

HEAVEN MADE SURE;

OR,

THE CERTAINTY OF SALVATION.

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.—PSALM XXXV. 3.

THE words contain a petition for a benediction. The supplicant is a king, and his humble suit is to the King of kings: the king of Israel prays to the King of heaven and earth. He doth beg two things:—1. That God would save him; 2. That God would certify him of it. So that the text may be distributed accordingly, *in salutem, et certitudinem*,—into *salvation*, and the *assurance* of it.

The *assurance* lies first in the words, and shall have the first place in my discourse; wherein I conceive two things—the matter, and the manner. The matter is *assurance*; the manner, *how* assured: *Dic animæ*, ‘Say unto my soul.’

I. From the matter, or *assurance*, observe—

1. That salvation may be made sure to a man. David would never pray for that which could not be. Nor would St Peter charge us with a duty which stood not in possibility to be performed: 2 Pet. i. 10, ‘Make your election sure.’ And to stop the bawling throats of all cavilling adversaries, Paul directly proves it: 2 Cor. xiii. 5, ‘Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?’ We may then know that Christ is in us: if Christ be in us, we are in Christ; if we be in Christ, we cannot be condemned; for, Rom. viii. 1, ‘There is no damnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’

But I leave this point, that it may be sure, as granted; and come to ourselves, that we may make it sure. The Papists deny this, and teach the contrary, that salvation cannot be made sure: much good do it them, with their sorry and heartless doctrine! If they make that impossible to any which God hath made easy for many, ‘into their secret let not my soul come,’ Gen. xlix. 6.

2. That the best saints have desired to make their salvation sure. David that knew it, yet entreats to know it more. Pa. xli. 11, ‘I know thou favourest me;’ yet here still, *Dic animæ*, ‘Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.’ A man can never be too sure of his going to heaven. If we pur-

chase an inheritance on earth, we make it as sure, and our tenure as strong, as the brawn of the law, or the brains of the lawyers, can devise. We have conveyance, and bonds, and fines, no strength too much. And shall we not be more curious in the settling our eternal inheritance in heaven? Even the best certainty hath often, in this, thought itself weak. Here we find matter of *consolation*, of *reprehension*, of *admonition*: comfort to some, reproof to others, warning to all.

(1.) Of *consolation*. Even David desires better assurance: to keep us from dejection, behold, they often think themselves weakest that are the strongest. *Sum peccatorum maximus, dicit apostolorum non minimus*.—He calls himself the ‘chiefest of sinners,’ 1 Tim. i. 15, that was not the least of saints. Indeed sometimes a dear saint may want feeling of the spirit of comfort. Grace comes into the soul as the morning sun into the world: there is first a dawning, then a mean light, and at last the sun in his excellent brightness. In a Christian life there is *professio, profectio, perfectio*. A profession of the name of Christ wrought in our conversion; not the husk of religion, but the sap: ‘A pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.’ Next, there is a profection, or going forward in grace, ‘working up our salvation in fear and trembling.’ Last, a perfection or full assurance, that we are ‘sealed up to the day of redemption.’

And yet after this full assurance there may be some fear: it is not the commendation of this certainty to be void of doubting. The wealthiest saints have suspected their poverty; and the richest in grace are yet ‘poorest in spirit.’ As it is seen in rich misers: they possess much, yet esteem it little in respect of what they desire; for *plenitudo opum non implet hiatum mentis*,—the fulness of riches cannot answer the insatiable affection. Whence it comes to pass that they have restless thoughts, and vexing cares for that they have not, not caring for that they have. So many good men, rich in the graces of God’s Spirit, are so desirous of more, that they regard not what they enjoy, but what they desire: complaining often that they have no grace, no love, no life. God doth sometimes, from the best men’s eyes, hide that saving goodness that is in their hearts:—

[1.] To extend their desires, and sharpen their affection. By this means he puts a hunger into their hearts after righteousness; whereas a sensible fulness might take away their stomachs. Deferred comforts quicken the appetite.

[2.] To enlarge their joys, when they shall find again the consolation which they thought lost. *Desiderata diu dulcius veniunt*,—What we much wished before it came, we truly love when it is come. Our lady had lost our Lord, Luke ii, three days: who can express the joy of her soul when she found him! She rejoiced not only as a mother finding her son, but as a sinner finding her Saviour. *Jucunde obtinetur, quod diu detinetur*,—What was detained from us with grief, must needs be obtained of us with joy.

[3.] To try whether we will serve God *gratis*, and be constant in his obedience though we find no present recompense. Satan objects that against Job, *Pro nihilo?*—‘Doth Job fear God for nought?’ chap. i. 9. Thus are we put to the test whether our service proceed from some other oblique respect, or merely out of love to God, when nothing but smart is presented to our instant sense.

[4.] That our care may be the greater to keep this comfort when we have it. *Quod lugemus ademptum, vigilantanter servamus adeptum*,—If we so sorrowfully lamented the loss, sure we will look well to the possession.

In all this, *Deus dona sua non negat, sed commendat*,—God intends not to

deny us his comforts, but to instruct our hearts how to value them. *Cito data vilescunt*,—If we might have them for the first asking, their worth would fall to the opinion of cheapness and contempt. We shall have it, though we stay for it. And to comfort us, let us assuredly know that this mourning for God's absence is an evident demonstration of his presence.

(2.) Of *reprehension* to others, that say they are sure of the purchase before they ever gave earnest of the bargain. Presumption is to be avoided so well as despair. For as none more complain that they want this assurance than they that have it, so none more boast of it than they that have it not. The fond hypocrite takes his own presumption for this assurance: he lives after the flesh, yet brags of the Spirit. This false opinion ariseth partly from his own conceit, partly from Satan's deceit.

[1.] From his own conceit: he dreams of the Spirit, and takes it granted that it ever rests within him; but when his soul awakes, he finds there no such manner of guest: the Holy Spirit never lodged there. Prov. xxx. 12, 'There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness.' These pure people so vaunt their assurance of salvation, that they will scarce change places in heaven with St Peter or St Paul, without boot. The infallible mark of distinction which the Apostle sets on the sons of God is this: they are 'led by the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18, 'So many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.' The Holy Ghost is their God and their guide; and this Spirit 'leads them into all truth,' John xvi. 13, and guides them 'into the land of righteousness,' Ps. cxliii. 10. But these men will *Spiritum ducere*, lead the Spirit. They are not ductible; they will not be led by the Spirit into truth and peace, but they will lead the Spirit, as it were, overrule the Holy Ghost to patronise their humours. Let them be adulterers, usurers, bribe-corrupted, sacrilegious, &c.; yet they are still men of the Spirit. But of what Spirit? *Nescitis*: we may say to them, as Christ to his two hot disciples, Luke ix. 55, 'Ye know not of what spirit ye are.' It is enough, they think, to have *oculos in celo*, though they have *manus in fundo, animos in profundo*,—It is held sufficient to have eyes fixed on heaven, though covetous hands busy on earth, and crafty minds deep as hell. This over-venturous conceit that heaven is theirs, how base and debauched lives soever they live, is not assurance, but presumption.

[2.] This ariseth from Satan's deceit: who cries, like Korah, Num. xvi. 3, 'Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation is holy, every one of them.' You are holy enough, you are sure of heaven: what would you more? You may sit down and play: your work is done. Hereupon they sing peace and *requiems* to their souls, and begin to wrap up their affections in worldly joys. But *tranquillitas ista tempestas est*,—this calm is the most grievous storm. This is carnal security, not heavenly assurance. As the Jews went into captivity with *Templum Domini*—'The temple of the Lord,' &c.—in their lips; so many go to hell with the water of baptism on their faces, and the assurance of salvation in their mouths.

(3.) Of *instruction*, teaching us to keep the even way of comfort; eschewing both the rock of presumption on the right hand, and the gulf of desperation on the left. Let us neither be *tumidi* nor *timidi*, neither over-bold nor over-fainting, but endeavour by faith to assure ourselves of Jesus Christ, and by repentance to assure ourselves of faith, and by an amended life to assure ourselves of repentance. For they must here live to God's glory that would hereafter live in God's glory.

3. In the next place, observe the means how we may come by this assurance. This is discovered in the text: *Dic anime*, 'Say unto my soul.' Who

must speak? God. To whom must he speak? to the soul. So that in this assurance God and the soul must meet. This St Paul demonstrates, Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' The word is *συμμαρτυρεῖν*, *contestari*, to bear witness together. Neither our spirit alone, nor God's Spirit alone, makes this certificate, but both concurring.

Not our spirit alone can give this assurance; for man's heart is always evil, often deceitful. At all times evil: Gen. vi. 5, 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.' At some times deceitful: Jer. xvii. 9, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' *Non novi animam meam*, saith Job, chap. ix. 21, 'I know not my own soul, though I were perfect.' And Paul, concerning his apostleship: 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified.' And if David's soul could have made a sufficient testimony alone, what need he pray, *Dic animæ*, 'Say thou to my soul?' Some have a true zeal of a false religion, and some a false zeal of a true religion. Paul, before his conversion, had a true zeal of a false religion: Gal. i. 14, 'I was exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.' The Laodiceans had a false, or rather no zeal of a true religion: Rev. iii. 15, 'I know thy works, that thou art neither hot nor cold.' So that when about this certificate a man deals with his heart singly, his heart will deal with him doubly.

No; nor doth God's Spirit alone give this testimony, lest a vain illusion should be taken for this holy persuasion. But both God's Spirit and our spirit meeting together are *concordes* and *contestes*, joint witnesses. Indeed, the principal work comes from God's Spirit; he is the primary cause of this assurance. Now, he certifies us by word, by deed, and by seal. By word, terming us in the Scripture God's children, and putting into our mouths that filial voice whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.' By deed: Gal. v. 22, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering,' &c. By these is our 'election made sure,' saith St Peter, 2 Epist. i. 10. By seal: 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you are sealed to the day of redemption.' Now our spirit witnesseth with him from the sanctity of our life, faith, and reformation. 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,' 1 John v. 10.

4. Lastly, this is the sweetest comfort that can come to a man in this life, even a heaven upon earth, to be ascertained of his salvation. There are many mysteries in the world, which curious wits with perplexful studies strive to apprehend. But without this, 'he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' Eccles. i. 18. *Unum necessarium*, this one thing is only necessary; whatsoever I leave unknown, let me know this, that I am the Lord's. *Qui Christum discit, satis est, si cætera nescit*,—He may without danger be ignorant of other things that truly knows Jesus Christ.

There is no potion of misery so embittered with gall but this can sweeten it with a comfortable relish. When enemies assault-us, get us under, triumph over us, imagining that salvation itself cannot save us, what is our comfort? *Novi in quem credidi*,—'I know whom I have believed;' I am sure the Lord will not forsake me. *Deficit panis?* thou wantest bread; God is thy bread of life. We want a pillow; God is our 'resting-place,' Ps. xxxii. 7. We may be *sine veste, non sine fide; sine cibo, non sine Christo; sine domo, non sine Domino*,—without apparel, not without faith; without meat, not without Christ; without a house, never without the Lord. What state can there be wherein the stay of this heavenly assurance gives us not peace and joy?

Are we clapped up in a dark and desolate dungeon? there the light of the

sun cannot enter, the light of mercy not be kept out. What restrained body, that hath the assurance of this eternal peace, will not pity the darkness of the profane man's liberty, or rather the liberty of his darkness? No walls can keep out an infinite spirit; no darkness can be uncomfortable where 'the Father of lights,' James i. 17, and the 'Sun of righteousness,' Mal. iv. 2, shineth. The presence of glorious angels is much, but of the most glorious God is enough.

Are we cast out in exile, our backs to our native home?—all the world is our way. Whither can we go from God? Ps. cxxxix. 7, 'Whither shall I go from thy face? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend,' &c. That exile would be strange that could separate us from God. I speak not of those poor and common comforts, that in all lands and coasts it is his sun that shines, his elements of earth or water that bear us, his air we breathe; but of that special privilege, that his gracious presence is ever with us; that no sea is so broad as to divide us from his favour; that wheresoever we feed, he is our host; wheresoever we rest, the wings of his blessed providence are stretched over us. Let my soul be sure of this, though the whole world be traitors to me.

Doth the world despise us? We have sufficient recompense that God esteems us. How unworthy is that man of God's favour that cannot go away contented with it without the world's! Doth it hate us much? God hates it more. That is not ever worthy which man honours; but that is ever base which God despises. Without question, the world would be our friend if God were our enemy. The sweetness of both cannot be enjoyed; let it content us we have the best.

It may be, poverty puts pale leanness into our cheeks; God makes the world fat, but withal puts leanness into the soul. We decay in these temporal vanities, but we thrive in eternal riches. Job v. 22, 'The good man laughs at destruction and dearth.' Doth sickness throw us on our weary beds? It is impossible any man should miscarry that hath God for his physician. So Martha confessed to Jesus, John xi. 21, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' Thy body is weak, thy soul is strengthened; dust and ashes is sick, but thy eternal substance is the better for it. Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.'

Lastly, Doth the inevitable hand of death strike thee? *Egredere, anima mea, egredere*,—Go forth, my soul, with joy and assurance; thou hast a promise to be received in peace. Happy dissolution, that parts the soul from the body, that it may knit them both to the Lord! Death, like the proud Philistine, comes marching out in his hideous shape, daring the whole host of Israel to match him with an equal combatant. The atheist dares not die, for fear *non esse*, that he shall not be at all: the profane dares not die, for fear *male esse*, to be damned: the doubtful conscience dares not die, because he knows not whether he shall be, or be damned, or not be at all. Only the resolved Christian dares die, because he is assured of his election: he knows he shall be happy, and so lifts up pleasant eyes to heaven, the infallible place of his eternal rest. He dares encounter with this last enemy, trample on him with the foot of disdain, and triumphantly sing over him, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? He conquers in being conquered; and all because God hath said to his soul, 'I am thy salvation.'

The poor Papist must not believe this; such an assurance to him were apocryphal, yea, heretical. He must lie on his deathbed, call upon what

saint or angel he list, but must not dare to believe he shall go to heaven. O uncomfortable doctrine, able to lose the soul! What can follow, but fears without and terrors within, distrustful sighs and heart-breaking groans! Go away he must with death, but whither he knows not. It would be presumption to be confident of heaven. How should purgatory stand, or the Pope's kitchen have a larder to maintain it, if men be sure of their salvation? Herefore they bequeath so great sums for masses, and dirges, and trentals, to be sung or said for them after they are dead, that their souls may at the last be had to heaven, though first for a while they be reezed in purgatory. If this be all the comfort their priests, Jesuits, and confessors can give them, they may well say to them, as Job to his friends, chap. xvi. 2, 'Miserable comforters are ye all.'

But he that hath Stephen's eyes, as also Paul's heart, and the saints' tongue: he that with Stephen's eyes, Acts vii. 55, can see that 'Son of man standing on the right hand of God,' as if his arms were open to welcome and embrace him, must needs, with Paul, Phil. i. 23, 'desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' and, with the saints, cry, 'Come, Lord, how long! Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

II. Thus much for the matter of the assurance, let us now come to the manner: *Dic animæ*, 'Say unto my soul.'

SAY.—But is God a man? Hath he a tongue? How doth David desire him to speak? That God who made the ear, shall not he hear? He that made the eye, shall not he see? He that made the tongue, shall not he speak? He that sees without eyes, and hears without ears, and walks without feet, and works without hands, can speak without a tongue. Now God may be said to speak divers ways.

1. God hath spoken to some by *his own voice*. To Adam: *Vocem audiverunt*, Gen. iii. 8, 'They heard the voice of God,' &c. To Israel: Deut. iv. 15, 'The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.' To Christ: John xii. 28, 'There came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it.' This St Peter testifies: 2 Pet. i. 17, 'There came a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

2. To omit visions, and dreams, and clouds, and cherubims, and angels, Urim and Thummim; God speaks also by *his works*: Ps. xix. 1, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork.' *Manus loquuntur*,—his works have a tongue. *Opera testantur de me*, saith Christ,—'My works bear witness of me.' We may thus understand God *ex operibus*; his actions preach his will.

3. God speaks by *his Son*: Heb. i. 1, 'God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.' He is therefore called the Word, John i. The sacred Scriptures, and sayings of the prophets, given by the inspiration of God, (for 'no prophecy is of private interpretation: it came not by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.) are called *verbum Domini*, the word of the Lord. But to distinguish God the Son from those words, he is, after an eminent sort, called *ὁ λόγος*, the Word, or *that excellent Word*. As also he is called, not a light, but '*that Light*,' John i. 8; not a lamb, but '*that Lamb*,' ver. 29. Not a vocal word formed by the tongue beating the air, for he was before either sound or air, but the mental and substantial word of his Father; but—

‘Ipse paterni
Pectoris effigies, lumenque à lumine vero;’—*

according to that of Paul, Heb. i. 3, ‘The brightness of his glory, and express image of his person.’

4. God speaks by *his Scriptures*: Rom. xv. 4, ‘Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.’ *Scripta sunt*,—they are written. Things that go only by tale or tradition meet with such variations, augmentations, abbreviations, corruptions, false glosses, that, as in a lawyer’s pleading, truth is lost in the *quære* for her. Related things we are long in getting, quick in forgetting; therefore God commanded his law should be written. *Litera scripta manet*.

Thus God doth effectually speak to us. Many good wholesome instructions have dropped from human pens, to lesson and direct man in goodness; but there is no promise given to any word to convert the soul but to God’s word.

Without this, antiquity is novelty, novelty subtlety, subtlety death. *Theologia scholastica multis modis sophistica*,—School divinity is little better than mere sophistry. *Plus argutiarum quam doctrinæ, plus doctrinæ quam usus*,—It hath more quickness than soundness, more sauce than meat, more difficulty than doctrine, more doctrine than use.

This Scripture is the perfect and absolute rule. Bellarmine acknowledgeth two things requirable in a perfect rule—certainty and evidence. If it be not certain, it is not rule; if it be not evident, it is no rule to us. Only the Scripture is, both in truth and evidence, a perfect rule. Other writings may have canonical verity; the Scripture only hath canonical authority. Others, like oil, may make cheerful man’s countenance; but this, like bread, strengthens his heart. This is the absolute rule: ‘And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God,’ Gal. vi. 16.

Oh that we had hearts to bless God for his mercy, that the Scriptures are among us, and that not sealed up under an unknown tongue! The time was when a devout father was glad of a piece of the New Testament in English; when he took his little son into a corner, and with joy of soul heard him read a chapter, so that even children became fathers to their fathers, and begat them to Christ. Now, as if the commonness had abated the worth, our Bibles lie dusty in the windows; it is all if a Sunday-handling quit them from perpetual oblivion. Few can read, fewer do read, fewest of all read as they should. God of his infinite mercy lay not to our charge this neglect!

5. God speaks by *his ministers*, expounding and opening to us those Scriptures. These are *legati à latere*,—dispensers of the mysteries of heaven; ‘ambassadors for Christ, as if God did beseech you through us: so we pray you in Christ’s stead, that you would be reconciled to God,’ 2 Cor. v. 20. This voice is continually sounding in our churches, beating upon our ears; I would it could pierce our consciences, and that our lives would echo to it in an answerable obedience. How great should be our thankfulness!

God hath dealt with us as he did with Elijah: 1 Kings xix. 11, ‘The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; after the wind came an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still voice;’ and the Lord came with that voice. After the same man-

* Pallad.

ner hath God done to this land. In the time of King Henry the Eighth, there came a great and mighty wind, that rent down churches, overthrew altarages, impropriated from ministers their livings, that made laymen substantial parsons, and clergymen their vicar-shadows. It blew away the rights of Levi into the lap of Issachar. A violent wind; but God was not in that wind. In the days of King Edward the Sixth, there came a terrible earthquake, hideous vapours of treasons and conspiracies, rumbling from Rome, to shake the foundations of that church, which had now left off loving the whore, and turned Antichrist quite out of his saddle. Excommunications of prince and people; execrations and curses in their tetrical forms with bell, book, and candle; indulgences, bulls, pardons, promises of heaven to all traitors that would extirpate such a king and kingdom. A monstrous earthquake; but God was not in the earthquake. In the days of Queen Mary came the fire, an unmerciful fire, such a one as was never before kindled in England, and, we trust in Jesus Christ, never shall be again. It raged against all that professed the gospel of Christ; made bonfires of silly women for not understanding that their ineffable mystery of transubstantiation; burnt the mother with the child. Bonner and Gardiner were those hellish bellows that set it on flaming. A raging and insatiable fire; but God was not in that fire. In the days of Queen Elizabeth, of blessed memory, came the still voice, saluting us with the songs of Sion, and speaking the comfortable things of Jesus Christ. And God came with this voice. This sweet and blessed voice is still continued by our gracious sovereign. God long preserve him with it, and it with him, and us all with them both!

Let us not say of this blessing, as Lot of Zoar, 'Is it not a little one?' nor be weary of manna with Israel, lest God's voice grow dumb unto us, and, to our woe, we hear it speak no more. No, rather let our hearts answer with Samuel, 2 Sam. iii. 10, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear.' If we will not hear him say to our souls, 'I am your salvation,' we shall hear him say, 'Depart from me, I know you not.' So saith Wisdom, Prov. i. 24-26, 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I will therefore laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.' The gallant promiseth himself many years, and in them all to rejoice. He thinks of preachers, as the devil said to Christ, that we come to 'torment him before his time.' Well, then, 'Rejoice,' saith God, Eccles. xi. 9; 'let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth.' But *ironice*, he mocks when he says so. Now, *quod Deus loquitur ridens, tu lege lacrymans*,—what God speaks laughing, do thou read lamenting. If God once laughs, it is high time for us to weep. They will not hear God when he preacheth in their health; God will not hear them when they pray in their sickness. They would not hearken to him in the pulpit, nor he to them on their deathbed.

6. God speaks by *his Spirit*: this 'Spirit beareth witness with our spirit,' &c. Perhaps this is that 'voice behind us,' Isa. xxx. 21, as it were whispering to our thoughts, 'This is the way, walk in it.' This is that speaking Spirit: 'It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you,' Matt. x. 20. It is this Spirit that speaks for us, and speaks to us, and speaks in us. It is the church's prayer, Cant. i. 2, 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.' *Sanctus Spiritus osculum Patris*,—The Holy Ghost is the kiss of God the Father. Whom God kisseth, he loveth.

Now by all these ways doth God speak peace to our consciences, and say to our souls that he is our salvation:—

1. He may speak with his own voice: and thus he gave assurance to Abraham, Gen. xv. 1, 'Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great

reward.' If God speak comfort, let hell roar horror. 2. He may speak by his works : actual mercies to us demonstrate that we are in his favour, and shall not be condemned. Ps. xli. 11, 'By this I know thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.' 3. He may speak by his Son : Matt. xi. 28, 'Come to me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will ease you.' 4. He may speak by his Scripture : this is God's epistle to us, and his letters patent, wherein are granted to us all the privileges of salvation. A universal *siquis* : 'Whosoever believes, and is baptized, shall be saved.' 5. He may speak by his ministers, to whom he hath given 'the ministry of reconciliation,' 2 Cor. v. 19. 6. He doth speak this by his Spirit : he 'sendeth forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father,' Gal. iv. 6. By all these voices God says to his elect, 'I am your salvation.'

To MY SOUL.—Many hear God speaking comfort to the corporal ear, that hear him not speaking this to the soul. They hear him, but they feel him not. The best assurance is from feeling, 'Come near, let me feel thee, my son,' said Isaac to Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 21. Let me feel thee, my Father, say we to God. The thronging Jews heard Christ, but Zaccheus, that believing publican, felt Christ. 'This day is salvation come to thy house,' Luke xix. 9.

MY SOUL.—There is no vexation to the vexation of the soul ; so no consolation to the consolation of the soul. David in this psalm, ver. 17, calls it his 'darling.' 'Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.' The same prophet complained of a great unrest, when 'his soul was disquieted within him,' Ps. xlii. 11. Jonah, of a grievous sickness, when his soul fainted, chap. ii. 7. Joseph had a cruel bondage, when the iron entered his soul, Ps. cv. 18. So, no comfort to the comfort of the soul. 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts have refreshed my soul,' Ps. xciv. 19. The wicked hear tell of God's mercies,—*communiter audimus verbum salutis*,—but God speaks not to their souls. Therefore they cannot say with Mary, 'My soul rejoiceth.' This joy, when God speaks peace to the soul, is *ineffabile gaudium*,—a jubilation of the heart, which a man can neither *recitare* nor *reticere*, neither suppress nor express. It gives end to all jars, doubts, and differences ; overcomes the world, nonsuits the devil, and makes a man keep Hilary-term all his life.

To MY SOUL.—*Mine*. I might here examine whose this *meæ* is. Who is the owner of this *my* ? A prophet, a king, a man after God's own heart ; that confessed himself the beloved of God ; that knew the Lord would never forsake him ; holy, happy David owns this *meæ* : he knows the Lord loves him, yet desires to know it more ; *Dic anima meæ*,—Say to *my* soul.

But let this teach us to make much of this *my*. Luther says there is great divinity in pronouns. The assurance that God will save some is a faith incident to devils. The very reprobates may believe that there is a book of election ; but God never told them that their names were written there. The hungry beggar at the feast-house gate smells good cheer, but the master doth not say, This is provided for thee. It is small comfort to the harbourless wretch to pass through a goodly city, and see many glorious buildings, when he cannot say, *Hæc mea domus*,—I have a place here. The beauty of that excellent city Jerusalem, built with sapphires, emeralds, chrysolites, and such precious stones, the foundation and walls whereof are perfect gold, Rev. xxi, affords a soul no comfort, unless he can say, *Mea civitas*,—I have a mansion in it. The all-sufficient merits of Christ do thee no good, unless *tua pars et portio*, he be thy Saviour. Happy soul that can

say with the Psalmist, 'O Lord, thou art my portion!' Let us all have oil in our lamps, lest if we be then to buy, beg, or borrow, we be shut out of doors, like the fools, not worthy of entrance. Pray, 'Lord, say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.'

I AM THY SALVATION.—The petition is ended. I will but look into the benediction, wherein I should consider these four circumstances: *Quis, Quid, Cui, Quando*.—Who, What, To whom, When.

WHO?—*The Lord*. To the Lord David prays. He hath made a good choice, for there is salvation in none other. Hos. xiii. 9, 'Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.' The world fails, the flesh fails, the devil kills, only the Lord saves.

WHAT?—*Salvation*. A special good thing; every man's desire. Who would not be saved? Every man would go to heaven, though perhaps he runs a course directly to hell. *Beatus vult homo esse, etiam non sic vivendo ut possit esse*.—Man would be blessed, though he takes the course to be cursed. I will give thee a lordship, saith God to Esau. I will give thee a kingdom, saith God to Saul. I will give thee an apostleship, saith God to Judas. But, I will be thy salvation, he says to David, and to none but saints.

Indeed this voice comes from heaven, comes unto earth; but only through the Mediator betwixt heaven and earth, Jesus Christ. He is the alone Saviour. Worldlings possess many things, but have right to nothing, because not right to him that is 'the heir of all things,' Christ, Heb. i. 2. The soul is the perfection of the body, reason of the soul, religion of reason, faith of religion, Christ of faith. A man can warrant us on earth that our land is ours, our garment ours, our money, servant, beast ours, and that he is a thief who robs us of these. But all the men in the world cannot warrant us our salvation, but only Jesus Christ. Therefore that we may have assurance that all these are ours, and that we shall never answer for every bit of bread we have eaten, and for every drop of wine we have drunk; that our possessions are our own, our gold, robes, rents, revenues, are our own; let us be Christ's. 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' Be sure of salvation, and be sure of all. For 'he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Rom. viii. 32.

TO WHOM?—*My salvation*. Not others' only, but *mine*. A man and a Christian are two creatures. He may be a man that hath reason and outward blessings; he is only a Christian that hath faith, and part in the salvation of Christ. God is plentiful salvation, but it is not ordinary to find a *cui*,—to whom. Much of heaven is lost for lack of a hand to apprehend it. All passengers in this world presume they are going to heaven, but we may guess by the throng that the greater part take the broader way. Christ leaving the earth in respect of his bodily presence, left there his gospel to apply to men's souls the virtue of his death and passion. Ministers preach this gospel, people hear this gospel, all boast of this gospel; yet himself foretells that when he comes again he shall scarce 'find faith upon the earth.' No doubt he shall find Christians enough, but scarce faith. Salvation is common, as St Jude speaketh, ver. 3, 'When I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation;' but few make it proper to themselves. That God is *my* salvation and *thy* salvation, this is the comfort.

WHEN?—In the time present, *I am*. *Sum; non sufficit, quod ero*. It is comfort to Israel in captivity that God says, *Ero tua redemptio*.—I will redeem thee; but the assurance that quiets the conscience is this, 'I am thy

salvation.' As God said to Abraham, 'Fear not, I am with thee.' Deferred hope faints the heart. Whatsoever God forbears to assure us, oh, pray we him not to delay this: 'Lord, say to our souls, I *am* your salvation.'

To conclude: it is salvation our prophet desires; that God would seal him up for his child, then certify him of it. He requests not riches; he knew that man may be better fed than taught, that wealth doth but frank men up to death. He that prefers riches before his soul, doth but sell the horse to buy the saddle, or kill a good horse to catch a hare. He begs not honour: many have leapt from the high throne to the low pit. The greatest commander on earth hath not a foot of ground in heaven, except he can get it by entitling himself to Christ. He desires not pleasures; he knows there are as great miseries beyond prosperity as on this side it. And that all vanity is but the indulgence of the present time; a minute begins, continues, ends it: for it endures but the acting, and leaves no solace in the memory. In the fairest garden of delights there is somewhat *quod in ipsis floribus angat*, that stings in the midst of all vain contents.

In a word, it is not momentary, variable, apt to either change or chance, that he desires; but eternal salvation. He seeks, like Mary, 'that better part which shall never be taken from him.' The wise man's mind is ever above the moon, saith Seneca: let the world make never so great a noise, as if it all ran upon coaches, and all those full of roars, yet all peace is there. It is not sublunary, under the wheel of changeable mortality, that he wishes, but salvation. To be saved is simply the best plot: beat your brains, and break your sleeps, and waste your marrows, to be wealthy, to be worthy—for riches, for honours; plot, study, contrive, be as politic as you can; and then kiss the child of your own brains, hug your inventions, applaud your wits, doat upon your advancements or advantagements; yet all these are but dreams. When you awake, you shall confess that to make sure your salvation was the best plot; and no study shall yield you comfort but what hath been spent about it. What should we then do but work and pray? 'Work,' saith Paul, Phil. ii. 12,—'Work up your salvation with fear and trembling;' and then pray with our prophet, 'Lord, say to our souls, thou art our salvation,' with comfort and rejoicing.