

THE
NECESSITY AND FOUNDATIONS
OF A
THRONE OF GRACE

FOR THE BEHOOF OF POOR SINNERS, POINTED OUT
AND ILLUSTRATED.

The substance of three Sermons, preached upon Sacramental occasions. The first at
Maxton, Saturday, July 4, 1719.

PSALM lxxxix. 14,

*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth
shall go before thy face.*

A MOST solemn and awful approach is before us, we have on our hand business of the greatest import, business with a king, a king on his throne, not a mortal king, but the King immortal, the King of the world, the king of the church, God himself. And whether we consider our business or our party, we have no need to trifle. Our business is for eternity, if we come speed at the throne, we are made for ever; if not, we are undone. Our party is God on his throne, a throne where we see a glorious mixture of majesty and mercy, which requires management with the utmost seriousness.

In the words we have a glorious view the Psalmist takes of Zion's God and King, in two things.

1. The throne he sits in, and appears on, which is most glorious, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." Where let us consider,

(1.) The person sitting on the throne, it is he to whom the Psalmist speaks, even God himself, ver. 8, and particularly the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 19, "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty."

And he is here represented as actually upon the throne ; for so “mercy and truth going before his face,” does require it to be understood.

(2.) The throne itself. I think this text wronged, by expounding the throne of the throne of providence, and God’s government of the world in general ; the ushers that go before this enthroned King oblige us to understand it of the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16, since truth joined with mercy, as here, is always understood of faithfulness in fulfilling promises ; and the ushers in the kingdom of providence are justice as well as mercy.

(3.) The habitation of this throne, “justice and judgment,” (marg.) “the establishment” or “place.” So that the habitation is not to be taken actively, for that which inhabits the throne ; but passively, for that in which the throne abides or inhabits. The word is of such a frame as denotes an instrument of something, and it properly signifies a base, a support, or stay, or foundation, on which a thing stands firm, Ezra ii. 68, and iii. 3 ; Psalm civ. 5. Now justice and judgment are the base or foundation of this throne, *i. e.* say some, just judgment is the stability of God’s throne, namely, in his government of the world. I am not clear of that sense being safe, far less genuine : for though just judgment is the stability of a creature’s throne, who is capable to do unjustly ; I see not how it can be thought to be the stability of his throne of providence, who can do no wrong, whose dominion is founded on his having created all things, and is absolutely, and in itself unalterable.

By justice then I understand God’s justice proceeding on a righteousness : by judgment, the execution of justice against sin ; which done, justice gives what is due. These are bases, supporters, or stays or foundations the throne of grace stands on : and you may easily perceive they relate to Christ, the Mediator, who became justice’s party, and on whom judgment was executed for the satisfaction of justice. The throne of grace could not have been set up but on these bases ; and were it possible they could fail, that moment they failed, the throne would tumble down.

2. The harbingers which go before him, “Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” Here is,

(1.) Something expressed, *viz.* that mercy and truth go before this enthroned King, as kings have their ushers who go before them. The one is mercy, *i. e.* loving-kindness, bounty, clemency, good-will towards poor sinners. The other is truth, *viz.* faithfulness in performing all the promises made to the Mediator in favour of those that are his. A glorious reviving sight to a sensible lost world !

(2.) Something supposed, namely, that the throne is a portable

throne. For these go before his face sitting on his throne. God has a throne of glory in heaven, of justice in hell, of providence through the whole world, of grace in the church, Jer. iii. 17. And wherever the gospel comes, there God comes sitting on this throne of grace, with mercy and truth going before his face, managing the treaty of peace with poor rebel sinners, and allowing all his people access to him, 2 Cor. v. 13, 18, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, &c.

Doct. The throne of grace, which God sits upon for the behoof of poor sinners, is founded and stands upon justice, and on judgment executed against sin, in the person of Christ the Mediator.

In discoursing this doctrine,

I. I shall shew the necessity there was of a throne of grace, for the behoof of poor sinners.

II. I will shew the necessity of these foundations and stays of justice and judgment against sin, for the throne of grace to stand on.

III. We shall consider the laying of these foundations, and the erecting of the throne of grace upon them.

IV. Apply.

I shall shew the necessity there was of a throne of grace, for the behoof of poor sinners. There was an absolute necessity of it for the salvation of any of the posterity of fallen Adam. For,

1. Sin having entered, they could have no more benefit by the throne of law-goodness, which run in that channel, "Do this and live." Gen. iii. 22, 24, "And the Lord God said,—And now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:—So he drove out the man," &c. The whole tribe of Adam turning rebels against the throne of heaven, the promised life and favour was forfeited, their claim was cut off by that one blow of the first sin, at the rate that they, with the help of angels, could never have been able to recover it, Rom. viii. 3.

2. They were bound over to answer at the throne of strict justice; for so was the law-treaty related and determined, Gen. ii. 17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This made them liable to eternal death for the least transgression, Gal. iii. 10. Taste but of the forbidden fruit, and lo! they must die. This made our guilty father, when he heard the voice of God, run and hide himself, when he looked to have the summons to that awful tribunal put into his hand.

In this case, there was the utmost necessity for a throne of grace.

A throne of grace, might the criminals cry, else we die, we all die ! we perish, we perish ! For,

1st, They could have no claim to law-goodness and bounty, but upon perfect obedience, Gal. iii. 12. And that was put beyond their reach by their sin, which both broke the law, and wasted entirely their strength for such obedience in time to come. So the Mediator found them without strength, fallen down in their race, and not able to go a step farther, Rom. v. 6 ; nay, “ dead in their sins,” Eph. ii. 1.

2dly, They were utterly unable to stand before the tribunal of justice, Psalm cxxx. 3, and cxliii. 2. If their process be led there, the sinner falls, he is a condemned man without remedy. No plea can do there, but Not guilty ; and that the sinner cannot plead. The Judge is omniscient, and the criminal can never out-wit him, nor deceive him, nor keep the truth from him. And in that court there is no advocate, intercessor, nor mercy ; but the sentence passed must needs be executed, and the criminal fall a sacrifice to justice : for the Judge is just and omnipotent, there is no moving him with cries and tears in prejudice of justice, no out-braving of him, or making head against the Judge or the law.

3dly, The criminal once falling under the weight of the sentence a sacrifice to justice, there is no rising again, he is cut off for ever, Psalm xciv. ult. Were it thousands of rams, or the fruit of one’s body, would satisfy for the sin of the soul, the sinner possibly might make shift ; yea, were finite sufferings so, though for millions of years, they would have an end : but the offence against an infinite God cannot be expiated but by infinite sufferings, which lay the criminal’s head so on the block, that he can never raise it up again.

4thly, Justice had determined the execution-day to be the same with the sinning-day, Gen. ii. 17. And had it not been that the throne of grace was erected the same day to which the process was by appeal carried from the throne of strict justice, the sentence had been fully executed that day. When man was fallen, justice lays hand on the criminal, and binds him for execution. Everlasting love minds a throne of grace, to rescue a ruined world : but where shall a foundation be had to set up the white throne on for the pale criminal ? angels nor men could furnish nothing which could bear the weight of it. Then said the Son of God, Psalm xl. 7, “ Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me.” Let my blood, the blood of God, be the base of the throne, that will bear it ; so it was done. Hence ye read, Gen. iii. 8, “ They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day : and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.” Ver. 15, “ And the Lord God

said unto the serpent,—I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” And ver. 21, “ Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”

Lastly, Ye may see the necessity of a throne of grace for the behoof of poor sinners, in the hopeless case of the fallen angels. They were the first that ventured to break over the hedge of the law, and no throne of grace being provided for their behoof, they were ruined beyond all remedy, 2 Pet. ii. 4. For at the throne of strict justice they must answer, and they have no access to the throne of grace ; Heb. ii. 16, “ For verily he took not on him the nature of angels.” The same had been our case, if a throne of grace had not been provided for us.

II. I will shew the necessity of these foundations and stays of justice and judgment against sin, for the throne of grace to stand on. Blind sinners, who never saw so much of the ill of sin as to make them question whether the saving of such wretches was consistent with the honour of God or not, are apt to think the throne of grace might have been set up on mere mercy. Nay, but it would stand on no other but justice and judgment against sin.

1. The justice of God could not suffer it to be erected but on these bases, Gen. xviii. 25, “ Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?” 1 Thess. i. 6, “ It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.” Sinners, by the dictates of their own consciences, know themselves to be worthy of death, and that God has a right to punish them, Rom. i. ult. And shall not a just God give sin its due ? Who can expect mercy over the belly of justice, or that a throne of grace should have been set up on the ruins of the justice of God ?

2. The holiness of God, and his hatred of sin, would not suffer it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psalm v. 5, “ The foolish shall not stand in thy sight : thou hatest all workers of iniquity.” And says the prophet, Hab. i. 13, “ Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and caust not look on iniquity.” When God does but spare sinners a while, they are apt to think he is like themselves, in which he shews he will vindicate his own honour, Psalm l. 21, “ I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.” How then could the honour of his holiness have been supported, in letting out the fountain of his mercy and grace upon the sinner, without taking due vengeance upon the sin ?

3. The truth of God was a bar in the way of emanations of mercy and grace without satisfaction to justice. He said, Gen. ii. 17, “ In

the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." What should have come of the truth of God, had not death followed sin, according to the threatening. True, if one will die for the criminal, he may have life with the good leave of justice and truth, the surety's death satisfying justice. But no mercy without satisfaction, either by the party or the cautioner.

4. The honour of the holy law, the eternal rule of righteousness, stood in the way of erecting a throne of grace but on these foundations; it behoved to be "magnified, and made honourable," Isa. xlii. 21. The law's hedge was broken down by the sinner, it was the fair transcript of God's holy nature; and therefore it was impossible this gap should always stand open, never be made up, and they that made it not only escape free, but be received into favour.

Lastly, If there had not been an absolute necessity of these foundations for a throne of grace to stand on, they had never been laid at the cost of the blood of the Son of God, Rom. iii. 25. How can we believe that an infinitely good and wise God would have given his own Son, the Son of his love, to a most cruel and cursed death, to found his throne of grace to sinners on, if there had been no necessity of such foundations, John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." If there had not been a necessity for it, this love had not appeared.

Use of exhortation. And hence I would direct an exhortation to two sorts of persons.

First, Secure sinners, going on in your sins, fall in with the fair occasion of grace and mercy, now put in your hands, while the Lord is come among you appearing on a throne of grace, and offering you his grace and favour through Jesus Christ. Give up with your sins, submit yourselves to this glorious King, and slight not gospel-grace any more.

MOR. 1. Look to him that sits on this throne of grace, that is the great King, and you will see two things may move you.

1. He is one whose favour ye must have, else ye are ruined; for in his favour only is life, Psalm xxx. 5. He is the best of friends, and of all enemies the most dreadful. How can ye live without his favour, since ye live on his ground, and live at his cost? Acts xvii. 25. How can ye die without it; will ye be able to face the king of terrors without peace with the King of heaven? The throne is among you, then make your address.

2. His favour ye may have, for he is on a throne of grace; come and fall down before him on that throne, and make peace, Isa. xxvii. 5. The golden sceptre is stretched out, come forward, and let not

the occasion slip, 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The proclamation of grace is issued out for peace and pardon to rebels, stand not off lest the day of grace go over with you, and that be pronounced, Luke xiv. 24, "I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper."

MOT. 2. Look to those that go before this enthroned King, and you will see two things may overcome your hearts to comply.

1. Mercy goes before it to embrace you, and give you a complete remedy for your misery; slip not the golden season, Isa. lv. 6, 7, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And it is sure mercy, ye may well trust to it; precious mercy, it is most dangerous to slight, since it issues out from a throne established on justice satisfied by the obedience and death of Christ.

2. Truth goes before it, to secure unto all that submit to the King on this throne all the promises of the everlasting covenant; they shall all be yours in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. They will begin to be accomplished in this life, but they will serve to tell out through the ages of eternity.

MOT. *ult.* Look to the foundations this throne stands on, and you will see two things may determine you.

1. That it is costly grace and mercy that is offered you. This white throne had never appeared amongst us, if Christ had not, by his obedience and death, made a foundation for it to stand on. Has he been at the expense of his precious blood to rear it up, and will ye slight the grace purchased at such a rate? Ye cannot do it but ye trample under foot the blood of the Son of God.

2. What ye must lay your account with, if ye continue in your sins, and slight the offers of grace from the throne, even justice and judgment on your own souls for evermore, Heb. ii. 3. Will ye look for mercy, yet not take God's way of mercy in Christ. Justice will step in betwixt you and mercy, and part you for ever. If this was done in the green tree, much more will it in the dry. If God spared not his own Son, how shall the slights of him expect to be spared? Nay, another throne shall be set up against you, where the flaming sword to devour the adversaries shall go for ever before the face of the dreadful Judge, 2 Thess. i. 9.

Secondly, Poor trembling sinners, pressed with the sense of sin and unworthiness, come forward with humble boldness to the throne of grace, that ye may "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16.

Look to him that sits on the throne: it is not an absolute God, but a God in Christ, 2 Cor. v. 19, whose rays of majesty shoot not forth immediately to you, unveiled; these indeed would confound the poor guilty creature; but they shoot forth through the veil of the flesh of Christ; so thou may look on them, and be refreshed with them.

Look to the ushers which go before him: these are not justice and judgment with the flaming sword; these would destroy the guilty sinner at his first approach; they are mercy and truth, mercy to spare and pardon, truth to enrich thee with the King's favours.

Look to the stays that support the throne, justice fully satisfied, judgment executed against sin, in the person of Christ: hence the waters of mercy flow out, say then, "Spring up, O well, sing ye to it." Look to these, and ye will see an answer to all the questions that perplex your souls.

1. Will ever the Lord look favourably on the like of me? **ANSW.** Yes, he is on a throne of grace, erected on purpose for his looking favourably on the guilty.

2. But I am laden with chains of guilt, can ever I have access to the throne? **ANSW.** Mercy and truth go before his face, to cause all these fall off, and bring thee in before him.

3. But is it consistent with the honour of God to pardon such sins as mine are, against so much light, love, &c.; to put me among his children, who am the very worst of sinners? **ANSW.** Yes, very consistent, his justice, holiness, truth, law, his honour shall suffer nothing by it; Christ has laid a foundation, that equally bears up God's honour, and thy salvation, even thine.

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Maxton, Sabbath, July 5, 1719.

PSALM lxxxix. 14,

*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

(The second sermon on this text.)

III. WE shall consider the laying of these foundations, and the erecting of the throne of grace upon them. Here consider,

1. The general ends of this new erection.
2. The necessary foundations of this throne.
3. How these foundations were laid.

*First*, The general ends of this new erection. For what ends was it to be made and set up? The particular ends are as many as the needs of lost sinners were, but they may be, and are by the apostle, reduced unto two heads, Heb. iv. ult.

1. The saving of sinners from the wrath of God due to them for their sins; "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy." Sin entering into the world made a gap, at which the flood of wrath following might enter, and would certainly enter and sweep away all before it into the pit, if the gap was not made up. This throne then was to be erected, that mercy might fill up the gap, rejoice over judgment, and save the sinner from perishing; that the sinner might be pardoned, his guilt of eternal wrath be taken away, and he taken out of the jaws of devouring death.

2. The making of sinners positively happy in the favour of God for evermore; "And find grace to help." By sin's entering into the world, their right to heaven was forfeited and razed, they could not come thither. They could have no communion with God here nor hereafter. Justice had drawn a bar betwixt them and it, and shut the door never to be opened, but on answering such demands of its own, which the sinner never could do. The throne of grace then was to be erected, that grace might open that door, and let in the sinner to the forfeited inheritance again; not only that the rebel might get his pardon, but might be restored to his Prince's favour, and loaded with benefits to his everlasting and complete happiness.

*Secondly*, The necessary foundations of this throne. The text says, these are justice and judgment.

1. Justice, as distinguished from judgment, whereby God gives good unto any, agreeably to the laws of righteousness, which the justice of his nature requires to be observed in his government of the world, Gen. xviii. 25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This justice annexeth his favour and good-will to the obedience, the perfect obedience of his law; secures the delivery of a purchase upon the payment of a valuable price for it; and cannot admit of the keeping back of any good that is due. This is justice, this is what is right, which the Judge of all the earth cannot but do, in so far as he cannot but be just.

This answers the end of making the creature happy, upon due obedience to the great Lawgiver, during the course of such obedience. And though there was grace in the first covenant, in so far as the obedience of innocent Adam was not proportionable to the great reward promised therein: yet as it was not comparable to

gospel-grace, it might have stood upon this single foot of justice. But supposing this foundation laid, it could not have supported a throne of grace in favour of sinners; it could not have stood on this single foot, unatoned guilt would have undermined it. Therefore there is,

2d, Namely, Judgment, whereby vindictive justice is satisfied for sin, for the breaking of the holy law; vengeance is taken upon it in proportion to the offence, which in a sort is an infinite offence. Hereby,

(1.) Sin is condemned, Rom. viii. 3. Sentence is passed from the throne of revenging justice against it, whereby, according to the law, the curse is pronounced against it, wrath ordained to pursue it in full measure, where it is found; and never to leave it, till full satisfaction be had of the party, who, by the appointment of God, stands answerable for it.

(2.) The sentence is executed, revenging justice is let loose upon it; floods of wrath overflow the party answerable for it; the fire kindled by the breath of an angry God preys upon him, till the vengeance is complete, and infinite justice has enough, that it can demand no more.

This answers the end of saving sinners from the wrath of God, and this foundation could not be laid without them.

*Thirdly*, How these foundations were laid. The whole creation could not furnish materials for them.

1. Man himself could not, for he was quite unable to obey the law perfectly; he had lost all his strength, for obedience by the fall, Rom. v. 6. He could no more do it than he could reach the stars with his hand. Besides, he was quite unable to satisfy the justice of God for his sin, by suffering; for the punishment required behoved either to be infinite in value, or in duration. The first he could not be capable of, being a mere creature; the last would leave him for ever ruined.

2. Angels could not neither; for though they were capable to obey the law perfectly, yet they owed that obedience for themselves, and therefore could not perform it for a fellow-creature. Neither could they, being but finite beings, bear infinite punishment, so as to satisfy infinite justice; and they were not of the same nature with those who had sinned, and for whom the throne of grace was to be erected.

Thus there being no help among the creatures, God laid help on his own Son, Psalm lxxxix. 19. When the poor criminals stood hopeless and helpless before the justice of God, he undertakes for them, to provide for the laying of these foundations of justice and judgment, a throne of grace might stand firm on.

In order to this the Son of God was incarnate, he becomes man, John i. 14. For this he did strike hands with the Father from eternity; and seeing it was impossible that covenant could be broken, upon the virtue of what he was to do and suffer in the fulness of time, the foundation was laid, and the throne of grace stood firm thereon in Old Testament times.

Behold now how he was fitted to make provision for these foundations of the throne of grace to stand on. (1.) He was a true man, "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bones; a son of Adam," Luke iii. "made of a woman," a daughter of Adam, Gal. iv. 4. Having a true human soul, of which he says, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Thus obedience was to be performed to the law; and justice satisfied with suffering, in the same nature that had sinned, Heb. ii. 14.

(2.) He was true God too, 1 John v. 20, and so God and man in one person, which was necessary to make his obedience and death of infinite value, in order to the full satisfaction of justice and the law. In this respect his precious blood was the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. And from thence did arise its virtue to support the throne of grace, for all the gracious purposes God had designed it for. Hence is that of the apostle, 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And that, Heb. ix. 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Thus he made provision,

1. For the first foundation of the throne of grace, namely, justice, by his obeying the law completely in the sinner's room, observing exactly and giving obedience to its commands. And this for laying the foundation of justice to the throne of grace, Matth. iii. 15, "Thus it becometh us (saith Jesus himself) to fulfil all righteousness." He was holy in his birth, life, and death; Heb. vii. 26, "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners." And his obedience was,

1st, Universal, 1 Pet. ii. 22, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He stuck at none of the law's commands. The hardest of them he complied with, he loved his enemies, denied himself. And all his enemies were bid defiance to convince him of the least sin, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" says he, John viii. 46. And he was justified from heaven, by his resurrection from the dead.

2dly, It was perfect in degrees: John xv. 13. Says Christ, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life

for his friends." He screwed up love, which is the fulfilling of the law, to its highest possible pitch. So that the law could not but say, It had enough of work.

*3dly*, It was constant, Phil. ii. 8, says the apostle, "He became obedient unto death." The temptations of Satan, the reproaches of his enemies, the treachery of his friends, could not make him make the least halt in his course, 1 Pet. ii. 23, "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." The first Adam broke off fairly, but quickly sat up, the second endured to the end.

*4thly*, It was voluntary: Psalm xl. 8, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart," says he. The doing of God's will was his meat, John iv. 34. Though he was a man of sorrows, yet he was never discouraged, Isa. xlii. 4.

2. He made provision for the other foundation, namely, judgment, by suffering in the sinner's stead. Hence says the apostle, Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He set himself up for the mark at which the law might shoot all the poisoned arrows, which should have stuck in the souls of the elect for ever. The fountains of the great deep, and the windows of heaven were opened against him; the flood of wrath pursuing the sins of the elect finding him in the gap, disburdened itself wholly into him. Justice put such a load of wrath on him, as made him in the open air, in a cold night, sweat drops of blood. And his sufferings were,

(1.) Most exquisite, judgment executed upon him to the utmost rigour, Rom. viii. 32, "He spared not his own Son." Justice pursued him from his birth to his burial, and never left him, till it brought him to the dust of death. His cup was pure unmixed vengeance, was filled to the brim, and he drank out the bitter dregs of it. In his greatest extremity, he could not have a cup of cold water to drink, but vinegar mingled with gall; nay, not so much as the light of the sun to shine on him, but it hid its head, then, because "light is sweet to the eyes, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun."

(2.) Nevertheless they were voluntary, John xviii. 11; Isa. liii. 7, without the least murmuring, that so justice might have complete satisfaction. He stood and answered all the demands justice and judgment could have of the sinner, in order to his finding grace in the sight of the Lord.

USE. I would drop a word to two sorts of persons.

*First*, To spectators of this solemn ordinance. And,

1. Unconcerned spectators, who have no part in, but look lightly on this solemn approach here made to the throne of grace. (1.)

Had ye no business at the throne of grace, that ye satisfied yourselves with mere onlooking? Is not eternity at stake with you as well as others? Or is it possible for you to be saved, without application to the throne of grace in the Lord's own way? Acts iv. 12, says the apostle Peter, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." And if ye value God's grace and favour, is it possible for you to undervalue the seal of it? (2.) How deep must the guilt of slighting a throne of grace be, which cost so dear to set it up? Is it not a trampling the Father's love, and the Son's blood under foot? (3.) Ye will not get leave to be mere spectators too at the throne of judgment, but must come out of your graves with others, and receive your sentence, which will be dreadful, if ye do not timely make your application for peace with God while on the throne of grace.

2. Spectators duly concerned, whatever has kept you back from this ordinance, do ye not prize the throne of grace? Are ye not resolved to ply it, for the interest of eternity? if ye do not, ye are not concerned spectators. If ye do, I tell you, though the communion be over, the throne of grace stands, and there is access to it for you; yet there is room. Therefore go away resolved to settle your business there for eternity while it is day.

*Secondly*, Communicants, ye have been professing to approach this throne, how went the matter? how managed ye your business there?

1. It is to be feared some have quite mismanaged it. These are they that have been careless, formal, and hypocritical in their management, who have retained some underhand management with some one lust or other, whose hearts have not opened to receive Christ with his whole yoke, and have not given themselves honestly to the Lord. (1.) Ye have lost a fair occasion of settling your matters for eternity, and God only knows if ever ye will have such another: repent, and with all speed manage better, and do in secret what ye should have done at the table, as ye would prevent a curse on your treachery. (2.) It is a stout heart that could trifle in such a solemn approach to such a throne, founded on justice and judgment: surely ye have not looked to the bottom it stands on, else it would have commanded dread, reverence, and utmost jealousy, as it did in Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 17, "How dreadful is this place!" said he; "this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

2. Some have been sincere in their management, whose consciences cannot but witness for them, they have been upright in the main, whatever mismanagements there have been. Yet,

1. Some such may be drooping for that the King on the throne has hid his face from them, and that they have no token of acceptance from the throne; so they fear they have quite mismanaged. *ANSW.* (1.) If sincere in the main, whatever mismanagements there have been, remember it is a throne of grace, where sincerity is accepted, and acceptance is not marred by unallowed infirmities and miscarriages, 2 Cor. viii. 12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2.) If sin has been made more hideous and frightful to thee by this ordinance, the glorious basis the throne stands on has not been quite hid. If thy desire after a God in Christ be more enlarged, neither has he that sits on the throne quite hid himself from thee. If thou hast got a kindly melting of heart for sin, mercy and truth have darted their beams on thee. (3.) Be as it will, the throne stands, abide ye by it; and what ye have not got, ye shall get in God's time, as did the spouse, Cant. iii. 4, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth." And ye shall be made to say, Grace times its visits well.

2. Others may have had sensible reviving and refreshing from the throne. All I say, is, remember that the least kind glance from the throne is precious; it is not the price of your pains, preparation, tears; it is the price of blood, of the Son of God. Not a smile from heaven but comes through the wounds of a Redeemer, nor a pardon but is written with his blood. Therefore walk softly, and quench not the Spirit.

*Lastly,* To all whose hope and expectation is all from this throne.

1. Look on sin as the most frightful evil, and stand at a distance from it, Rom. xii. 9, "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." Oppose to temptations to your former lusts the remembrance of justice and judgment the throne of grace stands on.

2. Never entertain cheap thoughts of pardon; leave it to them that know not God, his law, nor his gospel, to think it is but to ask mercy, and have it. There is no pardon of the least sin, without the good leave of justice, Exod. xxxiv. 7.

3. Love the Lord Jesus, and remember his love, to whose obedience and death we owe the throne of grace. Grieve not his Spirit by untender walking; but let his love constrain you to live henceforth not unto yourselves, but unto him which died for you, and rose again.

4. If at any time ye be obliged either to sin or suffer, choose rather the greatest suffering than the least sin. And to animate you thereto, consider what Christ suffered, in order to lay a foundation for the throne of grace.

5. Having settled your matters at the throne by a sincere embracing of the covenant from thence offered, strengthen your faith, and confirm your confidence of grace and salvation, by looking to the firm foundations the throne stands on.

*Lastly*, Be much at the throne by prayer and supplication, in the name of Christ.

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 Morebattle, Saturday, July 18, 1719.

PSALM LXXXIX. 14,

*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

(The third sermon on this text.)

I COME more particularly to consider, How these foundations of justice and judgment were laid. When a throne of grace was to be erected for the behoof of poor criminal sinners, justice and judgment stand up in the behalf of a holy, but broken law, and require to be satisfied of the sinner, before there could be a throne of grace erected in his favour. And Christ answers for the sinner,

FIRST, Justice requires of the sinner, in behalf of the holy law, perfect obedience to its commands, pleading the truth of God, Isa. xlii. 21. Otherwise there can be no throne of grace erected in his favour, since it cannot be set up on the ruins of the holy law. Therefore justice says to the sinner, Matth. xix. 17, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." But this sinful man could not do; and if the throne of grace cannot stand but on this foundation, he must lose the benefit of it for ever. Alas! then, must all perish? No, Christ answers for his own; what they could not, he did. He presents himself, and whatever justice has to demand of them for laying this foundation of the throne of grace, he affords. Hear the demands.

1st, Demand. Thy nature must be absolutely pure and holy; for if the fountain be poisoned with sin, how can the streams be otherwise? Hence says Job, chap. xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." And says the apostle John, Rev. xxi. ult. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." Without the law's being satisfied in this point, there is no grace nor mercy for thee. Alas, the sinner can never answer this. He has a corrupt nature, he cannot purify it, Prov. xx. 9. He was born in

sin; can he enter again into his mother's belly, and be born over again without sin?

But Christ answers this demand for his people; the law shall have all its asking. Therefore the Son of God takes to himself a true body and soul, both sinless. The Ancient of days becomes an infant of days. He is conceived without spot by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and in due time born without sin, Luke i. 35. Heb. vii. 26. His nature was not in the least tainted, but absolutely free of the least seed of sin. Here is now such a birth, such a nature, as the law exacted; so that demand is answered, that bar in the sinner's way drawn.

*2d. Demand.* Thou must obey every command of the broad law. Thy obedience must be as broad as the law. If some, not all, a curse shall come on thee, and not a blessing, according to that, Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Alas, what can the sinner do with this! He has lost much of the knowledge of the law; many of these commands he does not know, yet ignorance of the law excuses no man; many quite against the grain with him, "Love your enemies," &c.; many that, if his life were a thousand times lying on them, and he would set himself to the utmost diligence and watchfulness, he will break sometimes, as by vain thoughts, &c.

Christ answers this. He obeyed all: "fulfilled all righteousness;" Matth. iii. 15; "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Pet. ii. 22. He made the law, he could not but know it in every point. It was the transcript of his own holy nature, he fulfils it in every jot. Hence says he, Matth. v. 17, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." He gave it external and internal obedience, in heart and life. Its hardest commands he baulked not, loved his enemies, denied himself. Never an idle word dropt from the holy mouth, never a vain thought could run through his holy heart.

*3d Demand.* Every part of thy obedience must be screwed up to the highest pitch and degree the law requires: Matth. xxii. 37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." If any thing of the due measure be wanting there can be no favour. To be sincere, to desire to do better, and to be sorry at the heart thou canst not, will not be accepted here, Gal. iii. 10, forecited. Alas! the sinner shall as soon reach the clouds with his hands, as this perfection of degrees the law requires. Let him do his best, corruption clogs him so as he can never mount to the top; let him be praying never so fervently,

there is some coldrifeness about him, his faith is mixed with unbelief, his very sincerity is not without a mixture of hypocrisy.

Christ answers this. His love to his Father was most seraphic, most ardent and intense, it flamed in his holy breast to the utmost point the law could require. His love to men was incomparable, John xv. 13. He went to the utmost boundaries of love with them. Every action of his was absolutely spotless, perfectly refined, and without the least mixture of imperfection.

*Last Demand.* All this must be continued to the end, without the least trip in one jot, Gal. iii. 10. Shouldst thou live all thy days in a course of perfect obedience, but at the hour of death one vain thought run through thy heart, all is gone. Alas! the sinner can never answer this. He cannot keep perfectly right one year, day, hour, minute, if a thousand hells were upon it.

Christ satisfied this demand too, Phil. ii. 8, "He became obedient unto death." The first Adam broke fair off, but he tripped quickly; the second continued to the end. The law could never, in its greatest rigour, challenge him of the least sin from the womb to the grave, by day or night, alone or in company. His heart and life shone in holiness, before his Father and the world, in its meridian brightness, without the least cloud or spot to stain it. Thus the first foundation of the throne, namely, justice, was laid. But,

SECONDLY, Ere the throne can stand for all this, judgment, in behalf of the broken law, requires of the sinner satisfaction for the wrong done to the honour and law of God. Just judgment, taking the sinner by the throat, says, "Pay what thou owest." Thou art in debt to the justice of God for sins committed, thou must satisfy the just threats of the law, and bear the curse; and without this satisfaction there can be no grace nor mercy shown.

O then, might the sinner say, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Mic. vi. 7. No, these are too mean to satisfy here, Psalm xl. 6, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire:—burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required." But, O ye crowned heads, mighty monarchs, may not ye be cautioners for this debt? No, they cannot; if they would sell their crowns, kingdoms, and dig up all the gold in the bowels of the earth, and lay it down, it will not pay their own debt; themselves must have a cautioner, else they are ruined. O mighty angels, may not ye rather undertake for their debt, than that your fellow-creatures be ruined? Alas, they cannot, they are not able, they would be broken with the payment of the thousandth part of it, and it would never be paid for

them. O high demands of just judgment, no creature in heaven or earth can answer! Then said the Mediator, Psalm xl. 7, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." What are just judgments? demands the sinner?

1st Demand. Sinner, thou must suffer for the breaking of the holy law, die the death, for the word is gone out of the Lord's mouth, Gen. ii. 17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Alas, how shall this be answered? If the sinner's life go for it, what has he more? and if death, armed with law-vengeance, once get him down, it will hold him down for ever. O, may not bearing crosses do it? No, just judgment requires bearing of curses, not crosses. May not tears for sin do it? No, it is shedding of blood, not pouring out of water, it requires, Heb. ix. 22, "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

But Christ satisfies the demand. He presents himself to the sword of justice, and judgment is executed on him, Zech. xiii. 7, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." Death armed with its sting, and all the force a broken law gave it, falls on him, sheds his precious blood, wounds him to the heart, separates soul and body, carries him prisoner to the grave, and lays him in the dust of death. Death gave him the first fall, but because he was God, he riseth again; and death having got its due, he brings away the keys of hell and death with him.

2d Demand, more particular. Sinner, thy sufferings must be universal in the whole man: that is just judgment, for so has thy sinning been. That body of thine, as the iustrument of sin, must suffer: that head, that contrived the mischief against the law, must be wounded: that heart, the spring of all, must be pierced; these feet, that have carried thee so many black gates; these hands, that have wrought so much iniquity, &c. And thy soul must suffer chiefly, as being the principal actor in all thou hast done against a holy God. Ah, who can endure this! it is a thousand deaths in one.

Christ satisfies this demand too. He suffers in his body: his head is crowned with thorns, and his heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of his bowels, Psalm xxii. 14. His feet, his hands are pierced, his tongue cleaves to his jaws, his bones are out of joint. His body has nothing but shame to cover it, his strength is dried up. The wrath of God fell on his soul, it was troubled, amazed, in an agony; the arrows dipt in the curse were shot into it, till the law had no more to require; Gal. iii. 13, says the apostle, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

3d Demand. Thy sufferings, O sinner, must be most exquisite,

thou shalt have no pity, no sparing, but judgment without mercy. This is just judgment. Ah! who is able to abide this? "Who can dwell with the devouring fire? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

But Christ satisfied this too. So God spared him not, Rom, viii. 32. Though his body was of a most refined temperature, and so his senses most exquisite, his death was a most tormenting death. And in his death he was denied what benefits are not refused to malefactors. His eyes were denied the light of the sun, his ears were grated with mockers and cruel insults. He got vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. He was in travailing pangs, soul-travail; he had no help in it, and he died in it.

*4th Demand.* Thy sufferings, O sinner, must be infinite. It is just judgment, for it is infinite justice thou hast offended. Ah! who is able to abide this? This is killing, saddest of all, a thousand times. Universal, exquisite, yet infinite! "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" It is the hell of hell, and must fill a finite being brimfull of despair.

But Christ answers this too. He was God, and therefore infinite; so his sufferings, though not infinite in duration, yet were so in value. And what the creature could not have borne but by piece-meal without end, he bears altogether.

*Last Demand.* Thy sufferings must be voluntary; God hates robbery for burnt-offering, Lev. i. 3. If thou at all murmur under all thy sufferings, it will be new sin, and mar the acceptance of the sacrifice, for which just judgment will repeat its demands. Ah! what man can perform this? The weight of wrath makes the devils and damned to roar. The man cannot bear a fit of the gout or gravel, nay, nor a stitch in his side, but he is in hazard of impatience.

Christ satisfies this too, Isa. liii. 7, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." In all his sufferings he never had the least wrong or unbecoming thought of God, Psalm xxii. 1, 2, 3. Never the least murmuring. He willingly underwent what he was to suffer. When his hour came, though he was able to have rescued himself, he would not. He meekly prays for his murderers, even when he was in his extremity, Luke xxiii. 34. Thus the demand of judgment is satisfied.

And thus were the foundations of justice and judgment laid, for the throne of grace to stand on. And on these it was erected, and stands for the behoof of poor sinners.

USE 1. O sinners, come to God, through Jesus Christ; and while

God is on a throne of grace to you, settle your business for eternity at this throne.

*First*, What is your business at the throne of grace?

*1st*, More generally, your great and comprehensive business at the throne is, to get God to be your God by a special covenant relation. Sinners, do not ye know ye have lost God? that ye are "without God in the world"? Eph. ii. 12. Sin has dissolved all saving relation betwixt God and Adam's lost posterity: and his wrath abides on the rebels and traitors, while in that state, John iii. ult. But hear good news from a throne of grace to you, who stand condemned at the bar of justice, Heb. viii. 10, "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord;—I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Isa. lv. 3, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." And if ye had that secured, your business for eternity is secured.

QUEST. How shall we manage that business at the throne?

1. Believe with application to yourselves, that this covenant is offered to you from the throne. You have the Lord's word for it carrying the offer of it to all to whom the gospel comes, Isa. lv. 1—3. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," &c. If you had a voice from heaven calling, and offering it to you by name, would ye not believe it? Ye have a more sure word of prophecy, which reaches you among whomsoever you rank yourselves, Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." And chap. xxii. 17, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If ye do not believe it thus, in greater or lesser measure, ye cannot accept of the covenant, and so ye perish without remedy.

OBJECT. But how can I believe that ever God will be my God, who am such a monstrous vile sinner? ANSW. Look to the foundations of the throne, and you will see a perfect righteousness, and a complete satisfaction for the sins of all, that will take the benefit of the throne of grace erected thereon. This truth is written in characters of the precious blood of the Son of God, the which, to what purpose was it shed, if it could not secure the business of any poor sinner at the

throne? 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

2. Consent sincerely and honestly to the covenant, and your business is done, according to that, Isa. xlv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Let your souls and hearts open this day to the offer, and consent that from henceforth God shall be your God in Christ, and ye shall be his. And if ye be sincere in taking him for your God, you will let your other gods go: the devil, the world, any lust and idol, whatever fondness ye have had for it, shall be no more your god; but cast it to the bats, and to the moles. You will consent to be his only, wholly, and for ever, to take part with him and his people, for better and worse.

*2dly*, More particularly, it is to get supply to all your wants, in that God through Christ. Hence says the apostle, Heb. iv. 16, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Here is the place of supply; and think not strange of that, for here is the price of all our mercies, the obedience and death of Christ. It is your business to get,

1. Pardon and peace with God, Rom. v. 1. Weighty business that can be done no where else. Every where else, but at the throne of grace, you will meet the flaming sword staying you off from pardon and peace. Unpardoned sin will be a sinking weight to your soul; want of the peace of God will hide peace from your eyes for ever; if once they are opened, come then, and ply your business.

2. The sanctifying Spirit, and his grace, to make you holy, Luke xi. 13. Without holiness no happiness, Heb. xii. 14; without the Spirit no holiness, 2 Thess. ii. 13. And as the fire that burnt the incense was fetched from the altar of burnt-offering; so the Spirit comes to us from a crucified Christ.

3. Right to heaven, and eternal life, that you may be happy in another world, 2 Cor. v. 1. This is business absolutely necessary; leave it not till ye be a-dying; do it now, and it will be a death-bed comfort to you, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

*Lastly*, A settled communication betwixt the Lord and you, that ye may have recourse to in all the exigencies of your life, Eph. ii. 18; 1 John i. 3. Ye have an ill world to go through: ye will need both for life and godliness; and here ye are to make the settlement for both. Ye may come to see sad days of public calamity, wherein they that cannot draw comfort from heaven, must want it for altogether. Settle the communication for that.

*Secondly*, Motives to press this.

1. God is on a throne of grace to transact with you in this place ; for there the throne is wherever gospel-ordinances are set up, Jer. iii. 17. He has trysted once more with you here. What shall be the issue ; shall the business betwixt Heaven and you now be brought to a period ? If not, ye will give a new slight to the enthroned King ; and what will be the end of that ?

2. It cost the Redeemer his precious blood to erect this throne. If he had not died, we should have had no throne of grace to come to more than devils have. O slight not the glorious and costly erection.

3. Your business at the throne is most weighty, and necessary. It is soul-business ; business for eternity ; business that can be done no where else. If it be slighted or mismanaged here, it is gone ; and if so, nothing can make up the loss, Matth. xvi. 26, " For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? "

*Lastly*, It is a moveable throne ; see the text. It will not stand always for you. It has stood in some places, where now it is no more ; but the sometimes churches are unchurched. However, at death, ye will have no more access to it, if slighted now. And how soon the Lord may remove it, ye know not.

USE 2. O Christians, communicants, ye have heard your business, that is your business specially at a communion table. Learn here your communion-frame, and fetch it from a view of the throne.

1. Come believingly, and with expectation of good at the Lord's hand. Faith has here the most firm foundation ; justice and judgment executed against sin, in the person of Christ the Mediator. Has he answered all the demands ? Then are the children free ; free from wrath, free to the benefits of his purchase.

2. Come with the repenting, broken, bleeding hearts for sin, and filled with hatred of it. See what Christ suffered for your sins, and see the malignant nature of it.

3. Come with love, remembering his love more than wine. Behold how the Redeemer purchased the throne for you with his precious blood ; and when none in heaven nor earth was to prevent your ruin, he stepped in.

*Lastly*, Come with thankfulness for, and admiration of, the glorious work of redemption. Behold justice satisfied, truth preserved inviolate ; yet mercy and free love magnified, by wisdom finding out this way.