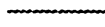


of their wants. It is a pleasure to have full breasts sucked; and there is a fulness in this treasure of favour lodged in Christ. His fulness is not the fulness of a vessel only to serve itself, but of a fountain to be communicated. O then bring forth daily out of it.



UNBELIEF THE SIN AGAINST CHRIST BY WAY OF EMINENCE, AND THE WRONG DONE TO THE SOUL THEREBY.

PROVERBS viii. 36,

*But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death.*

THE preceding verse gave us the happiness of those who are interested in Christ; this verse gives us the misery of those who reject him. And in it we have two things.

1. A dreadful risk some sinners run; they sin against the wisdom of God, and wrong their own souls. In which consider,

(1.) The dangerous adventure they make: they sin against Christ the Son of God. I told you, that Christ the personal wisdom of God is here meant. I must here inquire what is meant by sinning against him. Christ being true God, every sin men commit is against him, and wrongs their souls too. But it is not every sin that is here meant; it is some sin by way of eminency against the second person of the Trinity; for it is such a one as is constructed to be a hating of him, and loving death, which cannot be said of every sin. You know that the Holy Ghost being true God also every sin is in some sort against him; yet there is a sin against the Holy Ghost so called by way of eminency; so here is a sin against Christ by way of eminency. Now those sins which have their denominations from the several persons of the Trinity, respect them not so much in their essence, as in their office, operation, and work. The Father is Creator, the original lawgiver, the Son Redeemer and Saviour, the Holy Ghost applier of Christ's purchase, Enlightener and Sanctifier. The first sin of Adam in him and us, and the sins of the Pagans still, are the sin against the Father, the transgressing of the law of the Creator. The sin of gospel-despisers is the sin against the Son, as a rejecting of the gospel of Christ. The sin of obstinate and malicious deliberate fighting against God, is the sin against the Holy Ghost, as against the inward working

of the Holy Ghost in them. All the world are by nature under the first, and so liable to wrath; but the Son of God is the anointed Saviour and Redeemer, by whom alone sinners may be recovered. John xiv. 6. He is the ordinance of God for sinners' salvation. He is the remedy against sin provided by the Father; so the rejecting of this ordinance and remedy is the sin against Christ. That is, in a word, it is the sin opposite to the seeking and finding of Christ, vers. 34, 35, namely, not closing with, but rejecting Christ offered in the Gospel, called the sin of unbelief, John xvi. 8, 9.

(2.) The effect of this dangerous adventure; he wrongeth his own soul. The word properly imports violence, and might be read, "He doth violence to his own soul." So it is rendered, Zeph. iii. 4. He ruins himself, he is a self-destroyer, a self-murderer. The man is lying pining away in his sin; Christ the Physician comes to his bedside, saying, "Sinner, I offer you life and salvation with myself." But he turns away, he will have none of him, he cannot part with his disease. So he wrongs his own soul; he dies of it. But there is more than that in it. The man slights Christ; who loses by it? Not Christ, not his messengers, but the poor unbeliever himself. Prov. ix. 12.

2. The nature of this practice, which shews what a dreadful risk it must needs be. But of that more afterwards.

Two doctrines may be deduced from the words.

DOCTRINE I. Unbelief, or a sinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is the sin against Christ by way of eminency.

DOCT. II. The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul.

I shall illustrate each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. Unbelief, or a sinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is the sin against Christ by way of eminency. That is, if a man designed an affront to the Son of God, if he were in a mind to pierce him to the heart, and put a signal affront on him, this is the way to do it, namely, to slight the offer he makes of himself in the gospel.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what treatment of Christ it is, that is this sinning against him.

II. Confirm the doctrine, shewing you, that unbelief is the sin against Christ; that this treatment of Christ, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on him for salvation, is sinning against him in an eminent manner.

III. Improve the subject, in an address both to saints and sinners.

I. I am to shew what treatment of Christ it is, that is this sinning against him. In the general, it is twofold.

*First*, There is a doctrinal treatment of him, that is this sinning against him. So Deists, Socinians, Arians, Papists, &c., sin against him. I insist not on this further than to warn you, that there is, at this day, in this island, appearing a greater disposition to depart from the faith, than there has been at least these thirty years past. Some in the neighbouring land, not papists, nor prelatists, but dissenters, are undermining the doctrine of the eternal Godhead of Christ; and some in this Church are making woful advances towards obscuring the doctrine of the free grace of God in Christ. All which are the native bitter fruits of the generation's practical slighting of, and sinning against Christ, under the light of the gospel.

*Secondly*, There is a practical treatment of him, that is this sinning against him. And of this kind is,

1. Living ignorant of Christ, and the fundamental truths of the gospel; John i. 10. Grossly ignorant persons are doubtless unbelievers. For how can they believe, who know not what to believe? how can they believe in Christ, who have no knowledge of him? Psalm ix. 10. They are slights of Christ, who have means of knowledge, and yet know him not; they know him not, because they will not be acquainted with him; Job xxi. 14, "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And thus many proclaim their soul-ruining unbelief, by their slighting of ordinances and means of knowledge, and not profiting under them. Were there a physician in the country-side curing all freely, and if any should never use means to get acquainted with him, would not such persons be slights of him, to their own ruin.

2. People's living insensible of their absolute need of Christ; Matth. ix. 12. He comes in the gospel, and offers himself with all his salvation to sinners, to every one that hears it. Why does he so, but because they must perish without him, and that they need him? But the most part find no pinching need of him, and therefore never come to him. This is slighting him with a witness; Rev. iii. 17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The law is preached, and their misery without Christ is told them; yet are they never so far convinced as to be pricked to the heart; Acts ii. 37. They have no more ado with him, than a hale and sound person with the physician.

3. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel, the record that God hath given concerning his Son; 1 John v. 10, 11. In the gospel it is testified to us from heaven, That Christ alone is the great ordinance of God for life and salvation to poor sinners; that God hath placed that life in him, and offers it in and with him to them. This is the doctrine of the gospel; but who believes it? Is. liiii. 1. OBJECT. Who does not believe it? ANSW. Alas; that is the nature of the disease. Men may convince men who are hearers of the gospel of the sin of murder, adultery, &c.; but if the Spirit of God take it not in hand, they will not convince them of unbelief; John xvi. 8, 9. But for your conviction, (which may the Spirit carry home!) I will tell you, the treatment which Christ gets from most men, upon the back of the revelation of that record that God hath given of him to them, is such as that; 1 Sam. x. 24, 27, "And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen that there is none like him among all the people?—But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him;" and as that, 2 Kings v. 10—12, "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana, and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean! So he turned, and went away in a rage." Of this treatment of Christ take these two evidences.

EVID. 1. Their not seeking after him with the utmost diligence, till they find him. Compare Prov. viii. 34, 36, "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.—But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." Paul believed the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and therefore pressed forward, Phil. iii. 14. If you were desperately wounded, and one told you of an infallible cure that one had, and which you might get; if after this notice given you, you did not with your utmost might and most laborious endeavours seek after it, would not all the world conclude you did not believe there was such a remedy to be got by you? But your souls are thus wounded, and we tell you day by day, that there is an infallible remedy for them in Christ; and yet ye do not diligently seek after him till ye find him. May we not then say, with the prophet, "Who hath believed our report?" Is. liiii. 1.

**EVID. 2.** Their seeking life and salvation another way. So do all unbelievers, who give not up themselves to utter despair. They leave the King's highway, John xiv. 6, and betake themselves every one to his own way, Isa. liii. 6. God says of Christ, "This is the way, walk ye in it." But they will not venture on it, but take another way, by which they turn their backs on Christ, and so sin against him.

(1.) The way of the law or covenant of works, namely, by doing to seek life, Rom. ix. 32. This is the way that all men naturally betake themselves to, and that every man abides in, till the grace of God bring him to Jesus Christ. The natural bias of the heart to it I have shewn elsewhere, together with the enmity of the heart against Jesus Christ.\* It is little they do; but it is according to their doing, not according to their interest in the blood of Christ, that they expect to find favour with God. This speaks unbelief, and slighting of Christ with a witness; "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. *ult.*

(2.) The way of uncovenanted mercy. They pretend to do what they can; and where they come short, they expect that God will be merciful to them and forgive them; while in the meantime they do not consider that they can only find mercy being in Christ. Thus they do at least mix their own righteousness with Christ's, if they have any regard to Christ at all, Gal. iii. 12.

4. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel upon the authority of a divine testimony, but on some low account. As to many pretending to believe in Christ, we may see the quite contrary in them to that, 1 Thess. ii. 13,—“When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God.” What belief they have of it, they owe to their education, not to regeneration; to the teaching of men, not to the teaching of the Spirit. What makes some Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, Papists, in foreign countries, namely, that it is the religion they were brought up in, that is even the thing which makes them Christians in our country. O Sirs, that is not faith in Christ, but real unbelief of him, and slighting of him, as receiving his doctrine not upon his own authority, and the testimony of the Spirit, but of man, John v. 34. If ever ye come to honour Christ by believing, your faith will be built on another foundation; John iv. 42, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

\* See “Fourfold State,” state 2, head 1, under the title, “Of the corruption of man's nature.”

5. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel with a particular application to their own case, or to themselves. Here is the trial of a convinced sinner. Christ said, Mark xvi. 15, 16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Hereupon the apostle says to the jailor at Philippi, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," Acts xvi. 31. And every minister of Christ may say so to every man, and God says it to every one to whom his word comes. So that although we do believe that Christ is able and willing to save all his elect, yet if I do not believe that he is able and willing to save ME, and that he offers himself to ME, I am still an unbeliever, and do sin against Christ. For,

(1.) The offer is general, and comprehends us all, Isa. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 20. If any of you then believe it as to all others, and not as to yourselves, ye make God a liar, and do not believe his word; because though God says, the offer is to all that hear the gospel, ye contradict it, saying, that the offer belongs not to you, and that Christ is not willing to be yours.

(2.) What benefit can any man have by a general promise or offer of mercy from God or man, which he does not appropriate to himself? A king offers mercy to all the rebels that will take it; one says, "O but it is to all the rest, and not to me, I will not venture out of my lurking-hole." Is not this a belying of the king, and a refusing of mercy, and slighting the offer?

(3.) How is it possible that one can accept, receive, and rest on Christ for salvation, if he make not a particular application of the promise of the gospel, or gospel-offer to himself? The acceptance, &c. must needs be founded on the offer, and can be no larger than the offer is; if I do not believe that God offers to be my God in Christ, I cannot accept him as such. If I do not believe that Christ gives himself to ME in the gospel-offer, I cannot accept, receive, and embrace, nor rest on him.

(4.) Wherein does our faith of the promises of the gospel go beyond the faith of devils, if it proceed not the length of application of them to ourselves? James ii. 19. The devils believe the threatenings of God, and that with application, and they tremble; and that they believe the promises of God too in the general, that they shall be made out, we have no reason to doubt, when we consider, they believe God's faithfulness to his word, and therefore tremble in expectation of what he has threatened. And they know it is the same faithful God who has made the promises, that has made the threatenings. And now that for a course of five thousand years

they have observed the promises still fulfilled in their time, we may be sure that they do expect the rest will be fulfilled too. Wherein then can our faith go beyond theirs, if we believe not the promise or offer of life and salvation to us in particular?

Wherefore in not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, with particular application to ourselves, we sin against Christ, and wrong our own souls. Against this Satan bends his force, and under a veil of humility Christ is affronted by the unbelieving sinner; and indeed it is a mighty thing to believe this, over the belly of seen and felt vileness and unworthiness; but faith will make its way over it all, and honour Christ by believing his word.

6. *Lastly*. Their not taking, accepting, and receiving of Christ in the Gospel-offer, and resting on him, for life and salvation; John i. 11, 12. The royal Bridgroom is slighted, sinned against, and affronted when the offered marriage is neglected, refused, or shifted, or in any ways not concluded, by the sinful children of Adam; when the bride halts betwixt two opinions, and does not conclude the blessed bargain. And thus sinners sin against Christ,

*1st*, When the sinner will not take Christ, but holds by other lovers, namely, the world and lusts. There are two opposite parties in suit of sinners' hearts, who are hearers of the gospel, Christ on the one hand, lusts on the other. These last have so engaged the hearts of many, that they give Christ the refusal; Jer. li. 25; John v. 40. They see there is no dealing with both; if they take Christ, they must let these go away; and therefore since they cannot otherwise have him, they will not have him. They cannot think of being deprived or abridged of their sinful liberty; so the offer of Christ is made them, but they will not accept it.

*2dly*, When the sinner dare not take Christ, or embrace him in the gospel-offer, fearing that he will never be his, nor give himself to him. This is the snare for the convinced sinner, and as effectually keeps him from Christ, as the love of lusts does the secure; Jer. ii. 25. One may see, that the former makes way for the latter. The ground of this is one's sinfulness and unworthiness seen and felt, which makes them think it would be presumption in them to believe. Hence they say, as Luke v. 8. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The hand of Joab is in this. Satan has two glasses to let men see their sins in.

(1.) A lessening glass, which he holds before the eyes of secure sinners, causing their sins appear little. Hence their enormous out-breakings, though habitual, are accounted but infirmities; and lesser sins, which the world makes no bones of, are accounted no sins at all.

(2.) A magnifying glass, which he holds before the eyes of the convinced sinner. And one may know that he is looking on his sinful self in Satan's glass, when he sees his own sinfulness so as he cannot see God's mercy, the virtue of Christ's blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit, above his sinfulness; when the sight of the disease sets him farther from the Physician, and makes him stand off from Christ, instead of running to him; when instead of quickening him to embrace the remedy, it causes his heart to faint so as he cannot put forth his hand to apply the offered cure.

That this is from Satan, is manifest, in that it is directly contrary, (1.) To the true use of the law in subserviency to the gospel; Gal. iii. 24. The law discovers sin, and the soul's misery by it; but then the design of that to the hearers of the gospel is, that they may be made to prize and run unto Christ. (2.) To the ample declarations of love and mercy made in the gospel, which shew that there is no case whatsoever so bad but Christ is both able and willing to take it in hand; Isa. i. 18, and lv. 1; Rev. iii. 20, and xxii. 17.

*3dly,* When the sinner dare not venture on Christ alone for salvation, but to strengthen that bottom, goes about to render himself acceptable to God by his own obedience, Gal. v. 4. The covenant of works is so engrained in our natures, and so ignorant are we naturally of the mystery of Christ, and the way of imputed righteousness; that till the Spirit of the Lord savingly enlighten one in the knowledge of Christ, he will have but low thoughts of an imputed righteousness as an insecure way, and will therefore go about to strengthen it by the addition of his own works; though it is but attempting to mix clay with iron, that will not do. But the Spirit of the Lord, in the day of power, will carry men quite off their own bottom.

*4thly,* When the sinner does not take him for all the ends for which he is appointed of the Father for sinners, and in all his offices, but divides them, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is given to us for all in the gospel-offer, for salvation from sin as well as from wrath, to be our Prophet to teach us, our Priest to save us, and our King to govern us. When therefore the sinner does not take him for sanctification as well as justification, he is not received at all indeed, but sinned against, and rejected as the ordinance for sanctifying of sinners.

*Lastly,* When the sinner does not believe, that he shall have life and salvation by Jesus Christ. True faith may be accompanied with many doubtings; sometimes one may be ready to say, "My hope is perished from the Lord;" but it is plain that where there is no such persuasion in greater or lesser measure at any time, there is no faith.



II. I proceed to confirm the doctrine, shewing you, that unbelief is the sin against Christ; that this treatment of Christ, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is sinning against him in an eminent manner. This will appear from some general considerations, and from a view of some particular pieces of malignity against Christ wrapt up in unbelief.

*First*, It appears from some general considerations.

1. Faith in Christ is an honouring of him in a special manner, John v. 23, 24; therefore unbelief must be a special dishonour done to him. Faith gives glory to the object of it, Rom. iv. 20; unbelief then robs him of that glory, and casts reproach on him. Faith puts the crown on Christ's head, Cant. iii. *ult.*, unbelief pulls it off and tramples it under foot. See then how good, necessary, and pleasing to Christ believing in him is; how bad, noxious, and abominable to him unbelief must be.

2. Unbelief is the great Antichrist in the heart, setting up there in downright opposition to the Son of God. The end of Christ's coming was to destroy sin, 1 John iii. 8, the effect of unbelief is to preserve sin in life and vigour. It is the soul and life of all other sins, the shield that keeps their heads and hearts hale; take it away, they all die, and the soul revives; leave it upon their head, and they all live, and the soul dies, John viii. 24. It is the general of the army of hell in men's breasts, against whom the word is given in the day of power, "Fight neither with small nor great," but with unbelief, the king of sins, John xvi. 8, 9.

3. It is a sin that so engrosses the whole soul to itself against Christ, that it leaves him nothing to take part with him against it. If a man sin against Christ by oppression, murder, &c. his judgment, reason, natural conscience, will in greater or lesser measure plead the Lord's cause against him, and will prepare the way for the Spirit's conviction. But as for unbelief, there is no help from them against it. The mystery of Christ lies beyond the ken of mere reason, 1 Cor. ii. 14, how then can the blackness of the sin of unbelief be discerned thereby, or the natural conscience check for it? Nay, mere reason, in its corrupt state, sides against Christ with unbelief, in as far as the best way it knows, is the way of the law or covenant of works. So that on this occasion, Meroz's curse may light on all the faculties of the soul, "because they come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty," Judg. v. 23.

4. It is the sin that ruins the hearers of the gospel, with whom Christ has to do; John iii. 18, 19, "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the

only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The poor pagans who have not heard of Christ, sin not against him in this sort, John xv. 22. Whatever sins the hearers of the gospel may have been chargeable with, if they will believe in Christ, they shall never be charged on them; upon this point of believing, or not believing, turns their salvation, or damnation, Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore since it is the ruining sin, it must needs be the great ruining sin against Christ.

5. It is equal to the grossest sins against the light of nature. The Pharisee could say, I am not unjust, an extortioner, an adulterer; the publican durst not say so. But the one rejected the propitiation, which the other embraced, Luke xviii. 13, and so was accepted of God, while the other was rejected. You will bless God ye are honest, sober men and women, no adulterers, murderers, &c.; but ye do not see the bloody sin of unbelief, which is as ill as any of them; Isa. lxvi. 3, "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man;" i. e. An unbeliever is as a murderer in God's sight. Faith was the great duty under the Old Testament as well as under the New, ver. 2. And those Jews who put their sacrifices of oxen, lambs, and their incense, in the Messiah's stead, by unbelief were as murderers, &c.

6. It is above these sins in odiousness and heinousness; Heb. x. 28, 29, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God," &c.? There was a consultation of the Trinity concerning the making of man, and the result was, his creation after God's image. How great must those sins be, which, breaking the laws of his creation, do signally deface that image? There was also a consultation of the Trinity concerning man's restoration, and the result was, the Son of God giving himself to the death for their recovery. How much greater then must the sin of unbelief be, which of its own nature tends to make the whole contrivance vain? The Sodomites were great sinners, and the Capernaumites unbelievers; which were the greatest sinners? The greatest punishment by a just Judge speaks the greatest sin; and so the Capernaumite unbelievers were the greatest sinners, Matth. xi. 23, 24.

7. It has none that goes beyond it but the sin against the Holy Ghost; and even it is unbelief carried to its utmost height, Heb. x. 29. Unbelief strikes against the Father and the Son, casting dishonour on both, John v. 23. If to this be added a doing despite to the Spirit of God, the sinner is at his utmost pitch of wickedness. And none are capable of the latter, but he that is guilty of the former.

8. *Lastly*, It is a sin directly striking against the glorious office wherewith Christ is invested, and while he is in the actual exercise of that office, John viii. 49. The Father minding to recover the glory of his wronged attributes, and lost sinners of the race of Adam, invested his own Son in the mediatory office, that he should build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory. The Son comes in this his noble office, with his Father's commission, to prosecute it for these noble ends: and unbelief rejects him as such, and casts dishonour on him, Luke xix. 14. To do a personal injury to a king is a crime, but to do an injury striking against his kingly character and office, and that while he is in the administration of his royal office, is a crime of a far deeper die, than any merely personal injury done him. So the case is here.

*Secondly*, That unbelief is the sin against Christ by way of eminency, appears from a view of some particular pieces of malignity against him wrapt up therein.

1. It is a despising him as the Father's choice. The voice of the gospel is, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. iii. *ult.* The unbeliever answers, "We will not have this man to reign over us," Luke xix. 14. When man fell, God looked on the whole creation, and there was none found able to help him; so he made choice of his own Son, that the breach might be under his hand, Psalm lxxxix. 19. This comes to be proclaimed in the gospel, and as Samuel said to all the people, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" 1 Sam. x. 24; it says, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29. But unbelief says, as 1 Sam. x. 27, "How shall this man save us? and they despise him." So unbelievers pour contempt on the choice. Ask the unbelieving Jews if they approve the choice? No; they say, it is a stumbling-block; ask the unbelieving Gentiles, if they approve it, No, it is foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. Therefore do others as they will, they will not lay their weight on that bottom. Only believers cry, Grace, grace to the choice! a noble choice! "Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God," ver. 24; compare Matth. xi. 6.

2. It is a trampling upon his love in undertaking the mediatory office. Man having sinned, justice demands satisfaction; the poor bankrupts cannot discharge the debt themselves, angels found themselves too weak to bear such a burden, sacrifice and offering cannot be accepted as a compensation for the wrong done to a holy God. The proposal is made to the Son, and respect to his Father's glory, and unhired love to sinners, makes him accept and strike hands; "Lo, I come," &c., Psalm xl. 6, 7. And after all, unbelief says in

effect, he might have let it alone; the unbeliever is not for life and salvation that way. Christ's Father is content, he is so, but the unbeliever is not, Psalm lxxxi. 11. How great must the sin of trampling on such love be?

3. It is a treating of him as a liar and an impostor. The language of every unbeliever is that; John vii. 12, "He deceiveth the people." Christ's name is the word of God, by whom the mind of God touching the salvation of sinners is manifested to the world; he is by office interpreter of the Father's mind, the great prophet and teacher. He came from the Father's bosom, and reveals the way of salvation in the doctrine of the gospel. What is it not to believe him then, but to make him a liar? 1 John v. 10. And since the revelation made by him is upon such a weighty matter, the not believing it must needs infer the looking on him as an impostor. What then shall be given to that false heart, that thus sins against Christ? "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper," Psalm cx. 4.

4. It is a contempt poured on his precious blood, and the whole course of his obedience and sufferings. The believer by faith gets in under that blood, Heb. xii. 24; but unbelief treads on it, chap. x. 29. This performance of the Son was looked upon as a sufficient mean to retrieve the Father's glory, and recover the sinner that was sunk lowest in sin and misery, Psalm lxxxix. 19. As such it is proposed to sinners in the gospel; but they will not receive it. And if ye consider all the sets of unbelievers, the bold contemnners that go on in their sins, and hope for mercy; the legal professors that lay the stress on their own duties; the trembling unbeliever, that dare not come to Christ; the desperate sinner, that says there is no hope; they will all be found agreeing in maintaining low unworthy thoughts of the glorious ransom paid by Christ, and offered to them. The first say, All that was needless, God is merciful; the second, It is too weak a bottom to trust all to; the third, It may bear the weight of many, but it is too weak for theirs; the fourth, It can do nothing for them.

5. It is a frustrating of the ends of the death of Christ, as far as lies in the unbeliever's power. He had a long, sore, and helpless travail of soul; he endured it in hopes of a glorious issue; Isa. liiii. 11; Heb. xii. 2. But did all treat him as the unbelieving part of the world does, the issue would be but as it were bringing forth wind. At the expense of the blood of the Son of God, a medicine is prepared for perishing souls; but the unbeliever will not apply it, when it is brought to his hand; a feast is prepared, but the unbeliever will not eat of it, but says in effect, "To what purpose is this waste?"

6. *Lastly.* It is a declining of his government, and subjection to him, most reproachfully; Luke xix. 14. We see most of the hearers of the gospel at this pass with him; subject themselves to whom they will, they will not subject themselves to him; they stick by other lords. His Father has given him all power in heaven and earth; but they will not come under his power, as long as they can shift otherwise. There are many reasons of this, but there is one that is little observed, namely, unbelief, they cannot trust him. A wise people will not subject themselves willingly to one they cannot trust; Judg. ix. 15, compare Psalm ii. *ult.* They cannot trust him with their welfare, though he is the Father's trustee, the trustee of believers; hence they say, he shall not be their trustee. What wonder then that unbelief be a "piercing of him?" Zech. xii. 10.

From this doctrine we may learn lessons for saints, for sinners, and for all.

*First,* Here is a lesson for saints, or believers.

1. Prize the precious faith which God has given you 2 Pet. i. 1. Have your souls been brought to believe in, accept, and embrace Jesus Christ offered in the gospel, for all his salvation, and so to come off from the course of slighting and sinning against Christ. Do not undervalue it as a small thing, but look to the nature of reigning unbelief, and prize it next to the gift of his precious Son and Spirit. If it were but as a grain of mustard-seed, it is more precious than all the gold of the Indies, more precious than as many faithless works and duties, as would have filled up every minute of your time since ye were born.

2. Wonder at his sparing you till ye were brought the length of believing in him. How deep did your unbelief go against him; what attribute of his did it not cast dirt upon; what was it he did or suffered, but it had an ill tale of? O, why did he put up all these affronts, and still insist on your believing, giving you his word, writ, seal, oath, and whatsoever could have been required of the most faithless man, to cause you believe him, till ye were won to faith in him?

3. Mourn over your remaining unbelief, as the father of the child did, Mark ix. 25, who said with tears, "Lord I believe! help thou mine unbelief." Jealousies of Christ are a disease that runs in the veins of all those of the blood royal of heaven, ay till they get home to their Father's house. How justly may he say, "O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you." Alas! can the saints' experiences of his truth and faithfulness, and the tried word, carry them no further? If there could be any such uneasy passion as shame in heaven, they would blush for their unbelief whenever they got in there.

4. *Lastly*, See what it is that mars the communication betwixt Christ and you, and what makes you lead such a poor life, both in point of sanctification and comfort, Matth. xiii. *ult.*, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Faith purifies the heart, unbelief makes it as the neglected garden, overgrown with weeds. Faith quiets the heart and cheers it, Rom. xv. 13. David's experience of the way of getting help from heaven we have, Psalm xxviii. 7, "My heart trusted in him, and I am helped." Trust reposed in a generous man, able to help, brings him to put to his hand speedily, for the help of the party trusting him. No wonder that unbelief, being of such a nature, mar the communication.

*Secondly*, Here is a lesson for sinners, or unbelievers.

1. Ye are sinners against Christ in an eminent manner. Our text brings you in guilty of affronting the Son of God, sinning against the remedy of sin. Though the language of your lips may be "Hosanna to the Son of David;" the language of your unbelieving hearts is, Crucify him. Ye are guilty of sinning against him at the rate which Pagans, yea and devils, never sinned against him. They broke the law of their Creator; but ye have not only done so, but ye are breaking the law of redeeming love, namely, the law of faith, too.

2. Here is a sin thou hast to be sensible of, and mourn for, which hitherto thou hast little regarded. May be thou hast sometimes been grieved for other sins, and mourned for them. But didst thou ever mourn for this? did ever this give thee a grieved heart? Truly this is the wound to the heart, this is the most dangerous evil, that keeps all the rest from healing. If ye have not been sensible of and affected with it, (1.) Your faith is likely to be but a fancy, the Spirit being promised for that end, John xvi. 8, 9. (2.) Your unbelief would be sure to be strengthened by all your other mourning for sin; and so instead of its bringing you nearer Christ, it would set you farther off from him, Matth. xxi. 31.

3. Here, even here, O sinner, lies your ruin for time and eternity, John viii. 24, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." This is the great soul-murdering sin among gospel-hearers, for it is the sinning against the remedy of sin. Consider, (1.) It makes all your other plague-sores incurable, while it is not removed, John viii. 24. Your pride, passion, worldliness, &c. still run upon you; why, so they will always do, while the bloody issue of unbelief is not stopped. While that remains, they can admit no cure but a palliative one, after which they must needs break out again. For the falling dew shall as soon make its way through the flinty rock, as sanctifying influences shall come into you without union with Christ, which is

marred by unbelief. (2.) At this rate then ye must die in your sins eternally, and your unbelief must be the great cause of your ruin, 2. Thess. i. 8.

4. The condemnation of unbelievers must be most dreadful, since it is the sin against Christ, Matth. xi. 24, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Other sins wound the soul; this resolutely keeps the wounds open, and will not suffer them to be healed. Other sins are against the sovereign authority of God in the law; this superadds thereto a contempt of unparalleled love and mercy opened to the sinner in the gospel. As then the sourest vinegar comes off the most generous wine, so the most fearful thunder-claps of wrath will break out on the sinner, from the contempt of a throne of grace through unbelief.

5. *Lastly*, Here is what may strike the bottom out of all your objections against your believing in Christ, fetch them from what quarter ye will, and dress them up in what form you please, whether the conclusion be, you may not, dare not, or ought not believe on Christ. As it is the commandment "That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23, so not believing is the sin against Christ. Account ye of it as ye will, he will reckon it the greatest affront that ye can do him, and he will reckon with you for it as such. Wherefore let this short answer serve in the case.

*Thirdly*, Here is a lesson for all. It concerns us all to be convinced of the malignity against Christ and his Father that is in the sin of unbelief, to get above it, as we would throw coals of hell-fire out of our bosom; to believe in Christ, embrace him as our Saviour and Redeemer, Head and Husband, and to live by faith on him. This is the way to honour the Son, the true way to be holy here, and happy hereafter.

**DOCTRINE II.** The unbeliever sinner against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul.

Here I shall shew, how the unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul; and then deduce an inference or two for application.

I. I am to shew how the unbeliever, sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul. The wrong here meant is real hurt or damage, arising from this woful practice. Now, on whom does it fall? On the sinner himself. I take it up in these two, that he wrongs his own soul really and only.

*First*, The unbeliever, sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul really. He does in very deed do hurt and bring

damage to himself, not to his body only, but to his soul, the more precious part. He does violence to himself, he treats his own soul cruelly and unjustly. He carries against his own soul as an enemy, doing it real mischief. For by unbelief,

*1st*, A man keeps his soul in a state of separation and alienation from God. The sinner by nature is far from God, without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, John xiv. 6, and unbelief keeps the soul from off that way, fixes the separation wall, that as long as it remains in its power, the sinner can never meet with God, as rejecting the only meeting place.

*2dly*, A man keeps his soul under the guilt of all his sins. The blood of Jesus purgeth from all sin; but it must be sprinkled by faith on the soul, which unbelief refuseth, John viii. 24. It keeps the soul out of Christ; and while it is so, all the guilt remains, the yoke of his transgressions is wreathed about his neck, and all the cords of death abide about him in their force. No mourning or sorrow, tears or repentance will loose them; only the blood of Christ procures pardon.

*3dly*, A man keeps his soul in a state of utter inability to do any thing that is good or acceptable in the sight of God; Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith it is impossible to please him." It keeps the reigning power of sin hale in the soul, and so preserves and feeds the several lusts, the devourers of the soul. It binds up hand and foot that he can do nothing, nor move a step heavenward, John xv. 5. For it blocks up all saving communication between heaven and the soul.

*4thly*, It fixes the soul in a state of condemnation; John iii. 18, "He that believeth not is condemned already." It keeps it under the curse of the first covenant, and exposes it to eternal destruction. It keeps it naked without a righteousness, destitute of any valid plea for eternal life. It leaves it without the city of refuge, every moment in hazard of being cut off by the avenger of blood.

*Lastly*, By refusing the remedy, the unbeliever brings double ruin on his own soul. The soul might be saved; but by unbelief salvation is refused, and so the soul is in worse case than if Christ had never been offered to it.

*Secondly*, The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul only, not Christ whom he sins against; Prov. ix. 12, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." All sin is against the mind and honour of Christ, but no sin is against his happiness. If all the creatures did conspire against him, it could not make the least diminution of his happiness, or in the least disturb him. Thy un-



belief is like one's rushing his head against a rock, which can only hurt the person himself; Job xxxv. 6, "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him?"

I shall conclude this subject with some inferences.

1. All unbelievers, rejecters of Christ, are self-murderers; they ruin their own souls, Ezek. xviii. 31. When it comes to pass that thy soul perishes, and inquiry is made, by whose hands it has fallen, there will be a decision; Hos. xiii. 9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" not Adam, not Satan, but thou thyself, O sinner.

2. Ye cannot do your souls a worse turn than not to receive Christ by faith. Many an ill turn ye have done them by swearing, lying, covetousness, &c., but this is a stab to the heart; this is wounding the soul in the most sensible, in the most noble part.

3. All unbelievers will be inexcusable. Pagans will have something to say, that the revelation of the way of salvation through Christ was not made to them; yea devils will have it to say, that there was no remedy prepared for them. But what wilt thou have to say for thyself, O unbeliever, who treadest under foot the blood of the Redeemer! Thou wilt be wholly without excuse. Thou wilt be like the man that sat down at the table, at the marriage of the king's son, without a wedding-garment, who when asked, how he came there not having a wedding-garment, was speechless, having no excuse to allege for his presumptuous behaviour.

4. Believe in, accept of, embrace, and close with Christ, as ye would not ruin your own souls. Refuse not the remedy that is freely provided for you in Christ. Ye are all invited and welcome to come unto Christ for salvation from sin, and from the wrath that is to come. By accepting of Christ ye shall be saved, and your souls shall have communion with God. But if ye believe not, you shall perish, and the wrath of God shall lie on you for ever. "He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16.

5. *Lastly*, Saints and believers, in as far as ye admit unbelief, ye wrong your own souls. Every act of unbelief is a doing violence to your souls, and hurting them in their most essential interests. O then guard against this dreadful and deceitful enemy, that seeks your ruin. Daily exercise faith in Christ, improve it by vigorous and repeated exercise; and continually cry unto the Lord, saying, "Lord increase our faith." Live by faith, walk by faith, and, in the strength of Christ, resist all the assaults of unbelief; and in due time ye shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you. Always bear in mind, and never forget, that "he that sinneth

against Christ, wrongeth his own soul," and is in love with death ; whereas he that honoureth him by believing in his name, and is strong in the faith, giving glory to God, shall be safe amidst all the troubles and trials of this world, in every period and stage of life, and shall at last be received into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where happiness for ever dwells, and the voice of violence and wrong is never heard.

---

BELIEVERS A MYSTERY, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THEIR TRAVELS FROM THE WILDERNESS OF THIS WORLD, TO THE HEAVENLY CANAAN, LEANING UPON CHRIST.\*

SONG viii. 5,

*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved ?*

WE have been solemnising our souls' espousals to Jesus Christ, and our consent to the gospel-call, saying in effect to us, "Wilt thou go with this man ?" Leave thy father's house, and thine own people, and cleave to the King of Zion. We have before angels and men answered, We will go with him, for he is our Beloved. Here we have an account of the Christian life, which must be our life, if we will deal honestly with him ; it is a "coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on our Beloved." These are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, containing,

1. An inquiry about a party, whom they took particular notice of, namely, the church of believers, the spouse of Christ ; "Who is this ?" It intimates a kind of surprise, Who's that ! The wilderness uses not to afford such a sight as this. It imports an admiration as of some hidden thing, a mystery ; Who is this ? This is a strange kind of personage whom we see.

2. A character of the party inquired about. It is a woman, one of the weak sex, as the church of believers is represented in scripture. She is not one of the dwellers in the wilderness. She appears not to have built her house there. She is but a traveller through it, and her head is awayward from it ; and she is set for another country. That is she whom we mean, who is coming up from the wilderness. I make no question but by the wilderness here is meant

\* The substance of several sermons preached at Etrick, June 18, 1721, and subsequent Sabbaths.