JESUS CHRIST THE BELOVED ONE, AND SINNERS ACCEPTED OF GOD FREELY IN HIM.

Eph. i. 6,

His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

Before our works can be accepted, our persons must; and how that is attained is here declared.

The apostle taking a view of the state of salvation that believers are brought into, in the fulness of it, ver. 3; runs it up unto the prime author of it, the Father, ̧ the eternal plan of it in the decree of election, ver. 4; whereof the great design to be accomplished on them, their true sanctification, ̧ to be begun here, and perfected in glory; the reason of this design, that they were predestinated to adoption into his family, for it was inconsistent with the honour of a holy God, to have unholy children, ver. 5. In this verse are two things.

1. The great end of God's predestinating the elect to be his own children; “the praise of the glory of his grace.” It was a display of his free grace that he aimed at. Grace is love and favour freely flowing, without anything in the object to draw it out. This grace shown to sinners is glorious grace, like a shining sun, casting such a lustre, as is most admirable and attractive. And it is to be praised by the sons of men; but they that do not see, and do not feel the glory of it, cannot praise it, more than the blind the light of the sun. But God purposed to bring the elect out of the devil's family, and make them his own children freely; that they seeing, tasting, and feeling this glorious grace, might raise a song of praise of it here, and 'joining voices in heaven, might carry it on in the highest strain there for ever, praising the glorious grace appearing in their adoption; opening the various folds of it, and admiring the glories of free grace, for ever and ever. It is dangerous then to cast a veil over it, doctrinally or practically.

2. A particular fruit of this glorious grace; “Wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” Where we have,

(1.) The fruit itself, the acceptance of the persons of believers with God; “He hath made us accepted.” The acceptor is the Father, vers. 3, 5. The accepted are us, believers, who are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” ver. 3. The acceptance is emphatically expressed. The word is, as if he had

* The substance of several sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1726.
said, he hath graced us; and imports not only that he hath accepted us, but freely accepted us, without anything in us to render us acceptable; and bears not only free love and favour, but also all kinds of real benefits and favours flowing therefrom, Luke i. 28.

(2.) The way and manner of the acceptance. How can a sinner be accepted of a holy God? "In the Beloved," that is, Christ. It is not only for his sake, but God looking on the sinner in Christ, united to him, accepts him. He calls Christ here "the Beloved," to intimate that the accepting love and favour of God is first pitched on him, and then for his sake comes down on his members; so he is the Beloved by way of eminency. He saith not, "his Beloved," though doubtless He mainly aims at that, but "the Beloved," that he might give a vent to that love to Christ that his heart swelled with on the mention of this; and so uses a general term, whereby Christ might be pointed out as the object whereon the loves of heaven and earth meet together.

(3.) The original spring and source of this acceptance, intimated by the relative wherein. It refers not only to the word grace, but to "the glory of his grace," q. d. From, through, and by which glorious grace and free favour, he hath freely accepted us undeserving and ill-deserving creatures; that glorious grace finding a way to accept the sinner, with the good leave of justice, in Christ.

From the text, thus explained, ariseth the following savoury points of doctrine.

Doct. I. Jesus Christ is the beloved, the eminently beloved One.

Doct. II. The way how a sinner comes to be accepted of God, is freely, in Christ.

Doct. III. Glorious free grace shines forth in the acceptance of sinners in the beloved Jesus.

Doct. I. Jesus Christ is the beloved, the eminently beloved One.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew in what respects Christ is the eminently beloved One.

II. Make some improvement.

I. I am to shew in what respects Christ is the eminently beloved One.

First, He is the beloved of the excellent ones of the earth. Who these are, ye may see, Psalm xvi. 3. They are "the saints." Him all the saints love with a love above all persons and all things, Luke xiv. 26. And,

1. They meet altogether in him in love, however they are scattered through the world; hence is he called, "the desire of all nations," Hag. ii. 7. So that lovers of Christ and saints are of equal latitude; Eph. vi. 24, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord
Jesus Christ in sincerity." The American saints and the European saints take him all for their Beloved. As it is the same sun in the firmament that warms all their bodies, it is the same Sun of righteousness, Christ, that warms all their hearts in love. They differ vastly in their languages, customs, and particular dispositions; but they perfectly agree in their love of one beloved Jesus; Gen. xlix. 10, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." And so they are knit as one body, whereof Christ is the beloved head.

2. Each one of them loves him with a superlative and transcendent love; Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." They have a general love to mankind, a special love to their respective countries, a more special love to their relations, but the most special and peculiar love, leaving all the rest behind, is to Christ, Luke xiv. 26. In the other they are divided, but in this they meet in one; their beloved ones are very different, but their beloved One is one and the same.

3. They love other persons and things for his sake, Rom. xv. 2, 3; Tit. iii. 3—5. When the soul is in its natural state, other persons and things have the man's love, but Christ has none of it; when Christ discovers himself in his glory to the soul, then the man hates all in comparison of him; but Christ regulates the soul's love to other things, and takes it not away, but makes it run in another channel, springing from himself. Now other things being loved for him, himself is the best beloved.

4. The liker any thing is to him, they love it the more. Hence the godly that bear his image, are therefore beloved by them; and the more godly they are, the more beloved are they, 1 John iii. 14. They love his ordinances, because they bear the impress of his authority, his law as the image of his nature; his way and example, because of the tread of his steps therein to be seen. All which bear him to be their eminently beloved. And,

1st. They love him with a love of good-will; and vent it in prayer and praise; Psalm lxxii. 16, "Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised." It is not in their power to profit him, and he needs nothing at the creature's hand, being completely happy in his Father; but they shew good-will to him, in concern for his glory in the world, that his kingdom may prosper, his name spread far and wide, and be perpetuated to all generations.

2dly, They love him with a love of delight and complacency, 1 Pet. ii. 7, "Unto you which believe he is precious." His name and every letter of it is sweet to them, Cant. i. 3. They delight in him as a sister in a brother, a child in a father, and a spouse in a hus-
band. Everything in Christ is sweet to a believer; therefore they are said to eat his flesh, and drink his blood: for as by eating one finds the sweetness of the meat, and every bit of it, so by faith the soul finds the sweetness of Christ and every thing in Christ. And,

(1.) They love him for what he is in himself, Cant. v. 10—16. The glorious excellencies of his person and natures, his attributes and perfections, make him the object of their love. Their hearts are framed to the love of God: so they love him for himself, they love him for that holiness and purity for which carnal men hate him, as the owl doth the sun, Psalm xxx. 4.

(2.) They love him for what he is to them, Cant. v. 16. And as he is best in himself, he is the best to them. They love him for all his offices; for what he has done for them, and for what he will do for them. They love him as the foundation of all their hopes, the scope of all their desires, and the spring of all their joys. And fitly does he go under the name, "the Beloved," even in respect of the saints: for,

[1.] They profess him to be the beloved of their souls; they are not ashamed of their choice. So the spouse calls him, Cant. per tot. See chap. iii. 3, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" as if she would have all to know him by that name, "her Beloved;" supposing there is none so but he.

[2.] They show him to be so, by their life and actions before the world, Cant. viii. 6, 7. Where love to Christ is, it will discover itself by the soul's preferring Christ to all persons and things, so as to part with any thing when it comes in competition with him.

Secondly, Christ is the beloved of the glorious ones in heaven. All eyes are upon him there, for he is there the light of the pleasant land, Rev. xxi. 23, as the sun is in this world. And he is there,

1. The beloved of the glorified saints, who now love him in perfection, Rev. vii. 10. Their love to him is now perfected, and they love him with a pure and ardent love. They see him now no more through a glass, but face to face; they behold the glories of his person, the glories of his actings and sufferings for them; his eternal undertaking, his going through with his undertaking in his birth, life, and death; and the glory he now hath from his Father as the reward. So their love to him is in a continual flame.

2. The beloved of the holy angels, Rev. v. 11, 12. In the temple the cherubims were posted, looking towards the ark or mercy-seat, a type of Christ; which signified the angels looking to Jesus with love and admiration, 1 Pet. i. 12. They beheld his glory, and cannot but love him. They love him as the brightness of the Father's glory, as the elder Brother of the family, the heir of all things, and
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their Lord, Heb. i. 6, as the Saviour of sinners, and the head of angels, by whom they and all things do consist, Eph. i. 10.

3. The Father's beloved, Matth. xvii. 5. And here we may consider Christ two ways, as God, and as Mediator.

1st, As God, equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit. He was the beloved of the Father and the Spirit. The Scripture teacheth that "God is love," 1 John iv. 8, and that love must be eminently among the persons of the glorious Trinity one towards another. Thus, Prov. viii. 30, he is held out as the Creator's delight. See John i. 18, Heb. i. 2. But what our text mainly aims at, is,

2dly, As Mediator, God-man, having a common relation to God and sinners of mankind, as the representative of an elect world, and the bond of union and communion betwixt God and sinners, for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners.

(1.) As such he is the Father's beloved, his prime favourite, and most accepted, his "well Beloved," Mark xii. 6, in whom he is "well pleased;" Matth. iii. ult., the perpetual rest of his eyes and heart, 2 Chron. vii. 16. And he is his beloved,

[1.] In respect of his person; John i. 18. He "is in the bosom of the Father." For he is "the brightness of his Father's glory," Heb. i. 2. The glory of God shines forth in his face, 2 Cor. iv. 6. He is "the image of God" in a peculiar manner, ver. 4. Therefore says he, John xiv. 9, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." See Col. ii. 9, and i. 19. So he is the most beautiful object in the eyes of God, in heaven or in earth; and accordingly has the highest place in his love, Heb. i. 13.

[2.] In respect of his office. The Father is well pleased with him in the character he took on. And,

(1.) He was well pleased with his undertaking for the great work of sinners' salvation. See with what satisfaction he speaks of it; Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He cordially accepted him as the sinners' surety, and took his single bond for all the elect's debt, and his security for the injured honour of his name. He was the Father's own choice, and he delighted in his choice, Isa. xlii. 1. He so loved the Undertaker, that,

[1.] He promised to be with him, and furnished him with all things necessary for the work, Isa. xlii. 6, and lxi. 1.

[2.] He bestowed eternal salvation on many, before the time the Saviour paid the ransom; he set them free, and gave them their discharge, before the death of Christ. He rested in the Beloved's engagement.

(2.) He was well pleased with and accepted him in his carrying on Vol. XI.
the work that he had undertaken.—With his birth, therefore the angels were employed to carry the tidings of it, and sung solemnly on that occasion.—With his entering on his public work at his baptism, testified by a voice from heaven, Matth. iii. ult., and all along, testified by his being always with him, John viii. 29.

(3.) He was well-pleased with his perfecting of the work, by his death and burial. He did in it the most acceptable piece of service to God that ever was done, John x. 17. His sacrifice of himself was of a sweet savour unto God. He so loved him for it, that he raised him up, and set him on his right hand for ever for it, Phil. ii. 8, 9, and accepts the worst of sinners in him, for his sake.

(2.) As such he is the rest of the Holy Spirit, Isa. xi. 2. The Spirit came on the prophets, but he rested on Jesus as the beloved, Matth. iii. 16. All the saints as beloved ones have the Spirit in a measure; but he without measure as the Beloved, John iii. 34. The Spirit is in him as water in the fountain, to be communicated to others, Rev. iii. 1.

I shall conclude this point with a word of application.

Use I. Hereby ye may try whether ye be saints or not, partakers of the divine nature. If so, Christ will be your Beloved, your eminently beloved One; for so he is to the saints, and so he is to God. And if he is your Beloved,

1. Ye will love him above all, Psalm lxxiii. 25, which will shew itself in desiring him above all, prizing him beyond all, rejoicing most in his favour, and sorrowing most for the want of him; and in loving other persons and things for his sake.

2. Ye will hate sin above all things, because it is most contrary to him, his nature and will, Gen. iii. 15. Ye will hate it universally, constantly as to the habitual bent of your heart, and irreconcilably.

Use II. Of reproof to those who love him not eminently, above all. It is an evidence, that,

1. Ye know him not, John iv. x. None can be let into a discovery of Christ in his glory but must love him, Matth. xiii. 44—46. It is to the blind world only there is no beauty in him for which he is to be desired.

2. That ye are in love with your sins and a vain world. For who would loath the physician but he that loves his disease and cannot part with it?

Use III. Let him be your Beloved then, and give him your heart.

1. He is best worth your love. None has done so much for sinners as Christ has, dying for them. None can do so much for you; he can satisfy the cravings of your souls, and make you happy.

2. If ye love him not, ye will be constructed haters of him, and
enemies to him; 1 Cor. xvi. 22, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha.

Doctrine II. The way how a sinner comes to be accepted of God, is freely, in Christ.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,
I. Shew what is implied in it.
II. Consider the nature of a sinner's acceptance with God.
III. The way of it.
IV. Make some practical improvement.
I. I am to shew what is implied in the doctrine. And there are these things implied in it.

First, A state of non-acceptance, or unacceptableness with God, that sinners are in, while they are not in Christ. And we may take up this in these following things.

1. They are offenders; they have sinned, and provoked him, Rom. iii. 23. Men's doing their duty, and men's misery, may make them unacceptable to men, yea, one may be unacceptable to another, who cannot shew wherefore, only they cannot endure them. But nothing can make us unacceptable to God but sin. So the unacceptable to God are undoubtedly sinners, offenders against him.

(1.) They are sinners in Adam, Rom. v. 12. The root was corrupted, and all the branches withered and rotted in him. So his guilt lies on us by nature, we are deprived of righteousness of nature, and instead of that we have derived a corrupt nature from him; all which makes us unacceptable to God by nature.

(2.) They are sinners in their own persons, who are capable of actual sinning, Gen. vi. 5. They imitate sinning Adam, as well as fall heirs to his offence. The debt left by him on their heads, they do not clear, but increase daily; they continue their rebellion while condemned for it. And so they are more and more unacceptable.

2. They are unpardoned offenders. All have sinned, but some are pardoned and accepted; but none are pardoned who are out of Christ, John iii. ult. The sentence of the broken law stands in force against all those who are not in him, who has fulfilled the law. He is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. And,

(1.) Their original guilt lies on them, unremoved, unforgiven, 1 Cor. xv. 22. God has never forgiven them their guilt of Adam's first sin, their want of original righteousness, and the corruption of their whole nature. The debt left on them by their father, they were never either able or willing to pay; and though they may have forgot it, God has neither forgiven nor forgot it, but it lies on them still, to all effects and purposes of a dreadful pursuit for it.
OBSERVATIONS ON A SINNER'S ACCEPTANCE.

(2.) The guilt of all their actual sins lies on them, Gal. iii. 10. All the sins they have been guilty of, from the first sproutings of corruption in their childhood to this day, are hard and fast on them. None of all their sins of omission or commission, of heart, lip, or life, are forgotten by God, Amos viii. 7, but the accounts are closely kept, Deut. xxxii. 34; Hos. xiii. 12. They may have made a fashion of repenting, and begging pardon, for some of their grosser sins; but since they are not in Christ, there is not one of them blotted out; for "without shedding of blood is no remission," Heb. ix. 22, and there is no saving benefit of Christ's blood, but by being in him, chap. xii. 24.

3. God is not pleased with them; for his being pleased with any of mankind is in his son Jesus Christ, and without him he can be pleased with none of them, Matth. iii. ult.; Heb. xi. 5, 6. He is not pleased with their persons nor with any of their works; because they themselves are not in Christ; but yet in the old stock, Rom. viii. 8, and their works are not wrought in him, John xv. 5. So the apostle teacheth, that it was faith that made the difference between Abel's offering and Cain's, Heb. xi. 4.

4. He is highly displeased with them. There is a cloud of divine displeasure ever upon them, John iii. ult. Whatever case they be in, rejoicing or weeping; whatever they be doing, serving God in their way, or serving their lusts, his countenance is never towards them, because they are not in Christ, Isa. lxvi. 2, 3. There is a displeasure conceived against them on the justest grounds, not to be removed till they be in Christ.

5. He cannot endure them to have any communion or intercourse with them, farther than in the way of common providence, Psalm v. 5. He and they are at enmity, he legally, they really; so there can be no communion, Amos iii. 3. And they cannot have it till they come to Christ, John xiv. 6. God may lay common favours to their hand, health, wealth, &c.; as the condemned man is allowed his meat till the execution; but he grants them no special saving favours, no peace, pardon, &c. He may allow them to come, and call them into the outer court of ordinances, and make them offers of grace; but they cannot come into the inner court, nor partake of grace, not being in Christ, John x. 9.

6. He loathes them, his soul abhors them, as abominable. They are abominable in their persons unto God, as wholly corrupt and defiled, Tit. i. 15, 16. The whole herd of them is so, Psalm xiv. 3. Their works are abominable, even the best of them, like precious liquor in a filthy vessel, Prov. xv. 8. Sin is the abominable thing unto God, Jer. xlii. 4. And all their sins lie on them, and there is
nothing on them to correct the abominable savour of the sinner by them. Sin is abominable in believers too; but the sacrifice of the sweet-smelling savour of Christ corrects it, and is a savour of rest, Gen. viii. 21.

7. *Lastly,* The wrath of God is upon them, and they lie under his curse, John iii. ult., Gal. iii. 10. They are "children of wrath," Eph. ii. 3. There is much wrath on them, and they are liable to more. There is wrath in God's heart against them, in his word, and in his providential dispensations. And if the thread of their life be cut while they are in that state of wrath, they are for ever undone without remedy.

*Secondly,* A way provided, how sinners may be accepted. The case is not hopeless, but he that is not, may be accepted. The acceptance of some with God is now secured, and cannot be lost. Believers on earth may fall under the frowns of a Father, but never out of the state of acceptance with him; being "accepted in the Beloved." The acceptance of the saints in glory is not liable to the least cloud. The acceptance of some, again, is absolutely hopeless. The fallen angels never can, nor could have been accepted: the damned sometimes might, but can no more now for ever be accepted; they sat their accepted time. But there is a way how sinners in life may be accepted.

1. God is ready to accept of them now, that will come to him in his own way; 2 Cor. v. 19. The Judge of all the earth is set down on a throne of grace, for receiving sinners into favour; and therefore we have now an "accepted time," and "day of salvation," chap. vi. 2.

2. There is ready for sinners what may procure them acceptance with a holy God, Matth. xxii. 4. There is a sacrifice slain and offered, that is of such a sweet-smelling savour, that the most loathsome sinner having the savour of it about him cannot miss to be accepted.

3. There is open proclamation made in the gospel, that all may have the benefit of that sacrifice, and be accepted of God, 2 Cor. v. 19, Matth. xxii. 4. Who they were whom the Father gave to the Son to be redeemed, is a secret; but the ransom is paid, the sacrifice is offered for you to lay hold on and be accepted by. And that is the voice of the gospel.

*Thirdly,* The sinner's bestirring himself for acceptance with God. There is a way to acceptance, but the sinner must take that way, else he will not get acceptance. He cannot sit still careless, and be accepted: he must be where he is not yet, that is, in Christ; otherwise he can have no acceptance. The sinner's bestirring himself in this matter, takes in these three things.
1. A conviction of unacceptableness to God, John xvi. 8. Men must be convinced of their being unacceptable to God, ere they will come to Christ. It is their not seeing their own loathsomeness, that makes them slight the sacrifice of sweet savour; and think to be accepted of God, while yet they are not in Christ. And for that cause it is needful they get a sight of God's holiness and their own wiliness.

2. A weighty concern and uneasiness about it. They must not go on to be easy, whether they be accepted of God or not. As long as a man can live contented without it, he will never be accepted. But the soul shall be brought to that, that all shall be sapless without it.

3. Anxiety of heart for it, Acts ii. 37. There must be earnest longings to be accepted of him, yea the soul must be brought to esteem and so prize it, as to be content with it upon any terms, Acts iv. 6. Not as if these were required to qualify us for acceptance with God; but that without them we will never come into Christ to be accepted in him.

II. The next general head is to consider the nature of a sinner's acceptance with God; and this I shall do, 1. In itself, and 2. In its effects and consequents.

First, I shall consider the nature of a sinner's acceptance with God in itself. And in itself it is a great and unspeakable benefit, and implies these following things.

First, In general, it implies an acceptance of the sinner with God, as a righteous person. A righteous God cannot accept a son of Adam, but as righteous, that is, as being really righteous before him. And so a believer in Christ indeed is, and by faith pleading Christ's righteousness for his righteousness in the sight of God, he is accepted accordingly. The Lord renews, accounts, and accepts him into favour as a righteous person, 2 Cor. v. 21, Rom. iv. 6, and v. 19. So it stands in two things.

1. God's owning and sustaining a righteousness upon the believer, as answering the demands of the law fully, Rom. iii. 22, and holding him a righteous person thereupon. The sinner standing before him in the Beloved, pleading the Mediator's righteousness, the plea is sustained, and God saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. The law gives in its demands against him, of holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin. And it is found that all these demands are satisfied, and that the righteousness upon him fully answers them all, that the law has no more to crave. And so in the very eye of the law, he is through grace held righteous.
2. On the account of that righteousness he is accepted into favour with God, Rom. iii. 24, 25. It was the sinner’s unrighteousness that cast him out of God’s favour, and held him out of it. Now that bar is taken away, and the righteousness upon him procures the favour of a righteous God, who loveth righteousness. God is perfectly pleased with that righteousness, as much as he ever was displeased with the party’s sin; and he is so well pleased with it, that notwithstanding of all the sins the party ever committed, he accepts him into favour for its sake.

Secondly, More particularly, it implies,

1. The ceasing of wrath against the soul, Hos. xiv. 4. The wrath of God no more abides on the accepted person; that cloud clears. And it clears so, that that shower shall never come on again, nor one drop of it, of revenging wrath, for ever and ever, Isa. liv. 9. The small rain of fatherly anger may come on him for his after-miscarriages; but the great rain of his revenging wrath shall never return, Cant. ii. 10, 11.

2. The curse is removed, Gal. iii. 13. That is the sentence of the broken law, that lay on the sinner binding him over to revenging wrath; which seized all mankind in Adam, and which is fortified daily by actual sin, while the sinner is out of Christ. But being accepted in Christ, that is taken away, Rom. viii. 1. The sentence is reversed, ver. 33, 34, the cursed sinner is loosed from that dreadful stake to which he was tied as the mark for the arrows of God.

3. He is fully pardoned, Isa. xliii. 25. The accepted sinner gets the King of heaven’s pardon, under his great seal; whereby his guilt of eternal wrath is for ever removed, as if he had never sinned. God takes the pen, dips it in the blood of the Beloved, and blots out his whole accounts. All his past and present sins are formally pardoned, and all his sins to come are secured not to be imputed to him, for guilt of revenging wrath, Rom. iv. 6—8.

4. He is reconciled to God, Rom. v. 1. The Lord lays down the legal enmity he bore against that person, never to take it up again; and he gives him peace through the Beloved, Eph. ii. 14. So that though all the world should be at red war with him, he has a firm peace with heaven, that he needs fear no hostilities from that quarter again for ever; which is enough to settle the heart amidst all troubles, Phil. iv. 7.

5. God is pleased with him, Heb. xi. 5. Still they are sinners indeed, and God can never be pleased with their sins; but their sins hinder not that he be pleased with their persons in Christ. The prodigal son returns to his father in rags, poverty, and want, with not a shoe on his foot; the father is not pleased with the rags on
his son, but natural affection embraces him notwithstanding of his rags, he being his own son. So God embraces the sinner in the Beloved, because he is in him.

6. He is highly pleased with him, Isa. xlii. 21. He is as much pleased with the believer's person, as ever he was displeased with him. He is pleased with him, as one is with his jewels, Mal. iii. 17; as if he saw no sin in them, Num. xxiii. 21; as if there were no spot on them, Cant. iv. 7. In a word, he is infinitely pleased with them, and can never cease to be so. For the only ground of his being pleased with them, is the Beloved in whom they are, his righteousness which is upon them; and he is infinitely pleased with the Beloved and his righteousness, and they are not liable to any alteration, John xvii. 21. Indeed, if their acceptance depended on what is wrought by them, or in them, it could not be so; but it is not set in such a slippery foundation. He is displeased with their sins, and they may smart for them; but the pleasedness with their persons in Christ is not alterable, Col. ii. 10.

7. He admits them into communion with him, 1 John i. 3. The person is let into the inner court, into the chambers of the King, Cant. i. 4. The Lord treats him as a friend, and not as a mere servant, John xv. 15. They are now agreed, and so walk together; and not only agreed, but received into special favour; and are made God's favourites, courtiers of heaven in the Beloved, in the court kept below, Isa. lvi. 15. He dwells and walks in them, 2 Cor. vi. 16; and they dwell in him; 1 John iv. 15; Psalm xcv. 1.

8. Lastly, God hath a delight and complacency in them, Isa. lixii. 4. He looks on them in his own Son, and takes pleasure in them, as covered with his righteousness. As Isaac smelling the smell of the elder brother's garments on Jacob; so believers are to God a sweet savour of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15; and therefore he delights in them, whom before he loathed.

Secondly, Let us consider this acceptance in its effects and consequents. It is in these an unspeakable privilege. By means of it,

1. The springs of mercy are opened to the sinner, that rivers of compassion may flow towards him, Rom. v. 1, &c. Many look for mercy while unaccepted; but the unsatisfied law will draw a bar betwixt all saving mercy and them. But the believer being accepted, the law's mouth is stopt, and mercy may flow freely.

2. He is adjudged to eternal life, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7; Acts xxvi. 18. Life was promised in the first covenant, upon the fulfilling of the law; now the believer being accepted of God as a righteous person, for whom the law is fulfilled, is accordingly adjudged to live for ever.

3. The channel of sanctification is cleared for him, and the do-
minion of sin is broken in him, Rom. vi. 14. While the sinner is unaccepted, and under the curse, communion with God is stopt, and death preys on his soul; for "the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," 1 Cor. xv. 56. As long as the law has a cursing and condemning power over a man, sin reigns in him, like briers and thorns in the cursed ground; but these being removed, sin loseth its strength, and the blessing coming in their room makes him fruitful. So faith sanctifies.

4. He is privileged with peace of conscience. Peace with God makes peace within one's breast, Phil. iv. 7. While one is unaccepted of God, guilt lies on the conscience, which makes a soul and condemning one, that will gnaw like a worm, and blast all outward peace and prosperity; but being accepted, the conscience is cleansed, Heb. ix. 14, and turns a good conscience, that will make one rejoice in trouble, 2 Cor. i. 12.

5. Access to God with confidence, Eph. iii. 12; 1 John iii. 21. God allows them whom he accepts, access to him in duties, that they may come to him, as children to a father, with all their wants, complaints, &c. expecting all from him that is really good for them, Job xxxiii. 24, 26. They are privileged with the hearing of their prayers, communion with him in word and providences, receiving, by the means of grace, light in darkness, strength in weakness, health in sickness, &c.

6. Acceptance of their works, Prov. xv. 8. God accepting a man's person in Christ, does next accept his work, Gen. iv. 4. If it were never such a small work, a cup of cold water given one in name of a disciple, though attended with many imperfections, yet being fruit that grows on a branch ingrafted into Christ, it is accepted of God, as savouring of the stock.

7. The unstinging of afflictions and death, 1 Cor. xv. 55. It alters the very nature of these; afflictions are no more properly penal, but corretory and medicinal, Isa. xxvii. 9, and death perfects the cure. A bee-sting they may have, but the serpentine deadly sting is gone; for the curse is removed out of their crosses, and they are blessings.

8. Lastly, All things working for good, Rom. viii. 28. In a state of non-acceptance, all things work for evil to a man; his prosperity destroys him; the very gospel is a savour of death unto him, that he draws death out of what others get life. But being accepted, the worst of things tend to his profit, God being for him, nothing can be eventually against him; but whether the wind blow on his back or face, it drives him to the harbour.

III. I proceed to shew the way of a sinner's acceptance with God. 
First, It is "freely." There is nothing in the sinner himself to
procure it, or move God to it, Rom. iii. 24, but as the sun shines
without hire on the dung-hill, so God accepts sinners of mere grace.
It is done freely, in that,

1. It is without respect to any work done by the sinner, Tit. iii.
5. Grace and works are inconsistent in this matter. Men may
render themselves acceptable to men, by some work of theirs, that is
profitable or pleasant to them; but no work of ours can render us
acceptable to God. It is natural for men to think to gain acceptance
with God, by their doing better; and when they have set themselves
to do and work for that end, they please themselves that they are
accepted. But mistake it not, that way of acceptance is blocked up.
For,

(1.) All works of ours are excluded from our justification, where-
of our acceptance is a part, Rom. iii. 20, and faith and works are
opposed in that matter, ver. 28; Gal. ii. 16.

(2.) Our best works are attended with sinful imperfections, Isa.
xiv. 6, and mixed with many evil works, Jam. iii. 2. So in them
there is ground for God's loathing and condemning us; how then
can we be accepted for what is in itself loathsome and condemnable?

(3.) We can do no good works before we be accepted, John ix. 31;
Heb. xi. 6. The tree must be good, ere the fruit can be so. The
person out of Christ can work no works, but dead works, John xv.
5, for he is, while so, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of
iniquity. And what is all that the man can do before he believe
and be accepted in Christ, but a parcel of hypocritical works?

2. It is without respect to any good qualification or disposition
wrought in the sinner; Rom. iv. 5, “To him that worketh not, but
believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for
righteousness.” Men may be accepted of men, if though they have
done nothing, they yet are well qualified for doing, or are agreeable
in their disposition; but that is not the way of a sinner's acceptance
with God, though the bias of our nature lies that way to expect it.
For,

(1.) The way of a sinner's acceptance with God excludes all boast-
ing, Rom. iii. 27. And it is the design of the gospel to exclude it;
but if there were a respect to any good qualities in the party ac-
tcepted, there would be some ground for boasting.

(2.) What good qualities can there be in the sinner before he be
accepted in Christ? Heb. xi. 6. It is true he, may be touched with
a sense of his sin, may be filled with sorrow and remorse for it, and
desiring to be delivered; but all these are but legal and selfish dis-
positions, whereof not God, but self is the end. It is by union with
him that gracious qualities must be wrought in the soul, Acta
xxvi. 18.
THE WAY OF A SINNER'S ACCEPTANCE.

(3.) When the man comes to be endued with gracious qualities, as he is by that time already accepted, so if his acceptance depended on them, he would come short; for still they are imperfect, having a great mixture of the contrary ill qualities, that need to be covered another way. And how can one expect acceptance on that, for which he needs a pardon?

Secondly, It is in Christ the sinner is accepted. It implies,

1. The cause of a sinner's acceptance with God. It is for Christ's sake; Rom. iii. 24, 25, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." And v. 19—"By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." He is the Beloved of the Father, so highly acceptable to him, that sinners are accepted for his sake, Matth iii. ult. The acceptance of the Mediator is so full, that like the oil on Aaron's head, it runs down to the skirts of his garments. He is the Mediator, that brings in the sinner to the throne of grace, mediates his peace, and procures his acceptance into favour with God. This is,

(1.) The sole cause of the sinner's acceptance with God, Rom. iii. 24. As in purchasing the sinner's acceptance, so in procuring it, he alone is the actor. No righteousness is mixed with his, no works with his works. God has an eye to none but him, and nothing but him, in accepting the sinner. Some are better than others indeed, before they are accepted, but both are absolutely free grace's debtors for acceptance.

(2.) The full cause, fully proportioned in its efficacy to the acceptance of the worst sinners, Heb. vii. 25. As there is nothing else that can procure our acceptance, so we need nothing else for that end. Corrupt nature reckons it is too great a venture, to lay our acceptance with God on Christ's righteousness alone; and therefore, to make sure work, requires such and such works to be done, and such and such good qualities the sinner is to be adorned with. But what needs wood, hay, and stubble, to be laid in with the Rock for a foundation.

2. The state of acceptableness of a sinner, wherein he may, and will be, and cannot but be accepted of God; it is being in Christ, united to him by faith. One must not think to be accepted for Christ's sake while out of Christ; no more than the branch of one tree can partake of the sap of another, while not ingrafted into it; or the slayer could be safe, while he was not yet got within the gates of the city of refuge. For,

(1.) Where there is no union with Christ, there can be no communion with him; John, xv. 6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast
forth as a branch, and is withered." Can a branch be nourished by
the juice of a stock with which it is not knit? Neither can a man
be accepted for the sake of Christ's righteousness, while he is not
united to him. As it is the marriage with the woman that makes
her portion the man's; so it is a spiritual marriage-union with
Christ by faith that makes his righteousness actually ours, so as to
be accepted for it.

(2.) Christ's salvation is in the event confined to his body, though
in the offer it is extended to all. He is the Saviour of the world
indeed, John iv. 42. But does he save all the world? No; thou-
sands perish for all that, because they do not unite with him, are
not in him. He is the Saviour of the body, Eph. v. 23. His body
he actually saves, every member thereof, and none else. He is the
Saviour of the world officially, of his body only eventually. An ark
there was provided before the universal deluge, but none were
saved that were not in it.

(3.) The Father's good pleasure with mankind-sinners goes not
without him, Matth. iii. ult. As without the verge of the city of re-
fluence the slayer could expect no protection; so without Christ there
is nothing but the curse, wrath, and death. God cannot accept us
as righteous, while he sees no righteousness on us; there can be no
righteousness on us before God, but as we are in Christ, shaded with
his righteousness, 2 Cor. v. 21. Therefore he cannot be pleased
with a sinner out of Christ.

(4.) Lastly, The covenant of peace reaches not without him, Isa,
xlix. 8, and there is no acceptance of a sinner but in it. He was
the only party-contractor in it, and contracted only for his seed;
and it is only by faith uniting with Christ that we are actually in
it. Know then that the whole of your salvation lies here. Ye must
be in Christ, or ye can have no saving benefit by him. For God
will not accept you even for Christ's sake, if ye be not in him.

But in Christ the sinner is in a state of acceptableness to God.
We take up this in these five things following:—

1. In Christ the sinner may be accepted of God; 2 Cor. v. 19,
"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imput-
ing their trespasses unto them." There God may, with safety of his
honour, meet with the sinner, and receive him into favour. While
the sinner is out of Christ, it is inconsistent with the honour of God
to accept of him; where is the honour of his justice and holiness.
and of his law, if that should be? But the sinner being in Christ,
these bars are removed, Matth. xxii. 4.

Reason. Christ has fully satisfied the law, in the name and stead
of all his, Rom. x. 4. The law can demand nothing of them, but
what it has got of their Surety for them; so justice cannot hinder
their acceptance. And it has got,

(1.) Holiness of nature. It is true, it is not in them in their own
persons, in the eye of the law; but in Christ as a public person it
is; for he was born perfectly holy, brought a holy spotless human
nature into the world with him, which was never in the least stained,

(2.) Righteousness of life. They cannot pretend to it in their
own persons; but Christ has furnished it for them; Phil. ii. 8, "He
humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." All the ten
commands had their due from him. His obedience was universal,
constant without interruption, voluntary without constraint, and per-
fect without the least failure in degree or measure.

(3.) Satisfaction for sin. That is quite beyond their reach; but
he has satisfied fully; Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from
the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Death in all its
shapes preyed on him. The forerunners of it met him, at his en-
trance into the world; it hung about him all his days; in end it
came on him with all its joint forces, carried him to the dust
of death, kept him in the prison of the grave, till the debt was de-
clared to be completely paid.

2. In Christ the sinner will be accepted. Any, even the worst of
sinners shall certainly be accepted in Christ; Acts xvi. 31, "Be-
lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Whoso-
ever shall make their escape into this city of refuge shall be safe.
Christ will refuse none that come to him; and God will reject none
that are in Christ. Let this be secured, and all is safe.

Reason. The promise of the gospel ensures this. The truth of hea-
ven is plighted for it, that sinners may have all encouragement to
come to Christ; John iii. 16, "For God so loved the world, that he
gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should
not perish, but have everlasting life." It is an unalterable statute,
that "he that believeth shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16. The word
is full of promises of this nature. See Isa. lv. 1, 2. So that as
Christ's satisfaction shews it is in the power of a holy God, to accept
sinners; the promise of the gospel ascertains it to be his will.

3. In Christ the sinner cannot but be accepted. It is impossible
it should fail or miscarry; Heb. vi. 18, "That by two immutable,
things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a
strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the
hope set before us." Heaven and earth may pass away sooner than
a sinner in Christ should not be received into favour with God.

Reason. There is a right of a third party in this matter, which it is
impossible to be banked. It is not only God and the sinner that are here concerned, but the Mediator Christ appears for his interest. In the covenant that passed from eternity betwixt him and the Father, it was promised him, that on condition of his fulfilling all his righteousness, sinners should be accepted in him; he has fulfilled the condition, and so demands it as his own right, to whom the promises were made, Tit. i. 2.

4. That moment a sinner is in Christ, he is accepted, Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." No sooner does the soul come into Christ by faith, but all is safe; the man is in a state of favour with God, the day is risen with him, and the long and black night of the state of wrath is at an end. For then,

(1.) Heaven's offer is accepted as it was made. In the gospel there is an offer of Christ and his righteousness made to the sinner, Rom. i. 17; and of acceptance in him, Acts xiii. 38. The soul by faith coming to Christ, accepts the offer; so the acceptance with God offered, becomes actually his.

(2.) Faith uniting the soul to Christ, upon that union with him follows a communion with him in his righteousness, yea, in his fulness; as in marriage there is a communion of goods, 1 John i. 3. So the soul wants nothing to commend it to God for acceptance, having all in its head Christ, 1 Cor. i. 30; Col. ii. 10. The holiness and purity of his birth is theirs; all the good works he did during his life are theirs; and all that he suffered in life and death is theirs. All fullness being united to all emptiness, the empty creature is filled, and rendered accepted; the transcendent beauty of the Head casts a lustre on all the members.

(3.) The soul pleading Christ's righteousness, and Christ interceding for the soul on that ground, the imputation of it, and acceptance of the person upon it, must immediately ensue. Faith's plea is well bottomed, and cannot be refused: Christ's intercession is always effectual; so the righteousness that is theirs by faith, cannot miss to be reckoned theirs, and they accepted as righteous thereon, 2 Cor. v. 21.

5. Lastly, While they abide in Christ, they remain accepted; so their union with him being everlasting, the acceptance of their persons can never be interrupted; John x. 28, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" Rom. viii. 1. It continues in their adversity, as well as prosperity, Job. xlii. 8. Their sins may bring them under heavy strokes, yet still their persons are accepted in Christ, Psalm lxxxix. 30—34. It continues in death, as well as in life, John xi.
11, and will continue through eternity, Heb. vii. 25, for that righteousness of Christ put on by faith will ever continue on them; their union with Christ can never be dissolved; and being in Christ, they can never be but accepted.

I come now to the improvement of this subject.

1. Then the door of acceptance with God is open to all; none are excluded, Isa. lv. 1, 2. What is given freely, one has access to, as well as another, whatever they have been. Not that God will accept of any who will continue in their sin, and will not come to Christ; but that none shall be refused, who will come for acceptance in the method God has laid down.

2. Seek then acceptance with God, that ye may find favour with him. This should be your main aim, 2 Cor. v. 9. "Here your happiness lies in time and eternity; Psalm xxx. 5, "In his favour is life." The favour of the world is both insufficient and uncertain; it cannot satisfy in life, much less in death. God is the best friend, and the most terrible enemy; for he is an everlasting friend, and an everlasting enemy too.

3. Seek it freely, without pretending to anything in yourselves to recommend you to his acceptance or favour. Put no confidence in whole or in part, in your doings, sufferings, attainments, Phil. iii. 7, 8; otherwise ye do put a bar in your own way, and will meet with that, "Thy money perish with thyself." Mind that this may procure your rejection, and therefore not your acceptance.

4. Seek it through Jesus Christ only, that is, by faith in him, laying the whole stress of your acceptance on his righteousness. The Jews missed it, because they sought it not this way, Rom. ix. 32. No person nor thing else can procure you the favour of God; no righteousness else will cover you; nothing but the blood of the Redeemer can be a covert from revenging justice; nor will anything else purge the conscience. All other things will be but as a wall of dry boards betwixt you and the consuming fire.

5. Lastly, Therefore as ever ye would have acceptance or favour with God, seek to be in Christ; to be united to him. For as there is no acceptance with God, but for his sake; so there is no acceptance for his sake, but to those that are in him, Col. i. 27. There is salvation in Christ, but none partake of it that are not in him; a righteousness in him, but it covers none but the members of his body. And,

(1.) This is the only way to be safe in time; for it is the only way to be without the verge of wrath, John iii. ult. And they that are without it are safe, go times as they will, John xvi. ult. While the Lord is threatening a rousing stroke on the generation,
THE DOCTRINE APPLIED.

the only safety will be in Christ, Micah v. 5.; Isa. viii. 14; and xxvi. 20.

(2.) It is the only way to be safe in eternity, Phil. iii. 9. We must launch out of time into eternity, and there is no escaping the gulf of eternal wrath, but in him. They that are not in him must depart from him; and departing from him, they must go into everlasting fire.

QUEST. How may we then get into Christ.

ANSW. 1. The only way to get into him is by faith, Eph. iii. 17. And faith is the convinced soul's renouncing all confidence in itself, and trusting on him entirely for salvation from sin and wrath, upon the ground of the faithfulness of God in the promise of the gospel. Hereby the soul knits with Christ, hangs on him, depends on him, wholly to stand or fall, according as he shall deal with them.

2. The only way to get that faith, is by his Spirit in us, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Christ communicating his quickening Spirit unto the dead soul, it believes; and believing is united to Christ, and accepted in him. Wherefore breathe, pant, and long for the Spirit of Christ, Luke xi. 13.

I shall now drop a word very briefly to the last doctrine, and so conclude this subject.

DOCTR. III. ult. Glorious free grace shines forth in the acceptance of sinners in the beloved Jesus.

We shall consider, wherein it shines there. It shines,

1. In his admitting a Surety to mediate for the acceptance of sinners, when he might have insisted that the soul that sinned should die, Rom. v. 8, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The necks of all the elect were on the block, and it was in the hand of spotless justice to reach them the fatal stroke. But glorious free grace admits a surety in their room.

2. He provided the Surety, John iii. 16; as he did the ram to come instead of Isaac lying bound on the altar. All the beasts of the field could not have afforded a sacrifice sufficient for the sinner's acceptance; nor the angels in heaven a cautioner; but glorious grace gave God's own Son; Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." So the righteousness is the righteousness of God, not only of one who is God, but provided by God.

3. He demands nothing of us, to render us acceptable in whole or in part; but the cause of his accepting sinners is wholly without them; Rom. iii. 24, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the
redemption that is in Jesus Christ.” To us it is in no wise, Give and get; but Take and have; Rom. iv. 16, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.” So nothing in us has any hand in it, but faith, as the hand whereby it is received.

4. The very hand of faith whereby it is received is God’s free gift; Eph. ii. 8, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Philip. i. 29. That one believes while another doth not, is owing purely to free grace, which makes the difference; giving the quickening spirit to one, that is not communicated to another.

5. In its breaking over all impediments lying in its way, such as these in the case of the Corinthians, to whom the apostle says, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. In the best of sinners, there is that loathsomeness and unworthiness found, that proclaims a glory of grace in their acceptance; Jer. iii. 19, “I said, How shall I put thee among the children?” But in the worst of them there is nothing found but what glorious grace will break over, to accept them in Christ, as in Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Paul, &c.

6. In the thoroughness of the acceptance; Isa. i. 18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Acceptance among men is often coldrife, and by halves, so as the heart is not freely toward the pardoned offender. But God’s acceptance of sinners in Christ is perfect the first moment; they are perfectly beloved in him, John xvii. 21.

7. Lastly, In the perpetuity and constancy of it; sinners are so accepted in Christ that they shall never be cast out of God’s favour again; John x. 28, 29, “And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” They are not put on their good behaviour as to the acceptance of their persons with God, but it is secured unalterably in Christ. The smiles and frowns of a Father will indeed be as they carry.

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USE 1. Let us loath Popery then, as the smoke of the bottomless pit darkening the glory of grace in the acceptance of sinners, by their merit of works, and other corrupt doctrines and practices, laying another foundation than Christ. It is evident we are in danger of it, and it will be our wisdom to be on our guard, that we be not caught napping, come what will.

2. Let all be encouraged to come to God through Christ for acceptance, assuring themselves they may have it through him, God being well pleased with him, and with every one who believes in him for life, pardon and acceptance.