is not only natural for a child to cry, but it must crave the breast, it cannot live without the breast. Therefore Peter makes it the true trial of a newborn babe. The newborn babe desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby; if you be born of God, make it manifest by desiring the breast of God. Do you long for the milk of the promises? A man lives one way when he is in the world, another way when he is brought unto Jesus Christ. So Isaiah: “They shall suck and be satisfied, with the breasts of consolation.” If you be born again, there is no satisfaction until you get the milk of God’s word into your souls. [1]Isaiah 66:11. O what is a promise of God to a carnal man! a harlot’s song, it may be, is more sweet to him. But if you be born again you cannot live without the milk of God’s word. What is a woman’s breast to a horse? But what is it to a child? there is its comfort night and day. O how loath are they it should be taken from them! Minding heavenly things, says a carnal man, is but vanity, but to a child of God, there is his comfort.

3. A child that is newly born, if it have not other comforts to keep it warm, than it had in its mother’s womb, dies; it must have something got for its succor. So at his birth Christ had swaddling clothes prepared for him. So those that are born again, must have some promise of Christ to keep them alive. Those that are in a carnal state, warm themselves with other things; but those that are born again, cannot live without some promise of Christ to keep them alive, as he did the poor infant in [2]Ezekiel 16. “I have covered thee with embroidered gold.” When women

are with child, what fine things will they prepare for their child! O but what fine things has Christ prepared to wrap all in that are born again! O what wrappings of gold has Christ prepared for all that are born again! Women will dress their children, that everyone may see them, how fine they are. So he says in

> "I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain on thy neck, and I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head;" ²⁶Ezekiel 16:11

and he adds in ²⁶Ezekiel 16:13, "Thou didst prosper to a kingdom." This is to set out nothing in the world; but the righteousness of Christ and the graces of the Spirit, without which a newborn babe cannot live. They perish unless they have the golden righteousness of Christ.

4. A child when it is born, is nursed in its mother's lap. The mother takes great delight to have that which will be for its comfort. So it is with God's children; they shall be kept on his knee (²³Isaiah 66:11), they shall "suck and be satisfied with the breasts of consolations." Again, verse 13th. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." There is a similitude in these things that nobody knows of, but those that are born again.

5. There is usually some similitude betwixt the father and the child; it may be the child looks like its father. So those that are born again have a new similitude, they have the image of Jesus Christ. Galatians **4.** Everyone that is born of God, has something of the features of heaven upon him. Men love those children that are likest them, most usually; so does God his children, therefore they are called the children of God: but others do not look like him; therefore they are called Sodomites. Christ describes children of the devil by their features; the children of the devil, his works they will do. All works of unrighteousness, are the devil's works. If you are earthly, you have borne the image of the earthly, if heavenly, you have borne the image of the heavenly.

6. When a man has a child, he trains him up to his own liking; "they have learned the custom of their father's house." So those that are born of God, have learned the custom of the true church of God; there they learn to cry,

"My Father and my God." They are brought up in God's house; they learn the method and form of God's house, for regulating their lives in this world.

7. Children! it is natural for them to depend upon their father for what they want. If they want a pair of shoes, they go and tell him; if they want bread, they go and tell him. So should the children of God do. Do you want spiritual bread? go tell God of it. Do you want strength of grace? ask it of God. Do you want strength against Satan's temptations? go and tell God of it. When the devil tempts you, run home and tell your heavenly Father; go pour out your complaints to God. This also is natural to children; if any wrong them, they go and tell their father; so do those that are born of God, when they meet with temptations, go and tell God of them.

The *first* use of the subject is this; to make a strict inquiry, whether you be born of God or not. Examine by those things I laid down before, of a child of nature, and a child of grace. Are you brought out of the dark dungeon of this world into Christ? Have you learned to cry "My Father?" "And I said, thou shalt call me thy Father." [2419]Jeremiah 3:19. All God's children are criers. Cannot you be quiet without you have your fill of the milk of God's word? Cannot you be satisfied without you have peace with God? Pray you consider it, and be serious with yourselves. If you have not these marks, you will fall short of the kingdom of God, you shall never have an interest there; there is no intruding: they will say, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" and he will say, "I know you not."

2. No child of God, no heavenly inheritance. We sometimes give something to those that are not our children, but not our lands. O do not flatter yourselves with a portion among the sons, unless you live like sons. When we see a king's son play with a beggar, this is unbecoming. So if you be the king's children, live like the king's children; if you be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, and not on things below. When you come together, talk of what your Father has promised you. You should all love your Father's will, and be content, and pleased with the exercises you meet with in the world.

3. If you are children of God, live together lovingly; if the world quarrel with you, it is no matter; but it is sad if you quarrel together. If this be

amongst you, it’s a sign of ill breeding; it is not according to rules you have in the word of God. Dost thou see a soul that has the image of God in him? love him, love him; say, ‘this man and I must go to heaven one day.’ Serve one another, do good for one another, and if any wrong you, pray to God to right you; and love the brotherhood.

Lastly, If you be the children of God, learn that lesson, “Gird up the loins of your mind as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former conversation, but be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” Consider that the holy God is your Father, and let this oblige you to live like the children of God, that you may look your Father in the face with comfort another day.

FOOTNOTES

JERUSALEM SINNER SAVED

FT1 Having preached many times, and from various texts, upon this *subject*, the whole substance of many sermons is here published. — Ed.

FT2 The Jews, and their sacred city, are standing monuments of God's dreadful vengeance against unbelief in rejecting the Lord Christ, in whom alone is salvation. The Lord give us grace to prize and improve gospel privileges, lest we also be cut off, through unbelief. — *Mason*.

FT3 The higher a people rise under the means, the lower will be their fall if they slight them. O highly-favored England! Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, will have a milder hell than thy carnal, hypocritical, Christless children. — *Mason*.

FT4 All the objections are on the sinner's side, through unbelief. Christ answers them all in one word, 'Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely'; and, 'Whosoever cometh, I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, put forth thy power, and give the will. — *Mason*.

FT5 In this quotation, Bunyan has followed the reading in the Genevan or Puritan version. — Ed.

FT6 An arrow, dipped in the blood of Jesus, will subdue the most obdurate heart it reaches, even those bitter enemies to Christ, the priests. — *Mason*.

FT7 This quotation is from the Genevan or Puritan version — Ed.

FT8 'Death was swallowing of them down.' How very striking and full of truth is this expression! For, in proportion as the sinner violates the Divine law, so he rushes into the jaws of death and destruction. Obedience to the Divine law preserves health, bestows happiness, and prolongs life. — Ed.

FT9 'Rowl in his bowels'; intense affection: see Philemon 12. — Ed.

FT10 'Wheals'; pimples, or small swellings filled with matter. — Ed.

FT11 ‘As physicians do’ can now hardly be understood. In Bunyan’s days, all physicians put forth their bills of ‘wonderful cures.’ — Ed.

FT12 ‘Hedge-creepers’; footpads. — Ed.

FT13 O sinner, beseech the Lord to enable you to welcome the grace that is welcoming you; then you shall find it, in the Lord’s time, that you shall be made as kindly welcome as ever a sinner was that is now a glorified saint. — *Mason*.

FT14 This idea is most ingeniously and admirably displayed in Bunyan’s beautiful allegory, ‘The Holy War.’ — Ed.

FT15 ‘A muse’; deep thought. *Vulgo vocatum*, ‘a brown study.’ Bunyan used this word in the same sense in the first edition of ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress,’ at the Interpreter’s house: ‘Now was Christian somewhat in a muse.’ It was afterwards altered, but not improved, by substituting the words, ‘in a maze.’ — Ed.

FT16 Among all the wondrous sights that angels witness, one gives them peculiar joy — it is the poor penitent prodigal returning to God, Luke 15:10. — Ed.

FT17 This was printed in the first edition, ‘the biggest sin.’ — Ed.

FT18 How strongly does this dialogue bring to our recollection that between Christian and Apollyon in the ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress?’ — Ed.

FT19 ‘I stunck,’ in the original edition, probably meant, ‘I stuck’; but all the later editions have, ‘I stunk.’ — Ed.

FT20 ‘Clouts’; patches, Joshua 9:5

FT21 I cannot discover in what book Bunyan read this legend; it is not in the “*Golden Legend*,” or any of my monkish authors. It was a generally received opinion, among the ancients, that Mary Magdalene was sister to Lazarus; but the means of her conversion is not known. The story here related is possible, and even probable; but it has no foundation in the inspired writings, nor in ancient authors. — Ed.

FT22 Thus Zaccheus said: ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man, by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’ The law of God requires us, dim- sighted as we are, to see our sins in their real magnitude, but the perversity of man turns the telescope to diminish them. — Ed.

FT23 ‘The friends thereof in their reason’ were the words used in the first three editions by Bunyan. After his decease, they were altered, in 1697, in a *second* third edition, and this correction has been continued in every subsequent impression. — Ed.

FT24 Bunyan has some striking observations upon this word Go, in his work on the day of judgment. Those who refused the invitation to ‘come’ and receive life, when in the world, now irresistibly obey the awful mandate, ‘Go,’ and rush into eternal woe. — Ed.

FT25 How pointed and faithful are these words? How natural it is for a poor sinner to compare himself with his fellow-worm, and say, ‘Lord, I thank thee that I am not as this publican,’ or as that murderer — instead of viewing himself in the gospel glass, in the presence of infinite holiness, and feeling that in his flesh there is no good thing, but putrefying sores, that he is vile and hell- deserving, and must fall into the arms of Divine mercy, crying, Lord, save, or I perish. — Ed.

FT26 ‘Swoop’; to seize as a hawk does his prey. — Ed.

FT27 The convinced sinner is not content with the cry, ‘Deliver me from the wrath to come,’ but, feeling sin to be his greatest enemy, he earnestly cries for deliverance from its dominion in this world (Psalm 143). — Ed.

FT28 ‘At the catch.’ See the dialogue between Faithful and Talkative in ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress.’ — Ed.

FT29 Printed, ‘far,’ in the first and second editions; altered to ‘fast,’ in third and subsequent editions. — Ed.

FT30 The blind men, who implored the mercy of Jesus, would not be checked even by the multitude, but cried so much the more. When a true sense of misery urges, neither men nor devils can stop the cry for mercy, till Jesus has compassion and heals their spiritual maladies. — *Mason*.

FT31 Quoted from the Puritan or Genevan version of the Bible; our translation has, ‘He that covereth.’ — Ed.

FT32 ‘Long of Jesus Christ’; a provincial expression, meaning ‘all this belongs to us by Jesus Christ.’ — Ed.

FT33 How admirable an illustration is this of the Slough of Despond, into which Christian and Pliable fell in ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress.’ — Ed.

FT34 This illustrates Bunyan’s meaning of the Giant of Sophistry, named Maul, whose head was cut off by Great-heart, in the Second Part of ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress.’ — Ed.

FT35 The treasures of this bank are inexhaustible and unsearchable. Oh for faith, that we may draw largely upon its infinite riches! — Ed.

FT36 ‘Incidence’; the direction with which one body strikes another; now obsolete. — Ed.

FT37 A sour, crabbed Christian, is a contradiction in terms. The precept is, ‘Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you’ (Ephesians 4:31). — *Mason*

FT38 The true branches in Christ, the heavenly vine, are made fruitful in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. By these it will appear that Christ is formed within us. Mere ‘lick of the tongue’ love, without these, is an unsubstantial shadow. — Ed.

FT39 ‘Be so taunted’; in editions previous to 1697. — Ed.

FT40 ‘At least wise’; to say the least. — Ed.

FT41 This is the proper test for a perplexed soul, when troubled about his election. If I love Christ, and am desirous to obey him, it is because he first loved me; and this is the surest proof of election. Hear the voice of God, ‘Whosoever believeth in me shall not perish, but have eternal life’; and so Paul, ‘As many as were ordained to eternal life believed’ (Acts 13:48). — Ed.

FT42 How very forcible is this appeal to those who profess to believe the inspiration of the Bible, but yet reject the atonement of Christ. It is to make the typical sacrifice of the clean beasts, under the law, of greater value than that of the great antitype — the Son of God. — Ed.

FT43 The reason why those who are guilty of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost are never forgiven, is not for want of any sufficiency in the blood of Christ, or in the pardoning mercy of God, but because they never repent of that sin, and never seek to God for mercy through Christ, but continue obstinate till death. — *Mason*.

COME AND WELCOME

FT51 “My grace is sufficient for thee,” and the language of the church, conscious of its own weakness and the Lord’s all-sufficiency, is, “Draw me, we will run after thee” (2 Song of Solomon 1:4). — Mason.

FT52 No outward profession is accepted, except it springs from inward love to Christ. — Ed.

FT53 How clearly is every seeming difficulty explained by Bunyan. The Father entered into covenant with the Son, in eternity, to save his elect; and, in time, as they appear upon earth, the Father giveth them to Christ by effectual calling, and he brings them to eternal glory. — Ed.

FT54 To come unto Christ, in its proper sense, is to receive him as he is offered to us in the Word; to believe in him, as a suitable and all-sufficient Savior; to submit to his government, in both suffering and doing his will, with all lowly-mindedness and humility; and this by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit upon the soul. — Mason.

FT55 “Salve;” relief, aid, or help.

He done undo, yet for to salve his name
And purchase honor to his friend’s behalf,
This goodly countenance he did frame.”

— Spenser’s Faery Queen.

FT56 We cannot remember all God’s benefits, but how prone we are to forget them all! — Ed.

FT57 Christian, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, was thus exercised: — ”I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded that he did not know his own voice; and thus I perceived it: — Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind.” See also Grace Abounding, No. 100-102. — Ed.

FT58 “Warm gleads;” from Saxon glow, anything heated or hot.

“My destiny to behold her doth me lead,
And yet I know I run into the gleade.”, Wyatt. — Ed.

FT59 Many misspend their time in poring upon their own hearts, to find out some evidence of their interest in Christ, when they should rather be employed in receiving Christ, and walking in him, by a confident faith grounded on the Divine testimony. — Mason.

FT60 How striking are Bunyan’s illustrations! The devil, as a roaring lion, is in pursuit of the flying sinner; he would flee faster than his infirmities will let him. We cannot wonder that modern preachers borrowed so vivid and truthful a figure. — Ed.

FT61 A Christian is “never safe but when watchful;” he should keep a jealous eye on his own weakness, and a believing eye on the promise and power of Christ, and he shall be preserved from falling. — Mason.

FT62 “Let him;” hinder him. See 2 Thessalonians 2:7. Obsolete. — Imperial Dictionary. — Ed.

FT63 “The Scripture contains many gracious promises in behalf of the children of believing parents; but grace is not hereditary. It is the parent’s part to pray with and for, admonish, and piously train up his children; but, after all, must recommend them to the tender mercies of God, which the children of many prayers often happily experience.” — Mason. O that all persons may solemnly consider this searching truth! especially the children of believers. The coming of your father or mother to Christ cannot be imputed to you; come for yourself, or you must perish. As you love your souls, believe not that awful delusion, that any ceremony could make you a child of God. — Ed.

FT64 “While of late;” until of late. — Ed.

FT65 “Lie at Jesus Christ;” to lay down, lie at the feet of Jesus Christ, to persevere like the Syrophenician woman, Mark 7:25. — Ed.

FT66 “Ply;” to solicit importunately. — Ed.

FT67 “A flam;” a fable, an imposition.

FT68 “Most an end;” continually, perpetually.

FT69 How awful is the confidence of the self-righteous pharisee; he considers himself more righteous than the poor penitent, who is clothed in Christ's righteousness, the garments of salvation.

The self-righteous says: — "Stand by, I am holier than thou. Thank God, I am not like this publican." While in God's sight, poor wretched boaster, thou art clothed in filthy rags. — Ed.

Ft70 This nation now pays some eight or ten millions sterling a year. Had God sanctioned this diabolical trade in souls, all Christendom would have been divided into two classes-priests and slaves. — Ed.

Ft71 "Twitting;" taunting, or rebuking. — Ed.

Ft72 "A gload;" a warm, eager, passionate gazing: now obsolete. — Ed.

CHRIST A COMPLETE SAVIOR

Ft75 The Author refers here to 1 Corinthians 11:30-32, where the doctrine and method of God's fatherly *corrective* discipline in his own family, is laid down briefly but clearly. The subject deserves our deepest study, and supplies important topics of self-examination to the conscience of every careless Christian.

Yet it is the very mistake of Job's friends to suppose that *all* the afflictions of God's children are sent as *correctives for sin.* There is another class, that belong purely to our *conformity to Christ,* in which we share his cup and his baptism, by suffering for righteousness' sake, for the glory of his name, and the advancement of his cause. See Matthew 5:2-12. Such are all the sufferings which are either,

1. the *productions of piety,* in a world of sin; or,

2. the *proof of it* against slanderous imputations; or,

3. the *preventives of particular sins,* to which we are tempted; or,

4. the *preparatives* for more tender and effectual sympathy, more extensive usefulness on earth, and higher glory in heaven.

Examples of all these different forms of suffering, will readily occur to every reader of the Scriptures.

It is often of great moment to the suffering Christian, that he should know to which of these classes his own afflictions belong. See 1 Peter 2:20, 21. ¾ J. N. B.

ft76 The "land of Sinim" is now generally understood to be China. It contains one third of the population of the globe, and is now just opened to the gospel of Christ. How would Bunyan have rejoiced to see our day, and take part in the Missionary Enterprise! But his published works shall help the good cause on. ¾ J. N. B.

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