

Lecture VI.

What The Scriptures Principally Teach: The Ruin And Recovery Of Man. Faith And Love Towards Christ.

2 Tim. i. 13.—“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”

Here is the sum of religion. Here you have a compend of the doctrine of the Scriptures. All divine truths may be reduced to these two heads,—faith and love; what we ought to believe, and what we ought to do. This is all the Scriptures teach, and this is all we have to learn. What have we to know, but what God hath revealed of himself to us? And what have we to do, but what he commands us? In a word, what have we to learn in this world, but to believe in Christ, and love him, and so live to him? This is the duty of man, and this is the dignity of man, and the way to eternal life. Therefore the Scriptures, that are given to be “a lamp to our feet, and a guide to our paths,” contain a perfect and exact rule,—*credendorum et faciendorum*,—of faith and manners,—of doctrine and practice. We have in the scriptures many truths revealed to us of God, and of the works of his hands,—many precious truths, but that which most of all concerns us, is to know God and ourselves. This is the special excellency of the reasonable creature, that it is made capable to know its Creator, and to reflect upon its own being. Now, we have to know ourselves, what we are now, and what man once was, and accordingly to know of God, what he once revealed of himself, and what he doth now reveal. I say, the Scriptures

hold out to our consideration a twofold estate of mankind, and according to these, a twofold revelation of the mystery of God. We look on man now, and we find him another thing than he was once, but we do not find God one thing at one time, and another thing at another time, for there is no “shadow of change” in him, and “he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Therefore we ask not, what he was, and what he is now; but how he manifests himself differently, according to the different estates of man. As we find in the Scriptures, man once righteous and blessed, Eccles. vii. 29, and God making him such according to his own image, “in righteousness and true holiness,” Col. iii. 10, Eph. iv. 24; we find him in communion and friendship with God, set next to the divine majesty, and above the works of his hand, and all things “under his feet.” How holy was he “and how happy.” And happy he could not choose but be, since he was holy, being conformed and like unto God in his will and affection,—choosing that same delight, that same pleasure with God, in his understanding,—knowing God and his will, and likewise, his own happiness. In such a conformity he could not but have much communion with him, that had such conformity to him—union being the foundation of communion—and great peace and solid tranquillity in him.

Now, in this state of mankind God expresses his goodness and wisdom and power, his holiness and righteousness. These are the attributes that shine most brightly. In the very morning of the creation, God revealed himself to man as a holy and just God, whose eyes could behold no iniquity; and therefore he made him upright, and made a covenant of life and peace with him, to give him immortal and eternal life,—to continue him in his happy estate, if so be he continued in well doing, Rom. x. 5, “do this and live.” In which covenant, indeed, there were some outbreaking of the glorious grace and free condescendency of God, for it was no less free grace and undeserved favour to promise life to his obedience, than now to promise life to our

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faith. So that if the Lord had continued that covenant with us, we ought to have called it grace, and would have been saved by grace as well as now, though it be true, that there is some more occasion given to man's nature to boast and glory in that way, yet not at all "before God," Rom. iv. 2.

But we have scarcely found man in such an estate, till we have found him sinful and miserable and fallen from his excellency. That son sinned in the dawning of the creation, but before ye can well know what it is, it is eclipsed and darkened with sin and misery as if the Lord had only set up such a creature in the firmament of glory, to let him know how blessed he could make him, and wherein his blessedness consists, and then presently to throw him down from his excellency. When you find him mounting up to the heavens, and spreading himself thus in holiness and happiness, like a bay-tree, behold again, and you find him not, though you seek him, you shall not find him, his place doth not know him. He is like one that comes out with a great majesty upon a stage, and personates some monarch, or emperor, in the world, and then ere you can well gather your thoughts, to know what he is, he is turned off the stage, and appears in some base and despicable appearance. So quickly is man stript of all those glorious ornaments of holiness, and puts on the vile rags of sin and wretchedness, and is cast from the throne of eminency above the creatures, and from fellowship with God, to be a slave and servant to the dust of his feet, and to have communion with the devil and his angels. And now, ye have man holden out in Scripture as the only wretched piece of the creation, as the very plague of the world the whole creation groaning under him, (Rom. viii.) and in pain to be delivered of such a burden, of such an execration and curse and astonishment. You find the testimony of the word condemns him altogether, concludes him under sin, and then under a curse, and makes all flesh guilty in God's sight. The word speaks otherwise of us than we think of ourselves! "Their imagination is only evil continually," Gen. vi.

5. O then, what must our affections be, that are certainly more corrupt! What then must our way be! All flesh hath corrupted their way, and done abominable works, and “none doeth good,” Psal. xiv. 1, 2, 3. But many flee in unto their good hearts as their last refuge, when they are beaten from these outworks of their actions and ways. But the Scripture shall storm that also. “The heart is deceitful above all things,” who can know it? it is “desperately wicked,” Jer. xvii. 9. In a word, man is become the most lamentable spectacle in the world, a compend of all wickedness and misery enclosed within the walls of inability and impossibility to help himself, shut up within a prison of despair, a linking, loathsome, and irksome dungeon. It is like the miry pit that Jeremiah was cast into, that there was no out-coming, and no pleasant abode in it.

Now, man's state being thus,—nay, having made himself thus, and “sought out” to himself such sad “inventions,” Eccl. vii. 29,—and having “destroyed” himself, Hos. xiii. 9, What think ye? Should any pity him? If he had fallen into such a pit of misery ignorantly and unwittingly, he had been an object of compassion, but having cast himself headlong into it, who should have pity on him? Or, who should “go aside to ask” how he did, or bemoan him? Jer. xv. 5. But behold the Lord pities man as a father doth his children, Psal. ciii. “His compassions fail not,” he comes by such a loathsome and contemptible object, and casts his skirts over it, and saith, “Live!” (Ezek. xvi.) and maketh it a time of love. I say, no flesh could have expected any more of God than to make man happy and holy, and to promise him life in well-doing, but to repair that happiness after it was wilfully lost, and to give life to evil-doers and sinners,—O how far was it from Adam's expectation when he fled from God! Here then is the wonder, that when men and angels were in expectation of the revelation of his wrath from heaven against their wickedness, and the execution of the curse man was concluded under, that even then God is pursuing man, and pursues him with love, and

opens up to him his very heart and bowels of love in Jesus Christ! Behold then the second revelation and manifestation of God, in a way of grace, pure grace—of mercy and pity towards lost sinners “The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man [hath] appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his abundant mercy showed in Christ Jesus,” Tit. iii. 4-6. So then, we have this purpose of God's love unfolded to us in the Scriptures, and this is the substance of them—both Old and New Testament—or the end of them, “Christ is the end of the law” (Rom. x. 4) to all sinners concluded under sin and a curse. By it, our Lord Jesus, the good Ebedmelech, comes and casts down a cord to us, and draws us up out of the pit of sin and misery. He comes to this prison, and opens the door to let captives free. So then we have God holden out to us as a redeemer, as a repairer of our breaches,—“God in Christ reconciling the world,”—“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help,” Hos. xiii. 9. He finds to himself “a ransom to satisfy his justice,” Job xxxiii. 24. He finds a propitiation to take away sin,—a sacrifice to pacify and appease his wrath. He finds one of our brethren, but yet his own Son in whom he is well pleased, and then holds out all this to sinners that they may be satisfied in their own consciences, as he is in his own mind. God hath satisfied himself in Christ, you have not that to do. He is not now to be reconciled to us, for he was never really at odds, though he covered his countenance with frowns and threats, since the Fall, and hath appeared in fire and thunders and whirlwinds which are terrible, yet his heart had always love in it to such persons; and therefore he is come near in Christ, and about reconciling us to himself. Here is the business then, to have our souls reconciled to him, to take away the enmity within us, and as he is satisfied with his Son, so to satisfy ourselves with him, and be as well-pleased in his redemption and purchase as the Father is, and then you believe indeed in him. Now if this were accomplished, what have we more to do but to love him and to live to him? When you

have found in the Scripture, and believed with the heart, what man once was, and what he now is, what God once appeared, and what he now manifests himself in the gospel, ye have no more to do but to search in the same Scriptures what ye henceforth ought to be. Ye who find your estate recovered in Christ, ask, “What manner of persons ought we to be?” And the Scripture shall also give you that “form of sound words,” which may not only teach you to believe in him, but to love him and obey his commands. The law that before condemned you is now by Christ put in your hands to guide you and conduct you in the way, and teacheth you how to live henceforth to his glory. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, reaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,” Tit. ii. 12. Here is the sum of the rule of your practice and conversation, piety towards God, equity towards men, and sobriety towards ourselves; self-denial, and world denial, and lust-denial, to give up with the world and our own lusts,—henceforth to have no more to do with them,—to resign them, not for a time, not in part, but wholly and for ever in affection, and by parts in practice and endeavour; and then to resign and give up ourselves to him, to live to him, and to live in him.

Thus we have given you a sum of the doctrine of the Scriptures, of that which is to be believed, and that which is to be done as our duty. Now we shall speak a word of these two cardinal graces which are the compend of all graces,—as the objects of them are the abridgment of the Scriptures,—faith and love. These “sound words” can profit us nothing, unless we hold them fast with faith and love.

Faith is like the fountain-gate. Streams come out of it that cleanse the conscience from the guilt of sin, and purify the heart from the filth of sin, because it is that which cometh to the “fountain opened up in the house of David,” and draweth water out of these “wells of salvation.” If you consider the fall and ruin

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of mankind, you will find infidelity and unbelief the fountain of it as well as the seal of it. Unbelief of the law of God,—of his promises and threatenings. This was first called in question, and when once called in question, it is half denied. Hath God said so, that you shall die?—It is not far off.—“Ye shall not surely die.” Here then was the very beginning of man's ruin. He did not retain in his knowledge, and believe with his heart, the truth and faithfulness and holiness of God, which unbelief was conjoined and intermingled with much pride—“ye shall be as gods.” He began to live out of God, in himself, not remembering that his life was a stream of that divine fountain, that being cut off from it, would dry up. Now therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ—an expert Saviour, and very learned and complete for this work,—he brings man out of this pit of misery by that same way he fell into it. He fell down by unbelief, and he brings him up out of it by faith. This is the cord that is cast down to the poor soul in the dungeon, or rather his faith is the dead grip of the cord of divine promises which is sent unto the captive-prisoner, and by virtue thereof he is drawn out into the light of salvation. Unbelief of the law of God did first destroy man, now the belief of the gospel saves him. The not believing of the Lord's threatenings was the beginning of his ruin, and believing of his precious promises is salvation. I say no more, as our destruction began at the unbelief of the law, so our salvation must begin at the belief of it. The law and divine justice went out of his sight and so he sinned now the law entering into the conscience, discovers a man's sins, and makes sin abound, and that is the beginning of our remedy, to know our disease. But as long as this is hid from a man's eyes, he is shut up in unbelief, he is sealed and confirmed in his miserable estate, and so kept from Jesus Christ the remedy. Thus unbelief first and last destroys. Faith might have preserved Adam and faith again may restore thee who hast fallen in Adam.

There is a great mistake of faith among us, some taking it for a strong and blind confidence that admits of no questions or doubts

in the soul, and so vainly persuading themselves that they have it, and some again conceiving it to be such an assurance of salvation as instantly comforts the soul and looseth all objections, and so foolishly vexing their own souls, and disquieting themselves in vain, for the want of that which, if they understood what it is, they would find they have. I say, many souls conceive that to be the best faith that never doubted, and hath always lodged in them and kept them in peace since they were born. But, seeing all men were once “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world,” and so without Christ also, it is certain that those souls who have always blessed themselves in their own hearts, and cried “Peace, peace,” and were never afraid of the wrath to come, have embraced an imagination and dream of their own heart for true faith. It is not big and stout words that will prove it. Men may defy the devil and all his works, and speak very confidently, and yet, God knows, they are captives by him at his pleasure, and not far from that misery which they think they have escaped. Satan works in them with such a crafty conveyance that they cannot perceive it. And how should they perceive it? For we are “by nature dead in sins,” and so cannot feel or know that we are such. It is a token of life to feel pain, a certain token, for dead things are senseless. You know how jugglers may deceive your very senses, and make them believe they see that which is not, and feel that which they feel not. Oh! how much more easy is it for Satan—such an ingenious and experimented spirit—assisted with the help of our deceitful hearts, to cast such a mist over the eyes of hearts, and make them believe any thing! How easily may he hide our misery from us, and make us believe it is well with us! And thus multitudes of souls perish in the very opinion of salvation. That very thing which they call faith,—that strong ungrounded persuasion,—is no other thing than the unbelief of the heart, unbelief, I mean, of the holy law, of divine justice, and the wrath to come, for if these once entered into the soul's

consideration, they would certainly cast down that stronghold of vain confidence that Satan keeps all the house in peace by. Now this secure and presumptuous despising of all threatenings and all convictions, is varnished over to the poor soul with the colour and appearance of faith in the gospel. They think, to believe in Christ is nothing else but never to be afraid of hell, whereas it is nothing else but a soul fleeing into Christ for fear of hell, and fleeing from the wrath to come to the city of refuge.

Now again, there are some other souls quite contrary minded, that run upon another extremity. They once question whether they have faith, and always question it. You shall find them always out of one doubt into another, and still returning upon these debates, Whether am I in Christ, or not? And often peremptorily concluding that they are not in him, and that they believe not in him. I must confess, that a soul must once question the matter, or they shall never be certain. Nay, a soul must once conclude that it is void of God, and without Christ; but having discovered that, I see no more use and fruit of your frequent debates and janglings about interest. I would say then unto such souls, that if you now question it, it is indeed the very time to put it out of question. And how? Not by framing or seeking answers to your objections,—not by searching into thyself to find some thing to prove it,—not by mere disputing about it, for when shall these have an end? But simply and plainly by setting about that which is questioned. Are you in doubt if you be believers? How shall it be resolved then but by believing indeed? It is now the very time that thou art called to make application of thy soul to Christ, if thou thinkest thou cannot make application of Christ to thy soul. If thou cannot know if he be thine, then how shalt thou know it but by choosing him for thine and embracing him in thy soul? Now I say, if that time which is spent about such unprofitable debates, were spent in solid and serious endeavours about the thing in debate, it would quickly be out of debate. If you were more in the obedience to those commands, than in the

dispute whether you have obeyed or not, you would sooner come to satisfaction in it. This I say the rather, because the weightier and principal parts of the gospel are those direct acts of faith and love to Jesus Christ, both these are the outgoings of the soul to him. Now again examination of our faith and assurance are but secondary and consequent reflections upon ourselves, and are the soul returning in again to itself, to find what is within. Therefore, I say, a Christian is principally called to the first, and always called. It is the chief duty of man, which, for no evidence, no doubting, no questioning, should be left undone. If ye be in any hesitation whether you are believers or not, I am sure the chiefest thing, and most concerning, is, rather to believe than to know it. It is a Christian's being to believe, it is indeed his comfort and well being to know it, but if you do not know it, then by all means so much the more set about it presently. Let the soul consider Christ and the precious promises, and lay its weight upon him; this you ought to do, and not to leave the other undone.

Secondly, I say to such souls, that it is the mistake of the very nature of faith that leads them to such perplexities, and causeth such invidence. It is not so much the invidence of marks and fruits that makes them doubt, as the misapprehension of the thing itself, for as long as they mistake it in its own nature, no sign, no mark, can satisfy in it. You take faith to be a persuasion of God's love that calms and quiets the mind. Now, such a persuasion needs no signs to know it by, it is manifest by its own presence, as light by its own brightness. It were a foolish question to ask any, how they knew that they were persuaded of another's affection? The very persuasion maketh itself more certain to the soul than any token. So then, while you question whether you have faith or not, and in the mean time take faith to be nothing else but such a persuasion, it is in vain to bring any marks or signs to convince you that you have faith, for if such a persuasion and assurance were in you, it would be more powerful to assure your hearts of itself than any thing else, and while you are doubting of it, it is

more manifest that you have it not, than any signs or marks can be able to make it appear that you have it. If any would labour to convince a blind man that he saw the light, and gave him signs and tokens of the lights shining, the blind man could not believe him, for it is more certain to himself that he sees not, than any evidence can make the contrary probable. You are still wishing and seeking such a faith as puts all out of question. Now, when ministers bring any marks to prove you have true faith, it cannot satisfy or settle you, because your very questioning proves that ye have not that which ye question. If you had such a persuasion, you would not question it. So then, as long as you are in that mistake concerning the true nature of faith, all the signs of the word cannot settle you. But I say, if once you understood the true nature of faith, it would be more clear in itself unto you, than readily marks and signs could make it especially in the time of temptation. If you would know, then, what it is indeed, consider what the word of God holds out concerning himself, or us, and the solid belief of that in the heart hath something of the nature of saving faith in it. The Lord gives a testimony concerning man, that he is “born in sin,” that he is “dead in sin,” and all his “imaginations are only evil continually.” Now, I say, to receive this truth into the soul, upon God’s testimony, is a point of faith. The Lord in his word “concludes all under sin” and wrath, so, then, for a soul to conclude itself also under sin and wrath is a point of faith. Faith is the soul’s testimony to God’s truth, the word is God’s testimony. Now then, if a soul receive this testimony within, whether it be law or gospel, it is an act of faith. If a soul condemn itself, and judge itself, that is a setting to our seal that God is true who speaks in his law, and so it is a believing in God. I say more to believe with the heart that we cannot believe, is a great point of sound belief, because it is a sealing of that word of God,—“The heart is desperately wicked,” and “of ourselves we can do nothing.” Now, I am persuaded, if such souls knew this, they would put an end to their many contentions and wranglings

about this point, and would rather bless God that hath opened their eyes to see themselves, than contend with him for that they have no faith. It is light only that discovers darkness, and faith only that discerns unbelief. It is life and health only that feel pain and sickness, for if all were alike, nothing could be found,¹³⁶ as in dead bodies. Now, I say to such souls as believe in God the Lawgiver, believe also in Christ the Redeemer. And what is that? It is not to know that I have an interest in him. No, that must come after, it is the Spirit's sealing after believing which puts itself out of question when it comes. And so if you had it you needed not many signs to know it by, at least you would not doubt of it, more than he that sees the light can question it. But, I say, to believe in Christ is simply this: I,—whatsoever I be,—ungodly, wretched, polluted, desperate, am willing to have Jesus Christ for my Saviour, I have no other help, or hope, if it be not in him. It is, I say, to lean the weight of thy soul on this foundation stone laid in Zion, to embrace the promises of the gospel, albeit general, as “worthy of all acceptation,” and wait upon the performance of them. It is no other thing but to make Christ welcome, to say, “‘Even so, Lord Jesus,’ I am content in my soul that thou be my Saviour, to be found in thee, ‘not having my own righteousness.’” I am well pleased to cast away my own as dung, and find myself no other than an ungodly man. Now it is certain that many souls that are still questioning whether they have faith, yet do find this in their souls, but because they know not that it is faith which they find, they go about to seek that which is not faith, and where it is not to be found, and so disquiet themselves in vain, and hinder fruitfulness.

Now, the faith of a Christian is no fancy, it is not a light vain imagination of the brain, but it dwells in the heart,—“with the heart man believes,” and it dwells with love. Faith and love, we need not be curious to distinguish them. It is certain that

¹³⁶ [That is *felt*.—*Ed.*]

love is in it, and from it. It is in the very bosom of it, because faith is a soul embracing of Christ, it is a choosing of him for its portion and then upon the review of this goodly portion, and from consideration of what he is, and hath done for us, the soul loves him still more, and is impatient of so much distance from him. We find them conjoined in Scripture, but they are one in the heart. O that we studied to have these jointly engraven on the heart! As they are joined in the word, so our heart should be a “living epistle.” Faith and love are two words but one thing under different notions. They are the outgoings of the soul to Christ for life,—the breathings of the soul after him, for more of him, when it hath once tasted how good he is. Faith is not a speculation, or a wandering thought of truth, it is the truth, not captivated into the mind, but dwelling in the heart, and getting possession of the whole man. You know a man and his will are one, not so a man and his mind, for he may conceive the truth of many things he loves not, but whatever a man loves, that and he in a manner become one with another. Love is unitive, it is the most excellent union of distant things. The will commands the whole man, and hath the office of applying of all the faculties to their proper works *Illa imperat, aliæ exsequuntur*. Therefore when once divine truth gets entry into the heart of a man, and becomes one with his will and affection, it will quickly command the whole man to practise and execute, and then he that received “the truth in love” is found a walker in the truth. Many persons captivate truth in their understandings, as the Gentiles did, they hold or detain it in unrighteousness, but because it hath no liberty to descend into the heart, and possess that garrison, it cannot command the man. But oh! it is better to be truth's captive than to captivate truth, saith the apostle, “Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you,” Rom. vi. 17. O a blessed captivity! to be delivered over to truth,—that is indeed freedom, for truth makes free, John viii. 32. And it makes free where it is in freedom. Give it freedom to command

thee, and it shall indeed deliver thee from all strange lords; and thou shalt obey it from the heart when it is indeed in the heart. When the truths of God,—whether promises, or threatenings or commands,—are impressed into the heart, you shall find the expressions of them in the conversion. Faith is not an empty assent to the truth, but a receiving of it “in love,” and when the truth is received in love, then it begins to work by love. “Faith worketh by love,” saith Paul, Gal. v. 6. That now is the proper nature of its operation which expresses its own nature. Obedience proceeding from love to God flows from faith in God, and that shows the true and living nature of that faith. If the soul within receive the seal and impression of the truth of God, it will render the image of that same truth in all its actions.

Love is put for all obedience. It is made the very sum and compend of the law, the fulfilling of it; for the truth is the most effectual and constraining principle of obedience, and withal the most sweet and pleasant. The love of Christ constrains us to live to him, and not henceforth to ourselves, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. As I said, a man and his will is one; if you engage it, you bind all, if you gain it, it will bring all with it. As it is the most ready way to gain any party, to engage their head whom they follow and upon whom they depend, let a man's love be once gained to Christ, and the whole train of the soul's faculties of the outward senses and operations, will follow upon it. It was an excellent and pertinent question that Christ asked Peter, when he was going away, (if Peter had considered Christ's purpose in it, he would not have been so hasty and displeased) “Peter, ‘lovest thou me?’ then ‘feed my sheep.’” If a man love Christ, he will certainly study to please him, and though he should do never so much in obedience, it is no pleasure except it be done out of love. O this, and more of this in the heart, would make ministers feed well, and teach well, and would make people obey well! “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Love devotes and consecrates all that is in a man to the pleasure of him whom he loves, therefore

it fashions and conforms one—even against nature—to another's humour and affection. It constrains not to live to ourselves, but to him,—its joy and delight is in him, and therefore all is given up and resigned to him. Now as it is certain, that if you love him you will do much, so it is certain that little is accepted for much that proceeds from love, and therefore, our poor maimed and halting obedience is called “the fulfilling of the law.” He is well pleased with it, because love is well pleased with it. Love thinks nothing too much—all too little, and therefore his love thinks any thing from us much, since he would give more. He accepts that which is given, the lover's mite cast into the treasury, is more than ten times so much outward obedience from another man. He meets love with love. If the soul's desire be towards the love of his name, if love offer, though a farthing, his love receiving it counts it a crown. Love offering a present of duty, finds many imperfections in it, and covers any good that is in it, seems not to regard it, and then beholds it as a recompense. His love, receiving the present from us, covers a multitude of infirmities that are in it. And thus, what in the desire and endeavour of love on our part, and what in the acceptance of what is done on his part, “love is the fulfilling of the law.” It is an usual proverb. All things are as they are taken; “Love is the fulfilling of the law,” because our loving Father takes it so, he takes as much delight in the poor children's willingness, as in the more aged's strength, the offer and endeavour of the one pleaseth him, as well as the performance of the other.

The love of God is the fulfilling of the law, for it is a living law, it is the law written on the heart, it is the law of a spirit of life within. *Quis legem det amantibus? Major lex amor sibi ipsi est.* You almost need not prescribe any rules, or set over the head of love the authority and pain of a command, for it is a greater law to itself. It hath within its own bosom as deep an engagement and obligation to any thing that may please God as you can put upon it, for it is in itself the very engagement and bond of the soul to

him. This is it, indeed, which will do him service, and that is the service which he likes. It is that only serves him constantly and pleasantly and constantly; it cannot serve him which doth it not pleasantly, for it is delight only that makes it constant. Violent motions may be swift, but not durable; they last not long. Fear and terror is a kind of external impulse that may drive a soul swiftly to some duty, but because that is not one with a soul, it cannot endure long, it is not good company to the soul. But love, making a duty pleasant, becomes one with the soul. It incorporates with it and becomes like its nature to it, that though it should not move so swiftly, yet moves more constantly. And what is love but the very motion of the soul to God? And so till it have attained that, to be in him, it can find no place of rest. Now this is only the service that he is pleased with, which comes from love, because he sees his own image in it; for love in us is nothing else but the impression and stamp that God's love to us makes on the heart. It is that very reflection of that sweet warm beam. So then when his love reflects back unto himself carrying our heart and duty with it, he knoweth his own superscription, he loves his own image in such a duty. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23. Here now is an evidence that he likes it, for he must needs like that place he chooses to dwell in. He who hath such a glorious mansion and palace above must needs love that soul dearly, that he will prefer it to his high and holy place.

Now I know it will be the secret question and complaint of some souls, how shall I get love to God? I cannot love him, my heart is so desperately wicked, I cannot say as Peter, "Lord thou knowest that I love thee." I shall not insist upon the discovery of your love unto him by marks and signs; only I say, if thou indeed from thy heart desirest to love him, and art grieved that there is not this love in thy soul to him which becomes so love-worthy a Saviour, then thou indeed lovest him, for he that loveth the love

of God, loveth God himself. And wherefore art thou sad for the want of that love, but because thou lovest him in some measure, and withal findest him beyond all that thou canst think and love? But I say, that which most concerns thee is to love still more, and that thou wouldest be still more earnest to love him than to know that thou lovest him.

Now I know no more effectual way to increase love to Jesus Christ, than to believe his love. Christ Jesus is “the author and finisher both of faith and love;” and “we love him because he first loved us.” Therefore the right discovery of Jesus Christ, what he is, and what he hath done for sinners, is that which will of all things most prevail to engage the soul unto him. But as long as ye suspend your faith upon the being or increase of your love and obedience—as the manner of too many is—you take even such a course as he that will not plant the tree till he see the fruits of it, which is contrary to common sense and reason.

Since this then, is the sum of true religion, to believe in Christ and to love him, and so live to him,—we shall wind up all that is spoken into that exhortation of the apostle's: “Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard.” You have this doctrine of faith and love delivered unto you which may be able to save your souls. Then I beseech you, hold them fast, salvation is in them. They are “sound words and wholesome words,” words of life, spirit and life, (as Christ speaks,) as well as words of truth. But how will you hold them fast that have them not at all—that know them not though you hear them? You who are ignorant of the gospel and hear nothing but a sound of words, instead of sound and wholesome words, how can you hold them fast? Can a man hold the wind in the hollow of his hand, or keep a sound within it? You know no more but a sound and a wind that passeth by your ear, without observing either truth or life in it. But then again, you who understand these sound words, and have “a form of knowledge, and of the letter of the law,” what will that avail you? You cannot hold it fast, except you have it within you, and

it is within you indeed when it is in your heart,—when the form of it is engraven upon the very soul in love. Now, though you understand the sound of these words, and the sound of truth in them, yet you receive not the living image of them which is faith and love. Can you paint a sound? Can you form it, or engrave it on any thing? Nay, but these sound words are more substantial and solid. They must be engraven on the heart, else you will never hold them. They may be easily plucked out of the mouth and hand by temptation, unless they be enclosed and laid up in the secret of the heart as Mary laid them. The truth must hold thee fast or thou canst not hold it fast; it must captivate thee, and bind thee with the golden chains of affection, which only is true freedom, or certainly thou wilt let it go. Nay, you must not only have the truth received by love unto your heart but, as the apostle speaks, you must also “hold fast the form of sound words.” Scripture words are sound words; the Scripture method of teaching is sound and wholesome. There may be unsound words used in expressing true matter, and if a man shall give liberty to his own luxuriant imagination to expatiate in notions and expressions, either to catch the ear of the vulgar, or to appear some new discoverer of light and gospel mysteries, he may as readily fall into error and darkness as into truth and light. Some men do brisk up old truths, Scripture truths, into some new dress of language and notions and then give them out for new discoveries, new lights, but in so doing, they often hazard the losing of the truth itself. We should beware and take heed of strange words that have the least appearance of evil such as *Christed* and *Godded*.¹³⁷ Let us think it enough to be wise according to the Scriptures, and suspect all that as vain empty, unsound, that tends not to the increase of faith in Christ and love and obedience unto him, as ordinarily the dialect of those called Antinomians

¹³⁷ [These terms were made use of as descriptive of themselves by the sect called the Familists. See *Discovery of Familism*, p. 7 *apud* Baillie's *Anabaptism*, pp. 102-127, Lond. 1647.—*Ed.*]

is. Giving, and not granting, that they had no unsound mind, yet I am sure they use unsound words to express sound matter. The clothes should be shaped to the person. Truth is plain and simple; let words of truth also be full of simplicity. I say no more but leave that upon you that you hold fast even the very words of the Scriptures and be not bewitched by the vain pretensions of spirit—all spirit,—pure and spiritual service,—and such like, to the casting off of the word of truth, as *letter*, as *flesh*. And such is the high attainment of some in these days—an high attainment indeed, and a mighty progress in the way to destruction—the very last discovery of that Antichrist and man of sin. Oh, make much of the Scripture for you shall neither read nor hear the like of it in the world! Other books may have sound matter, but there is still something, in manner or words, unsound. No man can speak to you truth in such plainness and simplicity, in such soundness also. But here is both sound matter, and sound words, the truth holden out truly; health and salvation holden out in as wholesome a manner as is possible. Matter and manner are both divine.