—That is, believe Christ is indeed yours, and that his body was really broken for you; and look on that bread and wine as God’s seal to it, which he will not deny his own institution, and administered in his name by his messengers called for that effect. If you have no mind to believe it, why will you sit down at that table? If you have, then see you do it. This will honour Christ, and advance your evidence and sanctification. And keep up the belief of it afterwards, and recal to mind the sealed bargain when doubts arise.

Lastly, Pray for the testimony of the Spirit. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.” This is that which may quite raze all doubts and fears. He attests the truth of the scriptures and the truth of grace in the heart. Of the one he says, this is my word; of the other, this is my work. And so lets the soul see without hesitation its title to heaven.

To conclude, This is the way to prepare you for the sacrament, to help you to a holy life, to a safe and comfortable death, and to glorify God and edify others in your death, being capable to give a reason of the hope that is in you. Remember you are warned, stirred up, and directed to this so much neglected, though most necessary duty. Cast not the counsels of God behind your back in your life, lest you hear of it bitterly in your death. “But if you know these things, happy are you if you do them.” Amen.

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*Penpont Communion, May 24, 1716.*

**THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED IN CHRIST.**

**SERMON V.**

**Matthew xi. 6.**

*And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

These words are the conclusion of our Lord’s answer to the question upon which John’s disciples came to him. John himself had no doubt of Christ’s being the Messiah, for he was his forerunner to point him out to the world; he had baptized him, seen the Spirit descending, and had given testimony to him as the Lamb of God, John i. 29—35. But it seems his disciples were not so firm in the faith, and therefore he sends them to Christ to be from himself fully satisfied in that grand point. And indeed, nothing less than a di-
vive power can silence the clamours of unbelief going about to raze foundations.

Our Lord gives them answer by referring them to his works compared with the word, Isa. xxxv. 4—6. and lxi. 1—3. The things which were prophesied concerning the Messiah, they heard and saw to be fulfilled in him, and therefore behoved to conclude him to be the Messiah. Divine power can cast such a beam of light over the works and word of God, as will stare the strongest unbelief out of countenance, and make that raging lust fall down unable to create more trouble.

But because his outward mean appearance was a vail, through which most of the world could not see, he declares them happy whose faith carries them over those things in him over which the graceless world, the despisers of the gospel, stumble and fall to their own utter destruction. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." In which words, there is,

1. A fatal stumble in the way to happiness, which many of the hearers of the gospel make. They are offended in Christ. They stumble at him. Observe here, the object of their offence, Jesus Christ. It is at him the world is offended. The God that made and guides the world, the Saviour that redeemed them, does not please the world. What wonder then that others cannot do it. There is something in the mystery of Christ, with which the unbeliever will always be finding fault. The Jews were offended at the meanness of his life, and in this the disciples of John seem to have joined them. The Gentiles were offended at the ignominy of his death. Some at one thing, some at another, and every unbeliever at something in him. This is surely a great mistake in them. Jesus Christ is holy, and there is nothing in him to give offence. The world is unholy, and takes offence at him. He is the brightness of his Father's glory: and they like owls and bats are blinded at the shining sun, and therefore carefully keep at a distance from him. They are offended. In the Greek, scandalized. The word scandal, in a natural sense, signifies, 1. Some obstacle in one's way, by which he is stopped in his passage; particularly a sharp stake, which soldiers put in the field in time of war, to wound the feet and legs of the enemy that were to follow them that way. 2. A stone or block in the way, over which men are apt to fall. A trap or snare to catch beasts. This shews what a dreadful sin, and soul destroying evil, an offence given is; and withal, what a soul ruining the taking offence is, and the stumbling over real stumbling blocks.

Now the blind world by reason of their own corruption, are thus offended or scandalized in Christ. "And he shall be for a sanctu-
ary; but for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.” He is the way to the Father, but they see something in him which they cannot digest, and therefore, they stop, or go off the way. They stumble at him, looking for matters in him, according to their carnal wish, they are disappointed, and they cannot get over that. Thus eventually, he is a trap and a snare to them, by which their ruin is more secured than ever. Their disease gathers strength from the remedy abused.

2. In the text there is the happiness of those who escape this fatal stumble. He that is not offended in Christ, who sees nothing in Christ that offends him, nothing in him to turn him away from him, nor to stop his going forward to him, and to the Father through him; he is a happy man, blessed here and shall be blessed hereafter. The party is described negatively, to shew us that there can be no neutrality among the hearers of the gospel. He that is not offended in Christ is one that is well pleased with him, with every thing in him, or about him; and he that is not so is offended in him.

**Doctrine.** Stumbling at some one thing or another in Christ abounds so much in the world that they are happy persons who are preserved from falling along with the rest. In prosecuting this subject, I shall shew,

I. What it is to stumble at Christ and be offended in him.

II. That stumbling at Christ abounds very much in the world.

III. That they are happy indeed who are kept from being offended in him. And then add some improvement.

I. To shew what it is to stumble at Christ, and be offended in him.

This is a very awful matter. For a man to die of his disease, when he might have been cured, is sad; but it is a double death for one to destroy himself by the abuse of a remedy prescribed that would have cured him infallibly. It has reference to four things in the general.

1. To the grand device of salvation through Jesus Christ, laid in the infinite wisdom of God, and fixed by the divine counsel. This is the foundation on which the Father has laid the weight of the elect's salvation, and on which he requires all to lay their weight for eternity. And at this the unbelieving world ever stumbles, and their hearts can never fall in with it. *We preach, says the apostle, Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*
2. To the offer of Christ made in the gospel. There he is offered to sinners, to be the Captain of their salvation. To be the sinner's head, Lord, and husband. To be their Prophet, Priest, and King, their all and instead of all. But sinners love not the offer, they stumble at his offices; there is something in them at which they perpetually stand, and so they cannot come forward. Ye will not, says he, come unto me that ye might have life.

3. To the making use of Christ for all the purposes for which the Father has given him. Here they stand again. They are obstinate patients that will not receive the remedy, though they should die of their disease. If their own way will do with them, good and well; but as for the Lord's way they are offended at it, and cannot fall in with it. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling stone."

4. To the practical understanding of sinners. They ever form a wrong judgment of Christ, and nothing less than overpowering grace will rectify their apprehensions of him. They still say what is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? It is true they may please themselves and others, with fine speculations about Christ. If they be Ministers they may preach him, or professors may talk of him and recommend him to others. But in this they are like the mountebank, who recommends his drugs to others, yet perhaps in the meantime he himself abhors them and makes no use of them. I find no fault in him, says Pilate, yet he condemned him. So the unrenewed world constantly stumble in their views of Christ with respect to practice. "If they knew the gift of God, and who Christ is, they would ask of him and he would give them living water." "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee." This stumbling at Christ, lies in these four things,

1. The blind soul ever finds some fault in the mystery of Christ. There is always something in or about Christ, that disgusts the sinner, is quite disagreeable and shocking to him. The Son of God is not a match suitable to those, whose minds are not savingly enlightened. "To them he hath no form nor comeliness, and when they see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him." Though his Father is well pleased with him, and he hath the hearts and praises of all the saints, yet they are not pleased with him. If they would speak their minds, they would tell you, they see not how they could be happy in him for all.
2. That which disgusts them, is what they cannot get over. There is something not to be found in him, which they cannot want, and something in him which they cannot endure. And by no art can they reconcile their hearts to it. It is with many as with the young man, "who was sad at what Jesus said to him, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." Many a time they are aiming at the bargain betwixt Christ and their souls, but they can never finish it. For there is always one thing that stands between Christ and them. His holiness will not allow him to yield it to them, and their corruption will not allow them to yield it to him. And so in the end the soul parts with Christ, perhaps with grief and tears, because it will do their way, and they cannot do otherwise, Mark x. 21, 22.

3. Because they cannot get over that one thing, it keeps Christ and the soul asunder effectually. Could the Jews have got over the offence of the mean appearance of Christ, and reconciled it to their own notion of the Messiah, they would have been fond of him, as they were while he was not come. "He was then the Lord whom they sought." But the bargain must needs be marred, where the parties cannot agree. And there can be no uniting with Christ by faith, while there is any one objection against him reigning in the heart. We must be all his, or none at all. We must receive whole Christ, or want him altogether.

Lastly, This keeping Christ and the soul asunder, the soul is at length thereby ruined, and brought into a worse case, than if Christ had never come in the way. "If I had not come, says he, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." For then the remedy for sin is despised, and while that continues the disease must needs be desperate. And none can think that their debt will be so severely exacted as those who have refused a cautioner. And as the sourest vinegar comes of the most generous wine, so the vengeance that comes on the despisers of the gospel will be the most terrible. No fire will burn so keenly, as that which comes from the altar. We now proceed,

II. To shew that stumbling at Christ abounds very much in the world. Let us view the heaps upon heaps that are lying broken, snared and taken.

1. Let us take a view of those that are lying rotting above the ground in open profanity; they are kept away from Christ, even by the very far off sight of him and his way. "There are many at this day, who cry, let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords from us. We will not have this man to reign over us." These are
the profane persons, and such as will not take on so much as a form of godliness. They are terrified at the holiness of his way, and therefore they run far from him. They keep at such a distance from him, they will not set their foot on the holy ground. They are so far from covenan ting with God, that it is evident, they will engage to be any thing sooner than to be the Lord's. Our holy Redeemer does not please these people more than a palace would please swine.

2. Let us take a view of those who are lying dead upon their murdered convictions. Our Lord has taken some persons in hand to cure them, and by the Spirit of conviction, he has begun to let blood of the heart vein of their beloved lusts. But the pain of this operation hath made them disagree with the Physician, start up and break the lancet, and stifle their convictions. And now their wound is whole, their convictions are gone, and their conscience, which was so uneasy before, is now as dead as stone. Go where they please, they are not troubled. Darts are as stubble.

3. Those that are lying broken and pining away, having stumbled over the cross of Christ. Like the stony ground hearers, "not having root in themselves but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." Many have made a good appearance in a fair day, when in the time of a storm, have soon turned their backs upon Christ. It is now long since the times of persecution, and yet there is no doubt, but the wounds then received are lasting with many to this day. But I fear that private crosses in the time of the Church's peace, have made greater havock in the case of many professors, than ever public ones did. And O! but it is much to wait upon the Lord, in all the turns of providence, which may be in our lots and not to be offended in the great manager of all. They may follow Christ far, time and circumstances may at length cause to draw back.

4. Those that are fallen away from the lusts of Christ's consolation, to the fulsome breasts of the world and their own lusts. In every age there are many like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt, who for a time kept up in the wilderness, but afterwards lost hopes of Canaan, and fell a "lusting, and even the children of Israel also wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat?" We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. Such persons keep steady and flourishing a while, so long as religion is new to them. But the grace which they receive being awakening only, and not changing, and their souls never truly uniting with
Christ; their comfort and satisfaction from that quarter dry up, when once the novelty is away: so they do not find that in Christ which they expected, and therefore they are offended, and even fall away to their former courses, having entirely lost their taste and relish for spiritual things.

Finally, Look at those whose soul exercises have issued in putting their case in the hands of a Physician of no value. There are many who being awakened by a spirit of conviction, and are really exercised about their souls' condition, put their case to Christ for healing. But not being able or willing to wait his time, till the wound be sufficiently searched, but being for peace at any rate, they are offended in him, and so put themselves in the hand of the law that wounded them. Thus they make themselves whole, not by the believing application of the blood of Christ, but by their prayers, tears, and external reformation. And so they settle down upon their lees farther from Christ than ever. It now remains,

III. To shew that they are happy indeed who are kept from being offended in him. What this attainment is, you may know from what is here said of it. It consists in this. This happy soul is well pleased with Christ, and has no objections against him. The soul says of him, "His mouth is most sweet; yes, he is altogether lovely." The heart of this person now corresponds in all respects to the covenant of peace, and says that it is well ordered in all things and sure. There is nothing in the mystery of Christ which they desire to have out, and there is nothing out which they desire to have in it. They are pleased with the gospel offer, they love Christ in his person, natures, offices, relations, all that is in him or about him is welcome to them. And are all such blessed ones? They are. For,

1. Their eyes are opened to see that superlative glory in Christ, that all the unbelieving world cannot discover. And therefore I may say, Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. And indeed in this case the hidden glory of the Mediator is taken up, darkening all created excellency. Whereas the most piercing eyes of nature can never see through the vail. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." But they who are pleased with him can say, "We behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth."

2. Their hearts are now formed, cast into a new mould, otherwise they could never be pleased with him. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of
the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Adam's
covention is engraved in our nature, and the way of believing is the
very reverse of nature's way. "For they being ignorant of God's
righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness,
have not submitted to the righteousness of God." Sin is our natural
element, and though it be our disease, yet we naturally love it, and
cannot but love it so as to loathe the physician. If then the heart
be pleased with Christ, it is turned and changed, and made willing
in a day of power. The natural enmity is cured, and the heart of
stone is become a heart of flesh.

3. That soul cannot fail to embrace Christ, to receive him by
faith and unite with him. For to be well pleased with Christ, is in
effect to say amen to the great bargain. And the cause is won
when the sinner is pleased with the gospel offer. Now he is the
person, "who having found one pearl of great price, went and sold
all that he had, and bought it."

Lastly, Hence all the blessings of the covenant fall to the share
of him who is well pleased with Christ, as to his having a right to
them, as a believer through Jesus Christ.

Uses for improvement.

1. Be convinced then of this bias of the heart, this disposition of
the soul to stumble at Jesus Christ. O, says the poor fool, would
any thing in Jesus Christ offend me? Pleased with Christ! who
would not be well pleased with him? Alas! you know not what
spirits you are of! you are little acquainted with the natural enmity
of your souls against the Lord, and particularly with that corrup-
tion of your nature, by which it is strongly averse to the gospel
plan of salvation. If it be not so, how can it be an evidence of the
grace of God in the text, to be well pleased with him. "While
Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks
foolishness, he is to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For we are the
circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ
Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

I tell you many are pleased with Christ, as Jacob was with Leah,
while he thought she had been Rachel. It is a mistaken Christ
whom they love, even as sure as they love their lusts. No man can
serve two masters. And if a new light would spring up in their dark
hearts, they would see it to be so. Many love Christ very well, to
be a rest to their consciences, while they can get the world and their
lusts to be a rest to their hearts. And thus they can do very well
between the two. But take away these from them, and their hearts
can rest no more than a fish drawn out of the water till it be in
it again. Their souls can never truly say as the Psalmist, "Whom
have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I de-
sire besides thee." Now was ever Christ a covering for the eyes to
them. Nor did they ever find such sweetness in Christ as they
have in following their lusts.

2. I exhort one and all of you, that have a mind for any share of
eternal happiness, and particularly communicants, that you would
try yourselves this night, whether you be well pleased with Christ
or not; that so if there be any thing which you have stumbled at in
Christ in time past, you would now come over it, as ever you would
see the face of God in mercy, and would not have it part betwixt
Christ and you. And for this purpose let your consciences put the
following questions.

1. Is there any thing in Christ's salvation offered in the gospel
that offends you? Salvation from the wrath of God, is but the half
of Christ's salvation. I doubt not but you are pleased with this
part of it. But are you pleased with the part which is salvation from
sin? "He saves his people from their sins?" What sayest thou,
sinner? Christ is saying to thee, wilt thou be made whole? Wilt
thou be made clean?

Wilt thou be made content, that the Physician not only remove
death, but the disease also? Not only take away the guilt, but
break the power, and also at last destroy the very existence of sin
in you? Wilt thou be content to hold out the right eye to him that
he may pluck it out, and the offending right hand that he may cut
it off? If not, you are offended in Christ, his salvation does not
please you. But if you come forward to him, he is pleased and you
are welcome.

2. Is there any thing in Christ's offices that offends you? Any
thing in his prophetic office that offends? Our Lord has the Fa-
ther's commission to guide poor sinners through the wilderness of
this world to Immanuel's land. "He hath given him to be a witness
unto the people, a leader and commander to the people." He leads
them by his word and Spirit, for it is not his will that they be trusted
with the guiding of themselves. What think you of this commis-
sion. Will you take Christ this day for your guide for ever, or will
you hold the reins still in your own hands, though you should lead
yourselves to destruction? Will you then renounce your own wis-
dom, and take him for your sole oracle? I am sure you may know
that your wilfulness has many a time shaken off this yoke. What
say you of it now? If you have nothing to object against our Lord's
command as a prophet, then I hope you will endeavour to shake off self-conceit, and lean no more to your own understanding. You will also resolve not to be such strangers as you have been, to seeking and depending on the Lord's light, in all matter of sin and duty.

You will allow the light of the Lord's word freely to turn you from your prejudices and preconceived opinions. And that a little child shall lead you, if he can but hold out the Lord's word, pointing you the way. You will prize his ordinances, and not make the Lord's work a sinking burden to the messenger, by despising his message. Seeing the ministry of the word is one thing by which Christ executeth his prophetic office, therefore, "He saith, he that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."

Again,

Is there any thing in his priestly office that offends you? Man is fallen. Justice is offended. God's device for the salvation of sinners is, that the Redeemer Christ be both priest and sacrifice, that he build the fallen temple of the Lord, and bear the glory, being the alone way to the Father. Will you venture your salvation on this foundation, renounce your own righteousness, all your doings and sufferings, and lay the whole weight of your acceptance with God on the merits of Christ's blood? and take him for your only intercessor and way to the Father. If you have nothing to object; here then you will humbly and heartily acknowledge, that you deserve nothing at God's hand, but that he would be just, if he should cast you off for ever. You will confess that you have nothing to recommend you to God, and dare trust nothing to any thing that is yours: and that if you be received of the Lord, there is nothing in or about you to engage him to you. You will look for the acceptance of your duties, not from any value in themselves, but through the merits of Christ. And that you will look for the acceptance of your persons and for all the favours from the Lord, only through the wounds of a Redeemer.

Again, Is there any thing in his kingly office that offends you? He has got the kingdom by his Father's gift, and it is his Father's decree that he rule sinners according to his own will and pleasure, and his holy laws? Are you content with this? Will you give up yourselves to him without reserve? Alas! will you say the armies of hell in my breast are not so easily dispossessed. True, but I hope you are not so closely blocked up, but there may be intelligence got betwixt Zion's King and you; and though you cannot subdue the rebels, will you be content to make an offer of the kingdom to him over your whole man? If so, then you will renounce and heartily give up with all your lusts without exception of one. You will also
look on Jesus Christ as your head of influences, for sanctification; and go no more out against temptations and to duties in your own strength, but in his strength who is mighty in battle. The long debate that has been betwixt providence and you, who should carve out your lot in the world, will be at an end. You will say, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved."

Lastly, Is there any thing in his covenant that offends you? Is there any thing in it that is not well ordered in your eyes? Does the taking up of the cross offend you? Or are you content to take him to follow him whithersoever he goes, and nothing shall part betwixt him and you? Blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in him. If nothing in Christ offends you, nothing in you will so far offend him, as to keep him at a distance from you. Nay if you be really offended and grieved at yourselves for that there is any thing in you so apt to be offended in Christ, it shall not mar your communion with him.

But, O brethren, search your hearts this night, for they are deceitful, and put yourselves to an impartial trial. And where you find your heart offended at Christ, put it into his own hand to remove the offence, and to reconcile the heart and gain it entirely to himself. Amen.

Tweedsmuir communion Sabbath evening, June 17, 1716.

BELIEVERS LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN.

SERMON VI.

2 Corinthians iv. 18.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

You have now been eating your gospel passover, and should therefore be preparing for your journey through the wilderness. You have enlisted under the standard of Jesus Christ, and should march on to follow your leader. You will meet with difficulties in the way, that will make you in danger of fainting, standing still, and giving it over, as a journey which you are not able to accomplish. To prevent this, you must take your aim right, and still keep your eye upon it; looking not to the things which are seen,