

SERMONS ON FAITH.

SERMON I.

THE SPIRITUAL ACTINGS OF FAITH THROUGH NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITIES.

“ *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.*”—Rom. iv. 19. *And being not weak [or weakened] in faith, &c.*

IN this latter part of the chapter ye have the commendation of Abraham’s faith; described from the *subject* or *matter* of that he believed, in the 18th and 19th verses. From the *manner* of his believing, “ He staggered not (at the 20th verse) at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith,” &c. From the *cause* of his faith, the sight of God’s all-sufficiency and faithfulness, “ Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.” From the *effect* of his faith, “ He gave glory to God.”

First of all for the *subject* or the *matter* that he believed, more plainly expressed in the 18th verse: “ Who against hope believed in hope, that he should become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be.” Aggravated and enlarged in this 19th verse. The *matter* that he believed was enclosed with many difficulties. He believed that he should be the father of many nations, and that in his seed all the nations of the world should be blessed; herein he had an eye unto Jesus Christ: but now his own body was dead, being about an hundred years old, and Sarah’s womb dead; yet notwithstanding, says the text, “ Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.”

You will say, How can this be that the apostle here says,

“ Abraham considered not his own body being now dead,” when we read, Gen. xvii. 17, unto which story this chapter relates, it is said, that “ Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed in his heart, and said, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah that is ninety years old, bear?” Did not Abraham here consider the deadness of his own body, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb? Why does the apostle say thus then?

Some answer it thus, that the apostle here speaks of the first giving out of the promise unto Abraham, which we read of in the xiith of Genesis; but that cannot be, he was not then an hundred years old: “ He considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old.” And so it is said he was an hundred years old, in the xviiith chapter of Genesis and the 17th verse, therefore it must relate unto that.

Others, they answer it thus, that Abraham indeed at the first did consider his own body, and did doubt through unbelief; but afterwards Abraham recollected himself, and got over that unbelief: but the apostle, he speaks the contrary in the 20th verse, “ He staggered not at the promise through unbelief.”

Others, they answer it, by labouring to find out some mystical interpretation of those words, “ Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old, and shall Sarah that is ninety years old, bear?” as if Abraham, say they, had said thus: Lord, thou hast some secret meaning in these words, I pray thee speak it out unto me, and tell me plainly thy meaning. And therefore, say they, God answered to that purpose in the 19th verse, “ And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed;” I mean according to my words, Sarah shall bear thee a son indeed.

But we need not strain for any mystical interpretation^r or expression. When Abraham says, “ Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old?” Gen. xvii. 17, they are words not of doubting, but words of inquiring; Abraham desiring to be further satisfied, and rightly to understand the meaning of the promise, and rightly understanding the meaning of the promise, says the apostle, he did not much mind, he did not throughly mind, he did not stand poring

upon or considering the deadness of his own body, or the deadness of Sarah's womb.

There are three things, especially, considerable in these words.

First of all, That Abraham's body and Sarah's body are dead, after God gives out a promise of a great seed of his.

Secondly, That notwithstanding this, yet Abraham believed and is commended for it. "He being not weak in the faith, considered not his own body being now dead."

And thirdly, That in all this he had an eye unto Jesus Christ, as I shall shew you afterward. Accordingly I would take up three observations thus:

First, When God intends to fulfil his promise by giving any special blessing to the children of Abraham, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon the blessing, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

Secondly, That then, and then especially it is the duty of all the children of Abraham to trust in God.

And Thirdly, that no difficulty can stand before faith; true, saving, justifying faith carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ.

I begin with the first at this time.

When God intends to fulfil his promise by giving any special blessing to the children of Abraham, to believers, he does first put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

A promise of a great seed like the stars of heaven, and the sand upon the sea-shore, is given to Abraham; but before it is fulfilled, Abraham's body is dead, and Sarah's womb dead; the sentence of death put upon the mercy, and the means that do lead unto it; and herein Abraham is held forth for our example, it was written not for his sake alone, at the 23rd verse, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, at the 24th verse. And as thus it fell out with Abraham, so it falls out with all the children of Abraham, with all believers, when God intends to give any special or great mercy by fulfilling his promise, he does first of all write down the sentence of death upon the mercy, and upon the means that do tend unto it.

The saints and people of God, they are called the "Redeemed of the Lord," Isa. lxii. 12., not only because they are redeemed from hell and from wrath, but because that they have their mercies and blessings in a way of redemption; there is a line of that great mercy of redemption that runs through all the mercies which they have; they have health redeemed out of the hand of sickness, they have liberty redeemed out of the hand of straitness, they have peace redeemed out of the hand of war, they have assurance redeemed out of the hand of doubting and unbelief, they have mercy redeemed out of the hand of misery, they have joys and comforts redeemed out of the hand of grief: they are the redeemed of the Lord; whatsoever great mercy or blessing they have, they have it in a way of redemption. Thus it was with Abraham. And was it not thus with Joseph? I shall not have time to speak of the patriarchs all of them, Joseph you know had a promise by way of vision, "That his sheaf should be higher than all the sheaves, and all the sheaves of his brethren should bow down to his," Gen xxxvii., the sun and the moon should bow down before him, his father and mother; this promise was afterward fulfilled when his brethren went down into Egypt, and bowed before him there, and his father went down into Egypt; but first of all Joseph is sold into Egypt, the sentence of death put upon the mercy; the promise did bring forth, but it had a sore and a hard labour first.

And was it not thus with the people of Israel? They had a promise of great increase like the sands of the sea, and that they should be brought into the land of Canaan; first the sentence of death is put upon both these, their males are to be cut off from Egypt, and before they come into Canaan, they must go into a howling wilderness; thus the sentence of death passes first upon the mercy before they do come to it.

And was it not thus with David? David had a kingdom promised him, that he should be the king of Israel, but first of all David must be thrust out of the kingdom, he must into the wilderness, he must be hunted up and down there like a partridge, David must be a traitor first before he can be a king, and David must be a rebel first in the eyes of the king before he can come to the kingdom and to the throne; he

had the mercy afterward, but at the first, sentence of death was put upon it.

So Job, a great, and a large, and a comfortable estate that God gave unto him, but first he is plundered and spoiled of all, a sentence of death passes upon all his comforts; and is not this God's dealing with his people still? look I pray into the xith of the Revelation, and ye shall see how the two witnesses are to fear; "After three days and an half, (at verse 11.) the Spirit of Life from God entered into them; and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them: and they heard a great voice from heaven; saying unto them, come up hither;" but I pray mark, Rev. xi. they are killed first; at the latter end of verse 7, "He shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them, and their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt; and they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves:" there is a Spirit of life enters into them afterwards. Aye, but first of all a sentence of death passes upon them; this is God's way and manner of dealing with his people, with the children of Abraham, with those that are true believers.

What reason for it? This seems somewhat strange: not a blessing or a mercy of any great importance, or concernment, but the sentence of death passes upon it first: what reason for this? Why is God pleased to take this way with his own people, the children of Abraham?

First of all, God doth so give blessings and mercies unto his own people, as "That he may be most of all seen therein." Beloved, God doth not only give us these outward creature comforts for to supply our wants, but to bear up the honour of his own greatness. You have not fish out of the water only to supply your wants; nor fruit from the earth only to supply your wants; nor light from the sun only to supply your wants, but to bear up the honour of God's greatness also. When he gives unto his people, he does give in such a way as may most of all bear up the honour of his own greatness. If it were only to supply their wants, then possibly, the sentence of death should never come upon the second cause; but now it is also to bear up his own honour,

the honour of his own greatness and that is done this way.

Hereby God is known to be a *living God*: so long as there is life in the means, God is not so well known to be a living God. But when all means are dead and yet the mercy comes, Oh, says a soul, now I see that God is a living God.

Hereby the *power* of God is made known; he must needs be great in power that can say to things that are not, *Be*; and give a resurrection unto dead things. So long as there is strength and ability in the means, men do not so much consider the power and the all-sufficiency of God. But when all means are strengthless, and all means are dead, and yet the mercy comes, Oh, says a soul, now I see that God is a God almighty, God all-sufficient.

Hereby he is made known under the name of Jehovah; a Being that gives a being unto all other beings; faithful in fulfilling his promise: so long as there is a being in the second cause and in the means, God is not known by the name Jehovah; but when there is a sentence of death put upon the second cause, and yet the mercy comes, Oh, now, says a soul, I see that God is Jehovah, a Being that gives a being unto all other beings. Therefore God does it.

And then, again, secondly, God does go this way with his people, with believers, the children of Abraham, that they may learn more to trust unto him, to trust unto God alone. You know what the apostle says, in 1 Tim. v. 5, "She that is a widow and desolate, trusteth in God." We seldom trust in God until a desolation come upon the means. A widow that is desolate trusteth in God: when desolation comes upon the means, then we learn for to trust in God. One that does learn to swim, so long as he can touch the bottom, can touch the earth with his foot, he does not commit himself unto the stream; but when he can feel no bottom, then he commits himself unto the mercy of the waters. Now so long as a man can stand upon the second cause, he can feel the bottom with his feet, he does not commit himself to the stream of mercy; but when once the second cause is gone, and he cannot feel the bottom, then he commits himself unto the stream of mercy. And you shall see the apostle gives you this account of it, in 2 Cor. i. 9, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in our-

selves, but in God which raiseth the dead." This is another reason why God is pleased to go this way.

Again, thirdly, it is fit that all believers should be conformable to Jesus Christ. It was thus with Christ. We read in that iind of the Philippians, of our Lord and Saviour, "that God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name." But see, first of all a sentence of death passes upon his name: "He was made of no reputation," verse 7; he was made of no name first: "And being of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: wherefore God hath highly exalted, and given him a name which is above every name." He brought salvation, life to light; he spoiled Satan; but first of all he was spoiled himself, and a sentence of death passes upon him before he brought things unto life, and he gives you to understand thus much himself, and here he holds forth himself for our example: in the xiith chapter of John, says he, at the 23rd verse, "The time is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Well, but how? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Thus he comes to his glory: he must die first, and so he must come to glory. "If any man serve me (says he at the 26th verse), let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." This is the way that Christ went, and this way God took with Christ. Love loves to be like unto Jesus Christ; and faith loves to go in the garment of Jesus Christ: as with him, so with the saints.

And then again, fourthly, God is pleased thus to order things in the dispensations of his grace and mercy, that the comforts of his people may be the more sure and stedfast. If our comforts hang at the girdle of the creature, they are most uncertain; but if they be laid up in God, in his promise, upon his power, then they are certain. He that is engaged in the crowd, must be carried to and fro in the crowd; and he that is in a ship, must be carried as the ship is. If a man stand upon a bank of ice, he is apt to slide; but if he stand upon dry ground, he stands more sure. All the second causes, they make but a bank of ice, and when a man stands on them, and his comforts on them, he is apt to slide; the

only dry ground is God's power, and God's faithfulness, and his promise.

That a man's comforts therefore may not slide, but may be more sure and stedfast; God takes this course with his people, putting a sentence of death upon the mercy, and upon all the means that do lead unto it, before he gives it out unto the soul.

Aye, but you will say, this shakes the very foundation of all my comfort; for if this be true, that when God intends any special mercy to the children of Abraham, he does first put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it; then surely I am none of the children of Abraham, I never had any special mercy yet given unto me, I do not find that it hath been so to me.

No: what then? because your experience does not speak it, is it not therefore true? Some would have the sun set by their watch, and not their watch set by the sun: some measure the truth of all the doctrines that they hear by their own experience, and if their own experience speak them true, then they are true; otherwise not. But I say, what then? It may be thou art a man or woman, that the Lord never gave out a promise to thee, not a promise to thy soul; some there are in prayer, that by the strength of their memory can reach in a promise; and when art and memory reaches in a promise into prayer, the sentence of death does not then pass indeed; but when the Lord gives out a promise to the soul, then the sentence of death passes upon the business, upon the mercy, and upon the means that do lead unto it. I appeal unto all the saints here: whether ever had ye any great mercy in all your life, but, first of all, there was a sentence of death passed upon it, and upon all the means that did lead unto it? And therefore, though thou sayest, this shakes the foundation of thy comfort; truly, better a rotten foundation should be shaken, than stand.

But, you will say, is it so with the saints in regard of all their spiritual blessings too?

Yes, when ever did the Lord give an ordinance to his people in the way of a special mercy, but first of all the sentence of death came upon the business, and upon all the means that did lead unto it?

When did the Lord ever give any grace to his people, but

first of all the sentence of death past? When ever did the Lord give any encouragement in duty to any of his children, but first a sentence of death past? When ever did the Lord give any great enjoyment of himself to any of his children, but first the sentence of death past? When ever was a poor soul made fruitful, but first a sentence of death past? Oh, never any more barren than I, never any more dead than I. Our Lord and Saviour Christ, he promises his disciples, that he would send them the Holy Ghost, the Comforter: but before the Comforter came, he goes away himself from them, and they were left, and never in such a sad condition as immediately before the Comforter came. And if you mind it here, though Abraham had many acts of faith, yet this act of faith is singled out from all the rest of the actings of Abraham's faith; wherein Abraham is held forth as a pattern for all believers. The grace of a godly man, is his soul's resurrection; we are risen, being risen with Christ; by grace we rise. Now, says the apostle, it is in regard of the resurrection as with seed that is sown; it first dies, and then it rises. The saints and people of God, they have all their graces and all their comforts in a way of resurrection. This is the way therefore God takes with his people. Only take along with you these three or four cautional considerations.

This is to be understood concerning the great and the special blessings and mercies which believers have. There are some blessings and mercies that are more common and ordinary; some that are more special and greater. I do not say that this is true concerning every common and ordinary blessing that a believer hath, that he hath no blessing, no mercy, but first of all a sentence of death is put upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it; but, I say, it is true concerning the great and the special blessings and mercies. We read of Abraham that he had other children; it was not so in regard of them; but Isaac was the great blessing, it was so in regard of Isaac. The children of Israel, they had their daily bread and their water; their daily provisions, we do not find it in regard of them: but they had manna from heaven, and they had water out of the rock; they had special water, special bread, so in regard of these. And therefore if you look into Exod. xv. you shall find there, at the last verse, "They came to Elim, where were twelve wells of

water, (according to the twelve tribes, every tribe had one,) and three-score and ten palm trees," (according to the number of those that went down to Egypt). But now before they had these twelve wells of water, ye read at the 29nd verse, that "they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." At the 25th verse, you read of waters they had that were very sweet; but before that the water was bitter, it was called Marah. "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." The special waters and blessings of God's people come to them thus.

Again, the sentence of death may be put upon your mercy in another man's hand. It was a great mercy even to Isaac, that by him all the nations of the world should be blessed; but the sentence of death was put upon this mercy in Abraham's hand, as well as in his own. Thou comest, it may be, to the preaching of the word, and thou art converted by such a sermon; thou dost not see how the sentence of death was put upon this mercy before thou hadst it: may be the sentence of death was put upon it in the minister's hand, in the preacher's hand; may be he had laid aside those doctrines and those truths, and thought to preach upon another matter; may be the sentence of death was put upon thy mercy in his hand. So sometimes it is in another man's hand.

Again, though the sentence of death be put upon a mercy before a believer comes to it; yet it is much according to the life of the mercy that is afterward. If the life be great, the death is great; if the life be small, the death is small. And sometimes the sentence of death falls mostly upon the apprehension; as it was with Hagar; she was in the wilderness, and she thought she should die for want of water; Only, said she, I will not see my child die; and there was a well by. So that now, here the sentence of death lay mostly upon her own apprehension. And thus you have it also with Joshua, of whom you read in the ist of Joshua: the Lord makes him a great promise, "Now therefore arise,

(says he, at the second verse) go over this Jordan, thou and all this people; every place the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." And at the latter end of the 5th verse, "I will be with thee, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Now if you look into the viith chapter, you find that Joshua had "rent his clothes, (ver. 6,) and fell to the earth upon his face, before the ark of the Lord, until even-tide; and Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan." Why, what is the matter? You read, "There went up three thousand men of the Israclites, and thirty-six men of them were smote by the men of Ai." Here was cause now of fear, but no cause of such expressions as did fall from Joshua: a sentence of death passes upon the mercy, but it lay mostly upon the apprehension of Joshua. Sometimes it falls more upon the apprehension, and less upon the thing; sometimes it falls more upon the thing, and less upon the apprehension: but always more or less, when God intends any great or special mercy to his people, to the children of Abraham, he does first cause the sentence of death to pass upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

You will say then, Why does God give the promise? I confess this is true, I seldom had any great mercy in all my days, but first of all the sentence of death came upon it: but one thing seems very strange to me, that the Lord should give out a promise; first a promise given out, and then comes the sentence of death upon the mercy, and upon the means that do lead unto it. What should be the meaning of this; why does the Lord deal thus, give out a promise first?

A promise is given out twice. At the first, before we do use the means, to encourage us thereunto; afterwards upon some encouragements that we do meet with in the use of means.

When the Lord does first give out the promise, a sentence of death then passes, that he may shew you where the mercy lies. As the mother does deal by her child; shews the child where the meat stands; Child, thou art not yet fit for it, thou

shalt have it in due time, look, here it stands. Or as a father that shews the child where the money lies; Child, time is not yet, but there the money lies, there is the bag it is in, none shall take it from thee. So does God do. You think that the mercy lies in the second cause; No, says God, here, here is the bag that it lies in. Therefore he does first give out the promise, that he may tell the soul where the mercy lies, show the soul where it is.

And then again. God does therefore give out the promise, notwithstanding the sentence of death; because he intends not to give the mercy presently. You think, it may be, that as soon as you have a promise set on upon your heart, you shall presently enjoy the mercy: nay, but God does therefore give you a promise, because you shall not have it presently.

As for example: If I would pay a man my money down presently, I would not give him a bond; but my very giving him a bond, argues, I am not to pay him presently. So the Lord, he gives out a promise, and you think now, you must have it presently: No, says the Lord, but because a sentence of death is to come, and thou shalt not have it presently, therefore I give out the promise.

Again, God does therefore give out the promise, notwithstanding his sentence of death, that your hearts may be borne up against all discouragements, when the womb of the second cause shall be dead. God sees that his child, or servant is going into a great storm: There is such a child of mine, says God, he is going into a great storm, and his faith will be put to a great stress; therefore I will furnish him with cables and good anchors; I will throw him out a promise. You think, because God gives you a promise, because God gives you cables, because God gives you anchors, therefore you shall come to land presently: the Lord does therefore give you a promise, because he does see that a storm is coming: you mistake the way of God in his promise; this is God's way, he gives out a promise, and then causes the sentence of death to pass upon the business, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

I come unto the application.

Whilst I stand upon this truth, methinks I see matter of great and everlasting encouragement to all the saints and peo-

ple of God: be not discouraged, but rather keep silence, wait and stay upon God when the darkest times go over your head: when the sentence of death is put upon the mercy, and blessing which you do most desire. This is God's way, when he intends any great mercy to any of his children, he puts a sentence of death first upon it. Oh, when death sits upon the means, then we conclude all is dead, the mercy dead, all is gone, and we are very apt to have despairing thoughts and to make despondent conclusions. "I said in my haste (says he) all men are liars," Ps. cxvi. 11: Samuel says, I shall have a kingdom; the sentence of death is put upon the business; "all men are liars." So in another place: "I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight," Ps. xxxi. 22: shall I see the face of God? nothing but death upon all the means; I am cast out of thy sight. So with Hezekiah, "I said, (says he) I shall be cast out of the land of the living," Isa. xxxviii. 11. And so now-a-days: I thought indeed we should have had a reformation; but now nothing but sad division: I thought we should have had free enjoyment of all the ordinances; but now the sentence of death put upon all. I had thought I should have had assurance; and never doubted again; but now death is put upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it: all is dead, all is gone: oh, we are very apt to be much discouraged, and to make strange conclusions when death comes upon the means: it is a hard thing to keep from such conclusions: for the business comes to a vote, as it were, it comes to a vote before the soul. The question is, saith the soul, whether I shall be saved or no? As many as are for the affirmative, say, Aye: Aye, says the promise. As many as are for the negative, say, No: No, says threatenings; and No, says guilty conscience; No, no, no, say a thousand sins. The question is, whether I shall be delivered or no? I am in such an affliction and straitness; the question is, whether I shall be delivered or no? As many as are for the affirmative say, Aye: Aye, says the promise. As many as are for the negative, say, No: No, says providence; No, say all second causes, and all the means round about; No, no, no, say a thousand sins. Now my beloved, it is a hard thing for a poor soul to give an affirmative with the bare promise, when all else gives a negative: but the reason is, because this truth that I am

now upon, is not by you ; were but this truth by you, it were easy to give an affirmative with the bare promise, when death sits upon all the means. As for example : suppose our army be in the field, engaged with the enemy ; a troop routed, a regiment routed, a wing routed ; Come, says a carnal soldier, fellow soldiers, shift for your lives, for we are all undone and spoiled : Nay, not so, says the believing soldier, this is God's way ; when God intends any great mercy to his people, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it : and therefore, come, fall on, fall on, brave hearts, fall on ; for this is God's way : and so it proves many times.

Or suppose a man be in some personal strait or affliction : the devil, the tempter he comes ; Ye see in what strait ye are, there is no means at all for your deliverance, you had as good take such and such an indirect course ; why should you wait any longer ? Nay, says the soul, but I have learned otherwise : when God intends any great mercy to his children, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it ; and therefore I will wait on God still, I may be in God's way, this may be God's way ; it may be the Lord is in a way to give me a greater mercy than ever I had in all my days. Oh, my beloved, that you would but gird this truth upon your thigh, how might you cut off all discouragements as they rise upon you.

You will say, How does this cut off discouragements ? Some things there are that die, and never rise again, as beasts ; some things there are that die, and do rise again, as men. The sentence of death is upon the mercy that I do much desire ; and did I know, indeed, that it should rise again, it were a matter of great encouragement to me, but that I do not know.

For answer, I shall only say thus much to it : A *may be* of mercy is a sufficient ground for our reliance and support of the soul upon God. Mark, there are two acts of faith, the faith of reliance and the faith of assurance ; assurance that causes joy, reliance that causes quietness. Accordingly there are two objects of faith : a *shall be* of mercy, that is the object of assurance ; a *may be* of mercy, that is the object of reliance. Ye shall observe, therefore, that when the Lord would call out his people to an act of reliance upon him, he

holds out a *may be* of mercy to them: "Seek the Lord, ye meek of the earth, seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger:" ye know the place in Zephaniah (ii.8). And if ye look into 1 Sam. xiv., ye shall find that this *may be* was that encouraged Jonathan; at the 6th verse, "Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few." It may be the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few. This encouraged Jonathan, and hereby he encourages his armour-bearer. So, when a man can say thus, It may be the Lord will shew mercy to me in such a work, or in such a business, there is no restraint with him; it causes the soul to rely on God. Now this doctrine, it holds forth a *may be* to you, a *may be* of mercy to you; though you have not an assurance that this mercy, that hath the sentence of death upon it, will certainly rise again; yet, notwithstanding, seeing it is God's way, this is God's way with the children of Abraham; when he intends to give a special mercy, he does put a sentence of death upon it. This holds forth a *may be* unto you; a *may be* of mercy this doctrine holds forth unto you. Why, therefore, my beloved, should we not rely upon God, when the sentence of death is put upon the means, upon all the means that do lead unto the mercy that you most desire?

But you will say unto me, Is there no way, no means to spy out God's meaning in this particular? Oh, that I did but know whether this mercy that hath the sentence of death upon it, shall rise again! How shall one know that; are there no means to know it; whether a mercy shall rise again when the sentence of death is upon it?

I shall speak but two things unto that, briefly.

1. A christian may have some persuasion of the resurrection of his mercy, when the sentence of death is put upon it, by the frequent visitings of the promise. Mark, when God intends any special mercy to his people, he gives out a promise; then comes the sentence of death: but if he intends to fulfil the promise, he does cause the promise frequently to visit the soul, even when the sentence of death is upon the business; often to knock at the door of the soul.

When there is good will between two young people kept from marrying by their parents, and the young man often is at the house, ye say, Surely, if the parents were but dead, there would be a marriage quickly, by the frequent visitings. So, now, when the promise does frequently visit the soul in the time when the sentence of death is upon the business, it argues that the mercy is not quite dead. Moses had a promise in a vision: the bush burning, and not consuming; Israel in Egypt, and not destroyed. Moses, he carries his promise along with him in his bosom; indeed we do not read of it till Moses comes to die; and when Moses comes to bless the people: "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush, be with you," Deut. xxxiii. 16. This same promise kept Moses company all along; and though the sentence of death was often put upon the business, yet, notwithstanding, in that the mercy came and visited him, it argued that this promise was not quite dead. So by the frequent visitings of the same promise; "Though the tree be cut down, yet through the scent of those waters it shall rise again," Job xiv. 9.

2. But especially in the second place: a christian may have some comfortable persuasion that the mercy is not dead but sleepeth: by the first fruits of the promise. When the Jews kept the feast of the first fruits, they knew that the harvest was not far off. And so, when the first fruits of a mercy comes, we may know that the mercy or blessing is not far off. Beloved, God does use to give the first fruits of a blessing before the great blessing comes. It is a good speech of one; says he, God does with the same seal seal divers matters; one mercy is made a seal to another. God does give one mercy as a pledge of another, and as a seal of another. And so our Saviour Christ does, in that ixth chapter of Matthew, we read of a certain ruler that came to him for his daughter; and he said (at the 18th verse), "My daughter is even now dead, but come, and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live." Here was his belief, that he should say, Come, and lay thine hand upon her; Christ could have healed her, without coming to her, but Jesus arose and followed him. "And behold a woman (at the 20th verse) which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment; Jesus

turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that same hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels, and the people making a noise; he said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn." He did a miracle in the way, as a pledge unto them that he would do this miracle also, that he would raise up his daughter; and by this miracle that he did in the way, he did give them a seal of the miracle following, of the mercy following. Thus he does many times.

Thus he dealt by David: the Lord made David a promise of the kingdom, to give him the kingdom, bring him to the throne: David, he is thrust out into the wilderness; well, when he is there, Saul he persecutes him, hunts him; Saul comes so near him, as that Saul is on one side the hill, and he on the other, nearer: but even there Saul is delivered into the hand of David. This now, this mercy here in the wilderness, was a pledge to him of the kingdom afterward. So now is it with you: hath the Lord given you a promise of some great blessing, or some great mercy; and thereupon does the sentence of death come upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it? In the interim, between the promise and the fulfilling, does the Lord deliver you from some affliction that rises up in your way: the interim-mercy, the deliverance being of the same nature with the mercy promised, is a pledge unto you that the mercy shall rise again; though the sentence of death be now upon it. And thus you should lock upon things.

But while I am upon this, it is enough for the reliance of the soul upon God, a *may be* of mercy: I say, a *may be* of mercy is enough for the act of reliance. And this doctrine always holds forth this truth unto you, that there is a *may be*; because, when God intends to fulfil his promise, by giving any special blessing, or mercy to the children of Abraham, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon the blessing, and upon all the means that lead unto it. Shall we not then wait upon him; keep silence in the day of trouble?

I will give you two or three encouragements hereunto, and so I will wind up all.

Beloved, the sentence of death (you say) is upon the mercy

or the blessing that you do much desire. If ever the mercy rise, and the grave clothes be taken off; it shall be the choicest mercy that ever you had in all your lives. Abraham had divers sons, but the jewel was Isaac, the dead mercy: Hannah had divers children, but who like Samuel, the found mercy? Mercy once *lost* and then *found* is a choice mercy, it is the greatest mercy. First I say, if ever you come to find the mercy you have lost; if ever that rise which the sentence of death is put upon, it shall be the greatest mercy. Job had a good estate; but when all was plundered, a sentence of death come upon all: when he came to his comforts and his estate again, then it was done. Some have observed concerning Joseph, that according to the several links of his affliction were the pearls in the crown of his mercy. There is observed some eight or nine. I shall not have time to enlarge myself in them, only thus: Joseph he is sold by his brethren into Egypt; answerable unto that, Joseph's brethren come down to Egypt, and worship before him. Joseph is accused for wronging his mistress, sad reproaches cast upon him; answerable to that, a herald proclaims before him, This is the man whom the king honours. Joseph is thrown into prison, the irons enter into his soul; answerable to that, a chain of gold is hung about his neck. Joseph, a poor stranger, brought as low as ever man was; answerable to that, he is made next in the kingdom to Pharaoh. Beloved, if the dead mercy rise, as your bodies when they rise they rise in glory, so when the mercy rises, it will rise a glorious mercy. And as it shall be the greatest mercy that ever you had, so it shall be the surest. That is most certain that is certain after uncertainty. Whose assurance was like to Thomas's? Oh, says Thomas, my Lord and my God; two my's, My Lord and my God: it came out of doubting. A tree that stands after shaking stands the most firmly. Assurance after doubting is the strongest assurance, surest assurance, as it is the greatest mercy. So, I say, it shall be the surest mercy, if ever the mercy rise.

And then again, lastly: as the surest, so it shall be the sweetest mercy; the children of Israel, they had wholesome meat and water, and drink: but the sweetest water was that, which they had after no water: water out of a rock, that was like honey: and a mercy that comes out of a rock, that comes

from out of the sentence of death, from under death ; it shall be the sweetest mercy. You know what the father of the prodigal says, when his son was come home : he calls his friends together : “ Come, (says he) and make merry with me ; for this my son was dead, and is now alive,” Luke xv. 32 : calls his friends together, and speaks thus unto them. So shall it be with the soul, when the mercy lost, is found, when the mercy dead is raised : then the soul shall call in his friends ; Come, O my friends ; come, I will tell you what the Lord hath done for my soul, here, here is a mercy dead, and it is now alive : come, make merry with me, O my friends ; this my assurance it was even dead, and it is now alive : oh, this blessing, this blessing it was dead ; but it is now alive : come and make merry with me, O my friends : for this mercy was dead, and it is now alive. Thus I say : if this mercy rise that hath the sentence of death upon it : it shall be the greatest mercy, it shall be the surest ; and it shall be the sweetest mercy, that ever you had in all your days. And therefore, who would not wait upon the Lord ? Who would not wait upon the Lord when the sentence of death is put upon the mercy, and upon all the means that do lead unto it ? O my beloved in the Lord, that you would but possess your hearts with this one truth, this mercy ; how quiet would your souls be under all the distempers and the troubles of the time ; national distempers, personal distempers. When you look upon the troubles that are abroad, yet your hearts would be quiet, and you would say, Well, but yet notwithstanding, we may be in the way to the greatest mercy that ever England saw ; why should we be thus discouraged ? O my soul, wait upon God, this is God’s way ; he never gives any great mercy to any of his people, but first he does put a sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it. And therefore, notwithstanding all, yet we may be in God’s way. Therefore, O my soul, wait on him.

Thus much for this time.

SERMON II.

THE SPIRITUAL ACTINGS OF FAITH THROUGH NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITIES.

“ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.”—Rom. iv. 19.

THE words, as ye heard the last day, are spoken concerning Abraham; and they hold forth three great truths unto us.

The first is this: That when God intends to fulfil his promise, by giving any special blessing to the children of Abraham, he does first put the sentence of death upon the blessing, and upon all the means that do lead unto it. Abraham’s body is dead, and Sarah’s womb is dead, when God had promised him a great seed.

The second is this: When God is thus pleased to put the sentence of death upon a blessing, or the means that do lead thereto; then, and then especially, it is the duty and commendation of all the children of Abraham to believe in God, and not to stand poring upon the means, and the deadness thereof. “ He considered not his own body being dead, nor the deadness of Sarah’s womb.”

The third is this: That no difficulty can stand before faith; true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ. Thus it was here with Abraham; he being not weak in faith, he had an eye unto Jesus Christ.

I have done with the first, and my desire is now at this time to despatch the second.

When God is pleased thus to put the sentence of death upon a blessing, or the means that do lead unto it; it is the duty of the children of Abraham then to trust in God, not to stand poring upon or considering of the means, and the deadness thereof.

Thus it was here with Abraham. God made Abraham a promise that his seed should be like the sand, and like the stars, for multitude: but Abraham’s body is dead, and his wife’s body is dead; notwithstanding, Abraham considered

not the deadness of the means. And in all this he is held forth for our example, as you heard the last day. As he did therefore, so must we do.

The doctrine is somewhat large ; I shall break it asunder into three parts, and endeavour to clear up these three propositions unto you, for the proof of the whole.

First, That a mere rational considering of the means, and the deadness thereof, is a great and a special enemy to the work of believing.

Secondly, That when all means fail, it is the duty and commendation of the children of Abraham then to believe.

Thirdly, That so to do is exceeding pleasing to God, and most acceptable.

First, That a mere rational considering of the means, the straitness or scantiness, narrowness or deadness of the means, is a great and a special enemy to the work of believing.

Abraham being not weak in faith, considered not his own body being dead. If he had considered, he might have been hindered in his faith.

Ye read of Zacharias, that good man, father of John the Baptist, that when the angel brought him tidings of a child, in way of his special mercy, he would not believe it. And in the ist of Luke, and the 30th verse, ye read how he was punished for it : “ Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words.” But what hindered him, what kept him off from this work of believing ? You shall find at the 18th verse ; too much attendance unto, and considering of the means, and the deadness thereof. Zacharias said unto the angel, “ Whereby shall I know this ? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” He looked too much upon, and considered ; he stood poring too much upon the means ; and this was the enemy unto his faith. You know, beloved, that the Scripture hath laid a flat opposition between faith and sense. We live by faith, says the apostle, and not by sight or by sense. The reasons drawn from sense are sense ; and when a man does live by reasons drawn from sense, and bears up his mind therewithal, he does live by sense. If you live by faith you do not live by sense ; if you do live by sense you do not live by faith. They are

as two buckets, the life of faith and the life of sense; when one goes up the other goes down: the higher faith riseth the lower sense and reason; and the higher sense and reason the lower faith. That is true of the schools, reason going before faith, weakens and diminisheth it; but reason following upon faith, increases and strengthens it. Besides, you know Paul says, "Not many wise," &c. Why not many wise called? Those that are wise, they consider the things of God, and of the gospel, in a mere rational way; and therefore not many wise are called: it hinders them from the work of believing. Luther says well, If you would believe, says he, you must crucify that question, why? God will not have us so full of wherefores. And if you would believe, you must go blindfold into God's command. Abraham subscribes to a blank, when the Lord called him out of his own country.

Besides, you know the great field that faith hath to work in; the large and vast orb and sphere that it hath to move in.

Faith can go into the Old Testament, and run as high as Adam, and come back again to the soul, and and tell the soul; I have seen a man whom God hath pardoned that damned all the world; and why may he not pardon thee? Faith can run up to heaven, and come home again to the soul; and say, I have seen the glory there; be of good comfort, there is enough in heaven to pay for all. Faith can run unto God's all-sufficiency, to God's omnipotency, and having viewed that well, it returns to the soul home again, and says, Be quiet, there is enough in God alone: and faith having placed and seated itself upon this high tower and mountain, God's omnipotency and all-sufficiency, it hath a great prospect, it can look over all the world, and look into another world too. But now reason, it gets upon some little mole hill of creature ability, and if it can see over two or three hedges, it is well. And therefore, oh, what a pain is it to faith to be tied to reason. I suppose you will all say, that if a man were able to go a journey of two or three hundred miles a foot, he were a very good footman; yet if you will tie him to carry a child of four or five years old with him, you will say, it would be a great luggage to him; and the man would say, pray let this child be left at home; for though he may run along in my hand half a mile, or go a mile with me, yet, notwithstanding, I must carry him the rest of the

way: and when I come at any great water, or to go over any hill, I must take him upon my back; and that will be a great burden to me. And thus it is between faith and reason. Reason at the best is but a child to faith. Faith can foot it over mountains and difficulties, and wade through afflictions, though they be very wide: but when reason comes to any affliction, to wade through that, and to go over some great difficulties; then it cries out and says, Oh, faith, good faith, go back again; good faith, go back again. No, says faith, but I will take thee upon my back, reason. And so faith is fain to do indeed: take reason upon its back; but oh, what a luggage is reason to faith; oh, what a burden is reason to faith. Faith never works better, than when it works most alone. The mere rational considering of the means, and the deadness thereof, is a great and special enemy to the work of believing. That is the first.

The second proposition is this, That when all means fail, and seem to lie dead before us; then it is the duty and commendation of all the children of Abraham to believe: that is, to believe the thing may be, and so to rest and rely on God in Christ. Thus it was here with Abraham.

And hath not the Lord commanded by the apostle, saying, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to the hand of God, as into the hand of a faithful Creator," 1 Pet. iv. 19. When ye are scrupled about your election or reprobation, you look upon God as a potter that hath power over the clay, to make it either a vessel of honour or dishonour: but when you are to believe, then you are not to look upon God as a potter, that works out of clay or out of materials; but as a Creator, that works out of nothing, yea, as a faithful Creator, that will be sure to work out of nothing, whom you shall be sure of. Thus then you are to look upon him. You know the place in Hab. iii. 17: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation: the Lord God is my strength," &c. Thus Habakkuk believed. Beloved, we are so to believe, as the promise runs. God's promise is the rule of our faith;

look how that speaks, so may we believe. The promise and faith is the buckle and clasp fit for one another. Now the Lord does not only promise to help the children of Abraham, but he promises to help when all means fail: "When the poor and needy seek for water, and there is none," Isa. xli. 17. I pray look into Jer. iii. 8, "Behold, (says the Lord,) I will bring them from the north country, (his people scattered here into the land of the north,) and gather them from the coasts of the earth; and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together; a great company shall return hither." The Lord promises to bring them back to their own country from the land of the north.

Aye, but may some say, I am a poor blind man, and I shall never find the way home again.

Says he, "I will gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind."

Oh, but I am a poor lame man, and I shall never be able to go so far,

"And with them (says he) the blind and the lame."

Oh, but I am a woman with child, surely I shall never be able to return to my own country.

Yes, says he, "the woman with child."

Aye, but I am a woman like to be in travail about that time, surely I shall be left behind; I shall never return to my own country.

Mark, "the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child, and a company shall return." God does not only promise help, but he promises to help the children of Abraham when all means fail.

And if you look into the New Testament, you will find that several promises which are given out in the Old Testament, upon special and extraordinary occasions, assuring help beyond means, are brought down into the New Testament for us to apply there. When the devil came to tempt our Lord and Saviour to turn stones into bread, says our Saviour, "Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," Matt. iv. 4. Now if you look into Deut. viii. 3, you will find that those words were spoken upon an extraordinary occasion; help beyond means: "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger,

and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither lid thy fathers know : that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."

And so here in this Rom. iv. Abraham believed when all means failed ; he believed the promise, and he is brought down for our example, that we should believe the promise also when means fail. And if you look into and consider Heb. xi., where you have a catalogue of many believers, ye shall find, that many of them believed when the means failed, beyond means ; and yet they are all brought down and made mention of for our example.

Surely, therefore, it is the duty of the children of Abraham to believe when all means fail, and seem to be dead before us : means for the soul, means for the body, means for the family, means for the churches.

Take this for the reason : Such a faith is to be exercised unto God, as is suitable unto that God in whom we do believe. If the God in whom we do believe, were a God that did help only by means, then we were to trust so unto him ; but being as he is such a God as works beyond means, we are to exercise a faith towards him suitable to this God in whom we do believe. So in regard of our love ; we must love God with a love worthy of God. Now if a man should only love God for benefits and blessings that he receives from him, and not for the holiness and excellency that is in God himself ; this love were not worthy of God. So in regard of our faith : if we should only believe God in regard of the reason, and experiences, and means ; this faith were no way worthy of God. I will believe a man, I will believe the worst of men, the vilest of men, so far as I can see him ; and shall I believe God no further ? We must believe with a faith worthy of God ; faith is not worthy of God, unless we believe beyond means : this is the faith that is worthy of God, this is the faith required and commended. Take but one scripture for it more. In Luke xvii. there were ten lepers came unto Christ desiring cure, saying, " Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." At verse 13, " When he saw them, he said to them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass as they went they were cleansed." It seems they were not cleansed then as he spake ; they were not

cleansed when Christ says, "Go and shew yourselves to the priests;" for it is said, "As they went they were cleansed." Why then should they shew themselves to the priests? They were to shew themselves to the priests, to bring an offering for their cleansing; yet, says our Saviour, "Go shew yourselves to the priests." They were to believe that they should be cleansed, although they saw themselves full of leprosy.

So, although a soul sees himself to be full of leprosy, yet notwithstanding it is to rely upon Jesus Christ, and to believe as if he were fully cleansed. This is the second proposition.

The third will make out this the more full: Thus to believe when all means fail, is exceeding pleasing to God and most acceptable.

This kind of faith Christ commends in Thomas: Thomas (says Christ) "thou hast believed because thou hast seen; but blessed are those that do believe and have not seen." John xx. 29. Blessed is any man that does believe, though his hands may be full of sense: but of all believers, blessed is that believer that believes beyond sense, that believes and hath not seen.

There are two especially that Jesus Christ does commend for believing: the Canaanitish woman, and the Centurion. To the one, says he, "O woman, great is thy faith." Mat. xv. 28. And to the other: "I have not seen such faith, no, not in Israel." Mat. viii. 10. And both of these believed above hope and under hope, when the means in view seemed to chide them off from believing. In Heb. xi. many of the saints are commended for their faith. They had other graces wherein they did excel: Moses was a *meek* man, he is not recorded there and commended for his meekness, but for his *faith*. Samson was a stout and a resolute man; he is not commended there for that, but for his faith. They had other excellent graces, but this grace of faith is singled out to wear the crown. "They all obtained a good report through faith." Heb. xi. 39. That wears the crown of all other graces. And you shall find that that faith was mingled with many weaknesses: Rahab, one of those believers, what a deal of weakness passed from her in her believing. Yet notwithstanding, though their faith was clogged with many weaknesses, yet their faith is commended, and most of them

believing beyond means, and when all means failed; plainly speaking out this truth to us: the great acceptance that such a faith hath with God. Beloved, this faith, believing when all means fail and lie dead before us, turns God about; (as we may speak with reverence) and makes God, of an enemy, a seeming enemy, to become our friend. If you trust unto your friend for a kindness, he will do it because you rest on him; if you rest upon an enemy, he fails you. But if you rest on God, he will therefore do it because you rest on him, and he will become your friend by your resting on him. Oh, I have been a great and a wretched sinner, yet notwithstanding, I know there is infinite riches of grace in Christ, and therefore, says the soul, I will rest on him: "yea Lord, though thou kill me, yet will I rest upon thee." Aye, (says the Lord) wilt thou now rest upon me, now I frown, now I chide, now I have a rod in my hand, now I have a sword in my hand to kill thee (as it were) wilt thou now rest upon me? Well, be of good comfort, thou art mine for ever. Man or woman, go in peace, good is thy faith. This resting thus upon God when all means fail, it melts God's anger into love.

And besides, it is that faith that is most successful, the most speeding in prayer. You may look into the second of Chronicles, the thirteenth chapter, and you shall find there that Abijah going to war with Jeroboam, had not more than half so many as Jeroboam had. Abijah "set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men." A great army. But Jeroboam had as many again. "And Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour." I pray now let us consider, how went the day? Read the seventeenth verse: "Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men." Five hundred thousand chosen men slain. How came this about? Read the eighteenth verse: "Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers." Or as some books have it, "because they stayed upon the Lord God of their fathers." The means was too scanty, it was short; they rested upon God beyond

the means, and see what great success they had upon this: they were but four hundred thousand, against eight hundred thousand; and they slew five hundred thousand men. So successful is this work and this way of believing.

It is this faith that now I am speaking of; believing when all means fail and lie dead before us, that does honor God especially, which doth justify the soul; "It is the soul-saving faith of all." Pray look into the seventh of Luke, and consider it well. It is said at the last verse: "Jesus said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." But here is no mention at all before of her faith. There is mention of her love in the forty-seventh verse: "I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." There is mention before of her tears, at the thirty-eighth verse: "A woman in the city, which was a sinner, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Here is mention of her tears, here is mention of her liberality, and bounty, and love to Jesus Christ; and yet our Lord and Saviour Christ does not say thus: Woman, thy tears hath saved thee, go in peace: Woman, thy repentance and thy humiliation hath saved thee, go in peace: he doth not say, Thy love to me and thy bounty to me hath saved thee, go in peace, woman. No, but our Lord and Saviour, he saw a secret work of reliance upon himself in this woman, for she was a great sinner, and he says unto her, Woman, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace. This is the soul-saving faith, thus to believe when all means fail and seem to lie dead before you. Surely therefore, to do thus must needs be exceeding pleasing to God, and most acceptable.

And so I have done with those three propositions; and now I come to the application.

If these things be so, oh, what manner of faith should we have? Will ye only believe when means are strong and have life in them? Ye have read of the unbelief of the people of Israel when they were in the wilderness: being in the wilderness, they wanted much outward provision, ordinary provision; and by occasion thereof they murmured, full of unbelief, in so much as the Lord was angry with them,

and slew them, so that they never came into the land of promise. But, I pray, what was their unbelief for which God did slay them: was it this, that they did not believe when they had means? No, but that they did not believe when all means failed, when all outward means failed; that is their unbelief.

Beloved, we have their promises, we have their example, we have more means of faith than they; and shall not our faith rise higher than theirs; shall not we believe an inch beyond the means? You have heard the doctrine: It is the duty of all the children of Abraham to believe when means fail, it is exceeding pleasing to God, and it is most acceptable. Oh, what an encouragement is here to believe above hope, and under hope, and when death sits upon the lips of the second cause, and speaks nothing but terror. Some there are, that say, they can believe for their bodies, but they cannot trust God for their souls, when means fail. Some say, they can trust God for their souls, when means fail, but they cannot trust God for their bodies. Some say, they can trust God for themselves, but they cannot trust God for their families: What shall become of my wife and children? Some say, they can trust God for their families, but they cannot trust God for the church; when a storm rises, they cry out and say, Lord, carest thou not that we perish? though Jesus Christ be in the ship with them.

We are very ready and apt to hunt after the means when we want them; and to rest upon them when we have them. And there is a great propenseness in us to doing rather than unto believing, before conversion; and in the point of conversion.

Before conversion, says the young man, Matt. xix. 16, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And in the point of conversion, Acts ii., "What shall we do to be saved?" And Paul himself, Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The jailor too, Acts xvi. 30, "What shall I do to be saved?" What shall I do? But I pray mark the apostle's answer to the jailor, when he cried out, and said, Oh, what shall I do? The apostle does not say, Go, fast and pray; though he had need do that: but the first work that the apostle does put him upon, is, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." This is the work.

And therefore, when some came to Christ, and asked him this question, "Master, what shall we do that we may work the works of God?" says Christ, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent," John vi. 28, 29. And of all workings of faith, this same believing, when all means do fail and seem to lie dead before us, is that which is most pleasing to God. Oh, that we could learn, oh, that we could learn this point, to believe when the sentence of death is past upon a business, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

You will say, I am afraid to believe when means fail, for God hath commanded us to use means: and as in angling for fish, a man is to have his eye upon the cork, so he is to have his eye upon the means; God hath commanded us to use the means.

True, in your fishing and angling you have an eye unto the cork, but in Christ's fishing there is another cork that you are to have an eye unto: Christ commands to believe. "Master (say they), we have fished all night, and caught nothing; nevertheless at thy command we will cast in again," Luke v. 5. The same God that hath commanded you to keep the ten commandments, commands you to believe when all means fail.

And whereas ye say, ye are afraid to believe when you have no means, because God hath commanded you to use the means, and now means are wanting.

I shall desire you to consider with me but these four things.

First of all, thou sayest means fail, and seem to lie dead before thee, and thou art afraid now to believe; but it may be, that this is the time that God does take away the means, on purpose to try thy faith.

Beloved, there is a time when God does purposely take away the means to try a man's faith. God does first try our faith before he does feed our sense. When our Lord and Saviour Christ was to work that great miracle, feeding so many thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes; we read in John vi. 5, thus: "Jesus lift up his eyes, and saw a great company, and said to Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Why did our Saviour Christ thus put Philip upon it? Read what follows: "And this he said to prove him." He took away the means, "and this he

said to prove him." There is a time when the Lord does sometimes take away the means on purpose to prove thy faith. How dost thou know, man or woman, whether this be not the day and the time? Thou sayest, thou canst not believe, because means fail; it may be it is the time of thy trial, God sending this time of purpose to try thee.

Again, secondly, consider this; God does never give to supply our lusts, but to supply our wants. Possibly there may be means to supply thy want, though not means to supply thy lust. When our Lord and Saviour Christ fed so many thousands, what did he feed them with? "Five barley loaves and two fishes," John vi. 9. Not with turkey, not with partridges, not with quails, not with chickens, but with barley loaves. It may be thou hast a barley-loaf-means, but thou hast not chicken-means; and because thou hast not means to supply thine appetite, and to supply thy lust, thou sayest thou hast no means, and all means fail. Oh, this is very ordinary among some people; because they have not means to satisfy their mind and their lust, therefore they say that all means fail. I beseech you, beloved, consider whether there be not this great mistake, when you say that all means fail; only a failing of means to supply your appetite and your lust, but not a failing of barley-loaf-means; whether there be not always that means left by God?

In the third place. But suppose that all means fail indeed, and lie dead before you: now faith is a means to a means: mark, now faith is a means to faith, faith hath a commission from God to put life into that means that lies dead before you; faith hath a power from God to make that a means which was none before. Poor soul, thou standest quaking and shaking at a distance, and sayest, Oh, there is no means but contrary means; come up to that contrary means, come up to it in a way of believing, and thy very coming up to that which thou lookest upon as contrary, through thy faith will be made a means to thee. When the apostle Peter was in prison, the angel comes to him, strikes off his chains, and bids him go out presently. Peter does not say thus, What should I stir for, Lord? Sir, there is an iron gate to go through, there are so many guards of soldiers to pass through. Peter does not say so, but rises in a way of believing, comes to the iron gate in faith, and when he comes at it the iron

gate doth open. And so it will be with you. Indeed, if you come unto that which seems a contrary means, in a natural way, the iron gate still continues shut; but oh, if you would use your faith, come up unto that which you look upon as the most contrary in the way of believing, faith hath such a power from God, to put life into that means that lies dead before you.

And in the fourth place, consider this for your further encouragement: that look what way God is used to walk in towards you, the same way you may boldly expect him in. Does the Lord use to walk towards thee in a way of preventing mercy? You may boldly expect him in that way. Does the Lord walk towards you in an extraordinary way? (as in these times he hath toward us, though an unworthy people:) I say, does the Lord walk towards you in an extraordinary way? Hath he done so heretofore? You may expect him in that way. Now I appeal to you, you that are the people of God; hath not the Lord walked towards your souls in an extraordinary way? Hath not the Lord said concerning Christ, "His name shall be called Wonderful?" Isa. ix. 6. As you are known by your name, Richard, or Thomas, or John, so Jesus Christ shall be known by this name among his people, Wonderful: working wonders.

Hath not the Lord said, "His name is in the deep?" Ps. lxxvii. 19. Beloved, the Lord's way is in the deep towards his people and towards the wicked: towards his people, his way is in the deep when he walks towards them. Behold, saith he, by the prophet Jeremiah, speaking concerning the times of the gospel, "a new thing will I work, I will do a new thing, a woman shall compass a man;" you read it, Jer. xxxi. 22; but as Calvin reads it, "A woman shall lay siege to a man." That is the weaker shall take the stronger. And, says the Lord, never tell me it is a new thing, and such a thing as was never done before, I will never stand upon that, I will do things never done before, I will do a new thing, says the Lord, I will lead you in a way that was never went, never trodden before; I will do a new thing. And when the Lord walks in an extraordinary way towards you, now his way is in the deep. "His way is in the whirlwind" says the prophet, Nah. i. 3. Oh, beloved, shall we tie God to means then? True, God hath commanded you to use the

means when you have them : but where hath God forbidden you to trust in him when you have no means ? Thus Abraham did ; he considered not his own body being dead, nor Sarah's womb being dead ; for this his faith is commended ; so shall you be. Oh, that our faith were right : oh, that we could learn to live by faith, at a higher rate than ever yet we have done. Time yet may come, for aught we know, that you may find more use of this point.

But you will say unto me, I am afraid I shall presume : trust in God when all means fail, means for my soul, and means for my body, and means for my family ; trust in God now. I am afraid I shall presume : presumption is a great sin.

Mark. I shall only tell you what it is to presume, in answer to this ; *præsumo*, is to take a thing before it is given, or offered : mercy it is always offered to a poor sinner : Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and die for sinners ; thou canst not take mercy before it is offered. For a man to think that he shall fly in the air with wings like a bird, this is to presume : for a man to put God upon provision for his lust this is to presume : for a man to put God upon extraordinary, where ordinary may be this is to presume.

But for a man to rely upon God for necessities in extraordinary cases when ordinary cannot be had, this is no presumption, but faith. Mark, I say, to put God upon extraordinary, when ordinary may be had ; this is presumption : but to rely upon God for necessities in an extraordinary case, when it cannot be had in ordinary ; this is no presumption at all. Beloved, it is presumption in the highest degree for you and me, poor creatures, to tie up the hands of God ; to labour to do it is dangerous.

As for example : one poor subject to go to his prince, and tie up his hands and feet, or to go to his palace, and nail up all his doors, and leave him but one little wicket to come out at ; this is presumption. And so for a man to tie God to means, to tie God to a time, to tie God to this or that means, to tie God to means in general ; this is presumption. Mark, some there are that tie God to a time : Oh, if mercy does not come by such a day, or such a time, I am undone for ever. Others they will not tie God to a time, but they will tie God to this or that particular means : Oh, if mercy come not in

that way, or by that means, I am gone, I am lost for ever. Others, they will not tie God to time, nor to particular means, but they will tie God to means in general, they will not believe God a whit beyond means, and so tie God to means in general: ah, what is this but rank presumption, for a poor creature, to tie up the hands of his Creator? the sin that you seek, and think to avoid, you fall into: this is presumption.

And beloved, do you know how prejudicial this is to yourselves? As a dishonour to God, so great a hindrance to yourselves to do thus: it turns God out of the way of his mercy; Nay, says God, seeing you will have no mercy but in a road of means, you shall have none but in a road of means; so mercy comes thin, and scant, and by little drops; whereas otherwise mercy would come thick, and full and large.

Hereby you are put upon indirect means to get out of trouble; pray what is the ground that causes men to use indirect means to get out of trouble? is not this at the bottom? you think means must be used; this is at the bottom.

Beloved in the Lord, as you do desire God may not be dishonoured, that mercy may come full and not scant unto you, learn to believe at another rate than ever you have done; when all means fail and seem to lie dead before you, then believe: so for thy soul, so for thy body, so for thy estate.

You will say, how should I do this: to believe when all means fail and lie dead before me? I have a great prospect in my sins; the guilt of one sin comes, and that hath a blow at my conscience: and the guilt of another sin that comes and that gives a blow to my conscience, and my conscience is all black and blue with blows, and they all cry out and say, Poor, damned, damned and undone creature, and I see no way, no means at all left for my salvation; ah, Lord, what shall I do to believe now, when all means fail.

I shall only speak a word to it, and so wind up all, thus;

Know, that thou mayest trust God, that thou mayest find mercy, that thou mayest believe in such a case as this is. Beloved, therefore thou hast not believed in such a case heretofore, because thou didst think thou mightest not believe. But now know from the Lord, it is no temptation, it is no presumption, in such a case as this thou mayest lean thy poor guilty soul upon God this day. I am loth to make

comparisons between one duty and another ; but if there be any compares, this act of believing, when all means seem to lie dead before us, is more than all thy prayers and tears : thou cryest out and sayest, Oh, that I had tears in prayer, oh, that God would enlarge my heart in prayer, oh, that God would break this hard heart ; and blessed be the Lord indeed when so it is.

But now, art thou in such a case ? Hast thou a prospect of all thy sins, and all means seem to lie dead before thee ; and doest thou now go unto Jesus Christ, saying to him, Ah Lord, I have been a great and a wretched sinner ; yet now, hearing of thy free and rich grace, I do throw myself upon thee ; Lord, if thou killest me, yet I will trust in thee ; through thy grace, I will never return again unto folly ; only Lord, I do lean my soul upon thee ; as for comfort, Lord give me comfort when thou wilt ; only, I lean my soul upon thee ? I tell thee, this act of thy faith is more pleasing to God than thy twenty years' tears, than thy twenty years' prayers, if there be any compare.

But why then, my beloved, should you look at this as a matter of presumption, to trust upon God and upon Christ in this condition ? Know it is your way unto Jesus Christ when all means fail. Oh, it is the only way for your deliverance ; deliverance from your sins, and the fear of your sins. Carry this rule home along with you : deliverance is then nearest, when faith works highest ; and faith then works highest, when all means are lowest. Do not stand poring then, christian ; do not stand poring upon the deadness of the means, or the deadness of thine own heart. As the sight, beholding and gazing upon beauty, is a snare and a temptation to those that are given to wantonness ; and the sight of much gold and silver and fine houses, a temptation to those that are given to worldliness : so the sight and beholding of the deadness of the means, is a great snare and temptation to those that are given to doubting, and those that are given to unbelief. Does the means, therefore, lie dead before thee at any time ? Soul, man or woman, go to the Lord, and say thus : Ah, Lord, turn away mine eyes from beholding this same dead means. Away, away to the promise, when all means fail, now bear thyself at length upon the promise ; go unto Jesus Christ, throw thyself now

at his feet, and say, Lord, though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee; if I perish, I will perish here. Do this and live.

And thus I have done with the second proposition. And so much for this time.

SERMON II.

THE SPIRITUAL ACTINGS OF FAITH THROUGH NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITIES.

“ And being not weak (or weakened) in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.”—Rom. iv. 19.

THE words are spoken of Abraham, and they hold forth three great truths, as ye have heard.

First, That when God intends any great mercy or blessing to the children of Abraham, he does first put the sentence of death upon the blessing or mercy, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

Secondly, That then, and then especially, it is the duty of all the children of Abraham, of all believers, then for to trust in God.

Thirdly, That no difficulties can stand before faith: true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ.

I have done with the two former, and am now to speak unto the third:

No difficulties can stand before faith: true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ.

Abraham had a promise given him, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and that in his seed all nations of the world should be blessed. Upon this promise, Abraham’s body is dead, and Sarah’s body is dead; now Abraham believes. “ Being not weak in faith, he considered not the deadness of his own body.” And in this he had an eye

unto Jesus Christ, for this was imputed to him for righteousness; and herein he is held forth as an example to us that believe with a justifying faith, in this chapter. So that wherever there is true, saving, justifying faith, it carries a man through all difficulties, through all natural discouragements.

For the clearing whereof, I shall deliver myself in these four things.

First, I will shew you, that the way to Jesus Christ is clogged with many difficulties and natural discouragements. This as a rice unto all the rest.

Secondly, That true, saving faith, will carry one through all these.

Thirdly, That nothing else can do it.

And fourthly, What it is in true, saving, justifying faith, that does it? how this faith comes to do it?

First: The way to Jesus Christ is clogged with many difficulties or natural discouragements. No sooner does a man begin to look after Christ, but difficulties and natural discouragements do arise; and they are prest by Satan with violence. When the children of Israel began to make out of Egypt, Pharoah doubles their task, and labours to make their way grievous and troublous. And so soon as a soul begins to look after Christ; Satan and the world labour to make his way troublous. The devil is the great hunter of souls. So long as the game goes well with the hunter and he is going into his snare, he makes no noise; but if once the hare or the game begin to decline the snare and to go another way, then he whoops and halloos and makes a noise, that he may scare it into the snare again. And so, as long as men are going into the devil's snare, he makes no noise; but if once they begin to turn aside from his snare, then he raises town and country, and a great noise is made to scare the soul in again; he knows that a candle may be easily blown into light when it is new put out. Paul met with no buffetings of Satan, till he had been taken up into the third heavens and seen the glory there. So long as Paul went on in his pharisaical way, he met with no opposition. And so long as a man goes on in the way of the world, or in some pharisaical devotional way that is not the way of the gospel, he meets with no opposition; but when once the Lord

takes him (as it were) into the third heavens and shews him the glory of Christ, then Satan begins to buffet him. Nature within us, that stands and says, Will you go to Christ? it is impossible that ever you should get him. And the world without: Will you go to Christ? you will lose all your friends. Will you become a fool too? What with the world, and what with the flesh, and what with the devil, the way to Jesus Christ is clogged with many difficulties.

And this will appear yet further, if you consider the nature of faith and the worth of it. It is a grace, a gospel grace, a precious grace, whereby we do come to Christ. I say it is a grace; *Nulla virtus sine lapide*. When our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, they rolled a stone over his sepulchre, and when the disciples came, they said, "Who shall roll away the stone?" And as our Lord himself had a stone rolled upon him, so the more of Christ is in any virtue, the greater stone and the greater difficulty is rolled upon it; every virtue and every grace hath one stone or other that is rolled upon it; but the more of Christ in any thing, the more, the greater is the stone that is rolled upon it. Faith is an excellent grace. "The trial of your faith is more precious than gold," says the apostle. What is faith itself then? It is the intelligencer of the soul, the directrix or queen-regent of all the graces, it sits at the stern and guides the whole vessel. It is that grace that gives a *being* unto a christian, other graces the *well-being*. It is that grace that brings Christ and the soul together. It is that grace that covers the defects of all other graces. It is called the shield; a shield does not only cover the body, but the rest of the armour; faith does not only cover the soul, but the defects of all other graces. There is an excellency in grace: excellent things and jewels they are hard to come by. Therefore by it we come unto Christ. He that comes over the river must come from that side of the water if he will come to this. And he that comes to Christ, he must come from his old customs, and his own engagements, and his own righteousness; this is a hard thing. I may say in some respects it is harder to believe than to keep the ten commandments, because there is something in nature towards them. Christ is the way to heaven, and faith is the way to Christ (understand it rightly) faith is the way to Christ; now therefore

it being so hard a work to believe, surely, the way to Jesus Christ must needs be laid with many difficulties and natural discouragements. But that is but the rice.

Secondly: Though the way to Jesus Christ be clogged with many difficulties; true, saving, justifying faith, will carry us through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ. It is that grace that is opposed to the sinful *απισται* that the apostle speaks of. He being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, *ου δεκρηθη* he staggered not; the word you translate staggering, in other places it is translated *doubting, nothing doubting*; but the same word is translated also *discerning*; “not discerning the Lord’s body.” 1 Cor. xi. 29. And so the word will fully bear that signification. When a man looks upon things with an eye of reason, he makes a discretion of dijudication of things: some things are *facile* easy, some things are hard. But when a man looks by faith upon the power of God, there is not that discretion there. All things are easy to the eye of faith that looks at the power of God. You shall observe therefore, that when our Lord and Saviour himself would bear up the hearts of his disciples over all discouragements, he directs them to this work of believing with a saving, justifying faith; you know the place: “Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me.” John xiv. 1. An Hebraism, noting a similitude: “The Father works hitherto, and I work.” That is, as the Father works so I work. So here, “ye believe in God, believe also in me.” That is, as ye believe in God the Father, so believe also in me; ye believe that God the Father is able to provide for you; believe in me that I am able to satisfy for you. If you would not have your hearts troubled that I am now to leave you, at the many discouragements that you are to meet withal; it is not enough for you that you believe in God as God; but you must believe in me also as your Mediator, and rest upon me. True, saving, justifying faith is the only means to bear up your hearts through all this trouble. And if you look into Luke xvii., you shall find that when our Saviour Christ would teach his disciples how to do a hard work, he does point them unto this justifying faith. “And the Lord said,” verse 6, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to

this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." You will say this is a faith of miracles. You may be pleased therefore to observe, that our Saviour Christ uses this and the like expression upon three several occasions. Once upon occasion that his disciples could not cast out the devil out of some that were possessed. Once upon occasion that the fig-tree was dried up and withered. And once here upon occasion that the disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith;" when they thought it was so hard a thing to forgive a man so often as Christ required.

Our Saviour uses this and the like expression of removing a sycamore-tree and the mountains; upon occasion that the disciples could not cast out the devil. And of that you read in Mat. xvii. 20, and there, indeed, he speaks of the faith of miracles. "Why could not we cast him out?" verse 19. "Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Here he speaks of the faith of miracles, because thereby we should be able to cast out the devil; which plainly speaks a miracle.

He uses again this like expression upon an occasion of the drying up of the fig-tree. And concerning that, you read in Mark xi. 20: "As they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. Jesus answering, said unto them, have faith in God. And verily I say unto you, whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, &c." Here the faith called for is both faith of miracles and a justifying faith too. A faith of miracles, it is brought in upon occasion of this miracle, Christ says, If he have faith, he shall not only do this, but he shall remove mountains. But here is a justifying faith also intended, for he says, "Have faith in God," verse 22, so you read it. But in the margin of your bible it is, have faith *of* God; when as the scripture speaks of a justifying faith, it uses to speak in such an expression as this: so Paul says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God;"

Gal. ii. 19, speaking of justifying faith, not by faith *in* the Son of God. So in Rev. xiv. it is called "the faith of Jesus:" and then it seems to run very largely, somewhat too largely, if it were only a miraculous faith, faith of miracles that were here intended. For I say unto you, whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, the faith of miracles and gifts only to some, unto another the gift of faith; not to all, says the apostle. And then here it is opposed to *doubting*, the same word that is used here in my text concerning Abraham, who believed and staggered not: says he here, "whosoever shall say to this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart"—or shall not stagger in his heart; it is the same word that is used there, the same opposition. So that I take it both are here intended; one primarily, the other secondarily.

But now in Luke xvii. there is another occasion that this expression is brought in by our Saviour Christ. He says unto his disciples, verse 3, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him; if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him: and the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith: and the Lord said, If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, &c." Here is no miracle here that these words are brought in upon: why should our Saviour put that upon a faith of miracles, in doing a work of christianity, the forgiving the brother so often thus? the faith that is to be exercised in prayer, and in forgiving our brother ordinarily, is not the faith of miracles: but the faith he here calls for, is a faith that is to be used in prayer, and in forgiving of our brethren: surely this is a saving faith, a justifying faith that is here intended. And as one says well, What is all the work of faith, but as the removing of mountains? When we take our sins, that stand up and hinder the light of God's grace from shining in our hearts, and remove them off from ourselves unto Jesus Christ, to his blood, that they are drowned as in the bottom of that red sea; what is this but to remove mountains? When we take our carnal reason, and our high thoughts, and bring them into obedience unto Jesus Christ; what is this but to remove mountains? When our great and manifold

temptations are laid level, that the promise may come into the soul freely, what is this but to remove these mountains? Mountains rose up in the way of Zerubbabel when he was to build the temple. Zech. iv. 7. "Who art thou, O mountain?" Temptation and corruption are mountains; and the curse of the law, is a great mountain. Would you, therefore, now remove these mountains, walk over these natural impossibilities; there is no such way as to get a justifying and a saving faith, says our Saviour. What abundance of difficulties did Noah's faith carry him through. The Lord commanded Noah to build an ark: Noah, he might have said thus: Lord, thou hast now commanded me to build an ark; I was never brought up to that trade; I have been a preacher many years, but I never yet was a wheelwright, never yet a ship-carpenter: and, Lord, if I do go about to build an ark, the whole world will jeer me: What will this old man do; will he ride in a ship upon the dry ground? And when I have built the ark, Lord, how shall I do to get in all the creatures into the ark? And if the creatures do come, they will tear me in pieces; the lions and the bears, they will prey upon me. Yea, Lord, and if they do come into the ark and into the ship, the very stench of all the beasts will poison me. Yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties and all these discouragements, Noah prepared an ark. Why? For he believed, and he believed with a saving, justifying faith.

So if you look into the New Testament, that is full of this. What abundance of difficulties did the wise men go through that came to worship Jesus Christ? They were commanded to go worship him that was born King of the Jews. They might have said thus: What is the King of the Jews to us? We know no such king. Shall we go out of our own kingdom, and out of our own country to worship the King of the Jews; the despised people of the Jews? When they came at Jerusalem, the learned men, the priests, and those that were of that country, they knew none such: when they came at the place where Christ was born, they found him in a stable; and they might have said, Is this the King of the Jews: is this his palace? What, a stable for his palace! What, are these horses, are these his courtiers? Is this a king? It is impossible he should be a king. Yet, notwith-

standing, they went. Why? Because they believed, and this their faith carried them through all.

What abundance of difficulties did Matthew's faith carry him through. The Lord commanded Mathew to follow him; Matthew, follow me, says Christ, Matt. ix. 9, and so he did. But he might have said thus: Whether shall I follow this man? I have a good calling, I have so many hundreds coming in by the year from the custom house; this man hath not whereon to lay his head: I shall be a beggar; all my friends will call me a fool. Notwithstanding Matthew leaves all and follows Christ. Why? He believed with a saving, justifying faith.

What abundance of difficulties did Zaccheus's faith carry him through. "Zaccheus (says our Lord to him), haste and come down, for I must abide with thee this day: he came down, he received him into his house;" and being there, he says, "Lord, behold the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if there be any one that I have wronged by false accusation, I restore unto him fourfold," Luke xix. 5—9. Mark, what a hard work he went through: "The half of my goods I give to the poor." Pray let us compute it a little. Suppose his estate was a thousand pounds. Lord, says he, the half of my goods I give to the poor: there is but five hundred left. Suppose he had wronged a man to the value of a hundred pounds; Lord, says he, I restore fourfold: then there is but one hundred left of a thousand. What a great matter was this. Yet this Zaccheus did. Why? "O Zaccheus (says Christ), this day is salvation come to thine house, for so much as thou also art the son of Abraham." He believed, as Abraham did, with a saving, justifying faith. So then, thus you see, that true, saving, justifying faith carries a man through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ.

But, in the third place, nothing else can do it: conviction of the good ways of God cannot do it. Saul was convinced that David was a righteous man: "Oh, my son David (says he), thou art more righteous than I," 1 Sam. xxiv. 17; and yet he persecuted him. Conviction, bare conviction will not do it.

Resolution will not do it neither. Resolution to turn to God and to become a new man or woman, that will not do

it: bare resolution will not do it. Many resolve that will not do it. And therefore says our Saviour to Peter, "Peter, I have prayed that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 13. Satan hath desired to winnow thee; and, Peter, thou hast said, though all men forsake me, thou wilt not: thou hast taken up a great resolution, but, Peter, it is not resolution will do it, if any thing hold, it will be thy faith; and therefore, Peter, I have prayed that thy faith fail not. He does not say, I have prayed that thy resolution fail not; no: "Peter, I have prayed that thy faith fail not." You have read what Hazael resolved, when the prophet told him he should be a great persecutor, rip up women with child. Oh, says he, does my lord look upon me as a dog's head; and yet he did it. Resolution will not do it: resolution will not carry one through temptation and difficulties.

Again, moral virtues will not do it. The young man that came to Christ, he was a great moralist. When our Saviour told him he should keep the commandments that he might obtain eternal life; "Lord (says he), all these have I kept from my youth," Matt. ix. 20; and Christ looked upon him and loved him; he was a fine moralist, but notwithstanding, he did not follow Christ, he went away, and was very sorrowful. Bare moral virtues will not do it, for they are dead things. You see how it is with a man's shoe, though the leather be never so thick, yet by going upon the stones and the gravel, the leather wears thin, and wears out: but if a man goes barefoot, though the skin of his foot be thinner, the skin does not wear out, but grows thicker; as Indians, they go barefoot, and the skin of their feet wears thicker by going upon the gravel and upon the stones. What is the reason? The leather of a man's shoe is a dead thing, but the foot is a living thing. And so faith is a living thing, and will carry a man over gravel, and stones, and difficulties; but moral virtues, they are but dead things, and though they be never so thick, they will grow thin, and wear out, and come to nothing. Bare moral virtues will not do it.

And then, again, gifts and parts and gospel enlargements cannot do it, they leave black ashes upon the soul; they are a blaze, they make a great blaze. Straw that is burnt, makes a great blaze, but it leaves black ashes upon the hearth; so where these are, without saving faith, they may make a great

blaze, but the end of them is black ashes upon the soul. Judas, ye know, he had great gifts and gospel parts; but that would not do it, would not carry him through all his temptations and difficulties to Jesus Christ. Pray do but compare Nicodemus and Judas: Nicodemus was but in his catechism of christianity when Judas was a preacher; Nicodemus comes to Christ by night, when Judas preaches Christ openly; but in the end, Nicodemus owns Christ when he is dead, and Judas betrays him when he is living. Nicodemus had a true, saving faith; Judas had only gifts, gospel gifts and gospel enlargements; that will not do it neither.

And then, again, the experience of God's former dealings, providential dealings and preservation, that will not do it. You know how it was with those spies that were sent into the land of Canaan; there were two sorts of spies; there were good spies and there were bad spies: the good spies brought up a good report of the land, and the evil spies brought up an evil report.

How? Why? Consider but a little. The good spies, they met with many troubles when they were sent out to spy out the land: fain to be hidden in Rahab's house: and then they fled to the mountains, and there they lay: they come home, and they say, The Lord hath delivered this people into our hands. The other spies, now, that brought up the evil report, they met with no such hard fare, that we read of; and yet they come home, and they say, The men of the country are the children of Anak, and the cities are walled up to heaven: they had experience of God's preservation in an especial manner, and yet, notwithstanding, that would not do it. Bare experience of God's preserving mercy, that will not do it; it is only faith will do it, saving, justifying faith will do it. "This is the victory whereby you overcome the world, your faith: by faith ye stand." 1 John v. 4; 2 Cor. i. 2, 3, 4. Look upon your dangers under a sea notion, and faith it is called your anchor. Look upon your dangers under a land notion, and faith, it is called your shield. Nothing but faith can do it.

Fourthly, you will say to me, What is it in this saving, justifying faith, that is able thus to carry the soul through all difficulties, and discouragements, and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ? How does faith do it?

Give me leave to stay here.

Faith shews the soul the glorious, invisible things of God and of his grace, and brings them near unto the soul. I was a hard thing for Moses to leave all the pleasures, and profits, and preferments of Egypt: he did it though, choosing rather the afflictions of Pharaoh with God's people. Why? Says Hebrews xi., "He saw him that is invisible." But how did he see him? By faith, says the text, "by faith he saw him that is invisible." Faith opens the eyes for to see that a man hath more with him than against him. And the works of God in Christ, are not seen by the world; God's pardoning mercy, not seen by the world; the union with Jesus Christ, and the privilege thereof, not seen by the world; the satisfaction of Jesus Christ for a poor sinner, not seen by the world; the great power of God not seen, or if so, yet at a distance, it does not much affect. "Faith is the substance of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1; it does not only shew a man things that are otherwise unseen, but brings them near; salvation near, pardoning mercy near, the privileges of union with Christ near, Christ's satisfaction near: and so when difficulties and discouragements do arise, says the soul, through faith, Why should not I be satisfied with any condition, seeing Christ hath satisfied for me? I am one with Christ. Christ is a common person. When Christ died, I died; when Christ rose, I rose; when Christ ascended, I ascended; Christ sitting in heaven, I sit there. Thus faith, it elevates and raises up the soul into heaven, it carries it over all difficulties and discouragements, that it can meet withal.

Again, true, saving faith; it tells the soul that all things are its own. "All things are yours (says the apostle) things present, and things to come, life and death; all things are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22. Faith speaks the same language: all things are yours, soul, all things are yours: difficulties are yours, and natural impossibilities are yours; things present are yours, and things to come are yours. Will you be afraid of that which is your own? Will the owner be afraid of his own dog? A mastiff, he falls upon a stranger, and worries him, and a stranger is afraid of him; but the owner is not afraid, he leaps and fawns upon him, but he does not worry him. Says faith, all these difficulties, and all these

temptations, they are your own, they will not worry you; they may leap upon you, they may fawn upon you, but they will not worry you; they are all your own; part of the purchase that Jesus Christ hath made for you, all these are your own. Faith holds this steadily upon the soul, and so a man breaks through difficulties.

Again, true, saving, justifying faith, it shews a man greater excellencies in Christ than all difficulties, and natural discouragements can amount unto on the other side. You know how it is with a dog, the greyhound, if he sees the game a great way off, he gives it over: but when he comes near, he will rush through the very bushes for to take the hare, throw himself upon his back that he may take it, a natural hope makes him do it: faith it raises a mighty hope in the soul, presents the soul with many excellencies, and raises a mighty hope in the soul for the obtainment of them: it does spread more excellencies before the soul, than can be lost by the hand of difficulties: for example: If a man hath been a prodigal, and now is returning to Christ; the world says, friends say, if you take this course you will lose all; you will lose all your acquaintance, lose your liberty, lose your estate, may be, lose your life: be it so, says faith, though thou lovest thy friends, thou shalt gain better: and though thou lovest thy liberty, thou shalt gain better: and though thou lovest thy life itself, thou shalt gain a better; it is but a while neither, says faith, that thou shalt lose these things and thou shalt have them better, in a better edition. When a man's eyes are open to behold the excellencies of Christ, then they are shut up to outward discouragements. When a man hath beheld the sun in its glory, his eyes dazzle to the things that are below: now faith opens a man's eyes to see the excellencies of Jesus Christ, and so the soul is carried through difficulties and discouragements, though they be never so many.

Again, true, saving faith, it enables the soul to leave the success and the event of all unto God himself. Nothing strengthens the hands of difficulties and discouragements so much, as solicitude about success and event of things: true saving faith helps a man to leave the success to Christ; it does commit the soul unto God, unto Christ; there is a mutual committing between Christ and a believer: Christ

commits himself unto a believer, and a believer commits himself again unto Christ. Christ commits himself unto a believer: you know what is said in the gospel, "He did not commit himself unto them, because they did not believe him," John ii. 24., arguing, that he did commit himself unto others that did believe him. And believers commit themselves unto Jesus Christ. "Commit thy way unto the Lord," Ps. xxxvii. 5; there is a mutual way of committing: Christ, he does commit his grace; he does commit his Spirit; he does commit his truth unto a believer: a believer commits his estate, and his name, and himself again unto Christ: Christ commits his work unto a believer; and a believer commits the success of the work, again unto Jesus Christ. Faith now leaves the event, and the success again unto Jesus Christ; and therefore when difficulties and natural discouragements arise, and say, What wilt thou do now? What wilt thou do now to be preserved? What wilt thou do to continue now? What wilt thou do to be delivered now? What will become of you now? Oh, Satan, says a believer, thou hast mistaken the question; my question is not, What shall become of me? I have left the success of things to God: but my question is, What shall I do for God? My question is, How shall I love Jesus Christ? My question is, How shall I be like unto Jesus Christ? My question is, How shall I serve my generation, and own Jesus Christ in these times? This is my question. Faith, true, saving faith, it leaves the success and the event of things unto Christ, and so thereby the soul is carried through all difficulties and natural discouragements unto Jesus Christ.

True, saving faith, is that grace whereby the soul takes up the yoke of Christ, and the burden of Christ upon his soul. Christ's burden, does unburden all other burdens; the very taking of Christ's burden upon a man, does ease him of all other burdens. This may seem strange to you, that the taking of a new burden should ease one of the former: if a man be carrying coals or wood, the taking of a new burden would not ease him of the former; but the burden of Christ, beloved, is of another nature. Austin distinguishes them; there is a burden burdening, and a burden supporting: he expresses it thus; the feathers that a bird or a fowl is clothed with, they have a weight in them,

the wings and feathers have a weight, a pound of feathers is as heavy as a pound of lead; there is a weight in those feathers, yet notwithstanding they bear up the burden of the body; there be a weight in them, one weight bears up another: or as it is with your coaches, the wheels are heavy; yet notwithstanding, being fastened unto the coach, unto the body of the coach, makes the body to go away the lighter, though they be heavy in themselves. So now it is here, the burden of Jesus Christ it makes all other burdens to go away the lighter. Faith, true, saving faith, it is the grace that takes up the burden of Christ upon the soul, and so thereby all other burdens are made the lighter, and difficulties and discouragements overcome.

True, saving faith, it does teach a man for to pick out the love of God, from under the anger of God. God never makes his pills so bitter, but he mingles some sugar withal: and true faith can find it out. When as our Lord and Saviour Christ said, "Woman what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come," John ii. 4, 5: the next words that she says is, to the servants, "Whatsoever he bids you do, that do." They wanted wine, she came to him for wine, and he answered her so: it may seem an hard answer, yet says she to the servants, "Whatsoever he bid you do, that do." For our Saviour had said, "My hour is not yet come:" implying therefore, that he would do it. Implication is enough for faith, for Mary's faith. Faith, it acquaints a man with the ways of God, and acquaints a soul what God's ways are: it tells the soul that when Christ seems to be the greatest enemy, he intends the greatest friendship. He, says faith, does then intend for to raise us up, when he seems most for to cast us down: whereupon, when difficulties and discouragements do arise, is this his way indeed? says a believing soul, why then shall I be borne down with so many discouragements, though they be never so many?

True, saving, justifying faith, fills the soul with God's infinity or infiniteness. God's way is not as your way, says faith, nor his thoughts as your thoughts; but as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts beyond yours, and his ways beyond yours. Faith lodges this principle into the soul, that God is infinite; and having laid that principle there, when difficulties and discouragements do arise, saying,

you see now into what distress you are brought, now you see there is no hope at all for your deliverance; true indeed, says the believer, through the strength of faith, I see there is no way in any one reason, but God is infinite: I see many difficulties, but God is infinite. The soul by faith being filled with the apprehension of God's infiniteness, hereby is carried through all difficulties and discouragements to Jesus Christ.

I have not time, I see, to tell you how faith works by love, which much water cannot quench, stronger than death. And how faith is strengthened with the strength of the power of God, that it lays hold upon. As the ivy is strong, by the strength of the oak that it grasps upon; so faith is strong, by the strength of that God that it grasps upon.

But the thing is sufficiently proved: No difficulties can stand before saving faith: true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ.

I come to the application:

If these things be so, then if difficulties and natural discouragements do arise, (who is there among you but meet with some or other in your several places?) see here the way how for to grapple with them; strengthen your faith, exercise your faith. Resolution; you are mistaken, resolution will not do it. Christian, here is thy strength. Conviction will not do it, moral virtue will not do it, exangelical gifts and parts and enlargements will not do it; experience of God's preservation of you will not do it. Christian, here is thy strength. But oh, let not your strength be cut off in the lap of any Dalilah. True, justifying faith, is your strength, that is your shield. The heathen could say, when he was sore wounded, Is my shield whole? if that be well, all is well. So say I, if your shield be well, if your faith be well, if your true, justifying, saving faith, be well, then all is well. Thus you shall be able to look difficulties and discouragements in the face, though they be never so great.

You will say unto me, Suppose a man hath newly begun to look unto Jesus Christ, and now difficulties and natural discouragements do arise; how shall he be able so to raise and to use his faith, as he may be able to break through all unto Jesus Christ?

Take heed that you do not stand poring too much upon them. Abraham considered not the deadness of his own body, Sarah's body. But if you will behold them,

Exercise your faith in the promise, before you do speak with those difficulties. Some there are that stand poring so much upon difficulties and natural discouragements, that they have spent the strength of their spirits; so that when the promise comes, they have no strength at all in their spirits to entertain the promise with. If the rope or cable be never so strong that is thrown out into the water, if a man be drowned before the rope or cable come at him, what matter is it though the cable be never so great? Some there are that stand poring so much upon natural discouragements, that their hearts are even sunk and drowned before the promise comes; and how can the promise help you then? Therefore say, Come first promise, come first promise.

And then again, if you will behold these, look upon them as they are, your trial and many times the devil's engines to work your hearts off again: I say your trials, and the devil's engines to work your hearts back again. When you were in your natural condition, then your heart was quiet, your conscience quiet, and the devil quiet, and your friends quiet, and did not speak evil of you: now you begin to look towards Christ, now conscience condemns, now the devil accuses, now your friends, your former friends, they speak evil of you. I appeal to thee, man or woman, in thine own soul, dost thou not think that thy former condition was an ungodly condition? Yes. And then quiet? Then conscience quiet, then friends quiet, then Satan quiet: and now conscience accuses, and now Satan accuses, and now friends speak evil. Oh, therefore say, surely this is nothing but a temptation; and believe it, beloved, it is half a victory over a temptation, to know that a temptation is but a temptation.

Now, now especially, set thyself with all thy might to venture upon Jesus Christ. Labour much in venturing upon Jesus Christ now. Mark, faith is nothing else but the soul's venture; it ventures *to* Christ, it ventures *on* Christ, it ventures *for* Christ.

It ventures *to* Christ, in opposition to all legal terrors. It ventures *on* Christ, in opposition to all our own guiltiness. It ventures *for* Christ, in opposition to all difficulties and

discouragements. The proper nature of faith is to venture; and what need we venture, if there were no difficulties? Difficulties properly call for venturing. Mark it: do difficulties arise? now set thyself to venture upon Jesus Christ.

If a man be to go home over some water, or river, and the water rises, he says with himself, How shall I get over this water? the longer I stay, the more it rises. He begins to go into it, and he comes back again. But, says he, there is no other way, as good first as at the last; I must venture, I must over, there is no other way: and so he ventures. So say I now unto thee. This thou must come unto at last, poor soul: difficulties and discouragements arise, to stave thee off from Christ; at the last thou must venture upon Jesus Christ; at the last you must venture, notwithstanding all your guilt: you begin to do it, and you are ready to go back; but know this, first or last you must venture upon Christ. Hadst thou not better do it at first? Oh, therefore, whenever any difficulties do arise, put thyself upon faith; say, Come, Oh my soul, here is a difficulty, now venture on Jesus Christ.

For your encouragement know this: That the more and greater difficulties your duties or your graces are recovered out of the hand of, the more comfortable they will be to you. I pray mark it. I say, duty or grace, recovered out of the hand of difficulty, is the most comfortable. You know how it was with David at Ziklag; the enemy had come upon him, taken away his wife and all his comforts: a sentence of death was upon all his comforts. David, he follows after, overtakes the enemy, recovers his wife and all his comforts, and there he had the greatest spoil of all spoils: he sent unto all his friends of his spoil, he never had a greater spoil. So I say, does difficulty or discouragement break in upon your duty, morning duty, evening duty? or any grace? follow after it. If thou strikest this difficulty in the hinder part, and recoverest thy duty or thy grace out of the hand of the difficulty, thy duty and thy grace will be more comfortable than ever it was.

Study Jesus Christ more, and labour for a clear and a distinct knowledge of Jesus Christ. Faith, in scripture phrase, it is called knowledge, the knowledge of Christ: "By his knowledge he shall justify many," Isa. liii. 11. To

know and believe, they are put together; the more you know, the more clear and distinct knowledge you have of Christ, the stronger your faith; the less knowledge you have of Christ, the weaker your faith. A weak faith is apt to be blown down with every wind. "Abraham being not weak, he considered not his own body," so he staggered not. The weak fire, it may be put out with fuel, casting of much wood upon it: the strong fire, it increases and grows even by throwing on of water, that is contrary. A weak faith is borne down instantly. Art thou therefore weak, and hast newly begun to look towards Jesus Christ? Oh, labour to get stronger faith; and that you shall do, by growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Study Christ more; his life more, his death more, his fulness more, the merciful disposition of Jesus Christ more. Thus shall you be able to grow strong, and shall work through all difficulties and discouragements unto the Lord Christ.

Yet you will say to me, But suppose now that a man hath believed some time, a great while, been in Christ a great while, difficulties and discouragements do arise to beat a man out of the good ways of Christ that he hath taken up: how should a man so raise and use his faith, as he may be able to work through all those unto Jesus Christ?

I will speak but to this, and so I will wind up all.

Consider your call, often consider your call, your first call to a work; and put yourselves often unto this disjunction, Either God hath called me to this work, or else he hath not. If God hath not called me, what means this scripture, and what means that scripture, and what means the other scripture? And if God hath called me, why should I lay down the work for any difficulty; will not he carry me through? And know this, that difficulties do sometimes arise in our way, to make a stoppage in our proceedings; and sometimes they arise only to draw out our faith. When as thou seest thy call clear unto any work, then say, These difficulties arise only to draw out my faith, and not to make a stoppage in my proceedings.

Consider this, That the more you believe in the face of difficulty, the more you please God. Nothing so pleasing to God, as believing in the face of difficulty. God will trust him with much, that trusts much to God; God will break

through many difficulties to save thy soul, if thou canst break through many difficulties to come to him. There is no grace does more honour God, than faith; of all graces it honours God most, and of all the pieces of faith, none do more honour God, than believing in the face of difficulties. When therefore any difficulty or natural discouragement does arise, say, The Lord pardon me; oh, I have dishonoured God enough already: is this the way for to honour God, to believe in the face of difficulties and natural discouragements? here now I have more opportunity to do it, the Lord help me, now will I set myself to believe.

Sometimes when you meet together, speak unto one another of the great things that God hath done, the great things that God hath promised, the great things that faith hath done. As words of anger do draw out anger, so experiences do draw out faith. Only I pray take heed, when ye speak of your experiences, and what God hath done, that ye do not lay, or ground your faith upon your experience, but upon the promise. It is a good speech that Parisiensis hath, Experience, says he, it is like the crutch, the lame man's crutch, it does uphold the lame man, but it does not cure him: and so an experience, it stays up thy soul for the present, but experience cannot cure you of your unbelief; it is only the promise cures you of your unbelief. It is said in Ps. cvi., concerning the children of Israel, "When they saw the Egyptians lie in the sea before them, then they believed in God, and sang his praise:" and the next words that follow are, "they soon forgot his works." Aye, when as we believe the word only because of experience, no wonder that we soon forget our experiences, and all. Therefore take heed, tell of your experiences, draw out your experiences for to strengthen your faith, yet lay not your faith upon your experience, but upon the word.

And again, above all things consider what great difficulties Jesus Christ hath broke through to come to you. Ye read of him so described in the Canticles, "He comes leaping over the mountains;" many are the mountains that Jesus Christ came leaping over to come to you. Passion work is greater and harder than creation-work: he came leaping over the mountains of work. Oh, shall Jesus Christ come leaping over mountains and difficulties to come to my soul,

my soul, and shall I go over no mountains, and break through no difficulties to get to Jesus Christ? think what difficulties he broke through to come to you.

And, never speak with your difficulties or discouragements apart from the promise. If a man be travelling in the road, and a thief can sunder him from his company, draw him alone into the woods, a hundred to one but he takes his purse, if he save his life. And if the devil can part you from the promise, take you into the woods, where you shall see nothing but darkness, difficulties and discouragements; a hundred to one but he spoils you of all your comforts. Man or woman, does difficulty arise therefore; natural discouragements arise? Away to the promise, and say unto them when they come, I will never speak with you, unless it be in the presence of a promise.

Oh, but God's providence seems for to cross his promise.

Be it so; yet thou mayest believe, though God's providence seems for to cross his promise, yet thou mayest rest on the promise.

Oh, but I have a threatening set on upon my heart.

Be it so; yet thou mayest believe the promise, although the threatening have taken hold upon thee, and filled thee with trouble; for God does therefore threaten, that he may make way to a promise. God's promises do not make way to his threatenings, but his threatenings make way to his promises. God does therefore threaten that he may not fulfil; but God does therefore promise that he may fulfil. And therefore, though the threatening have taken hold upon thine heart, and thou liest under the apprehension of God's displeasure; get away to the promise, rest upon the promise.

Aye, but Jesus Christ hath withdrawn from me, and hid himself from me.

Be it so; yet thou mayest go to the promise. Christ doth therefore withdraw from thee, that he may draw thee to him. Jesus Christ does therefore hide himself, that he may shew thee his face more and more. Our brother Joseph, he cannot conceal himself long; his bowels and compassions will not let him.

Wherefore then, whensoever any difficulties or natural discouragements do arise upon you, come to this conclusion; now therefore will I trust in God, now therefore will I ven-

ture upon Jesus Christ: oh, my soul, now venture, now venture, and say, Lord, such and such difficulties are risen; thou hast called me to this work; difficulties arise upon me: surely thou hast called me to this work; they are not therefore to make a stoppage in my proceedings, but to draw out my faith: now, therefore, I do here lay the weight of my poor guilty soul upon thee, do with me what is good in thine eyes: ah, Lord, my prayers are dead, my affections dead, and my heart dead; but thou art a living God, and I bear myself upon thee. Beloved, "If ye can believe, all things are possible; if you cannot believe, all things are impossible." Faith will make a thing easy, though it be never so difficult; as unbelief doth make a thing difficult, though it be never so easy. This is a certain truth, no difficulty can stand before faith. True, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ. Oh, therefore, as you desire to grapple with the difficulties that you do meet withal, stir up yourselves in a way of believing, for you have heard that nothing else can do it. The Lord teach us to believe at a higher rate than ever yet we have done.

SERMON IV.

THE GREAT THINGS FAITH CAN DO.

"And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me, to tell of Gideon, and of Barak; and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, women received their dead raised to life again," &c.—Heb. xi. 32.

IN this Heb. xi. you have a little book of Chronicles, wherein the believers of the Old Testament do stand upon record for their great work of faith. In the former part of the chapter, the apostle doth instance in several believers at

large; in the latter part he is more compendious, and draws up the instances into a narrower room: for, saith he, "The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephtha," &c. Now these believers that he doth instance in, in the latter part of the chapter, are of two sorts: some famous and of good reports for their actions, and some for their sufferings; some did great things, and some suffered great things: and both by their faith. Those that suffered great things, are mentioned in the following words: "Others were tortured, not accepting of deliverance." Those that did great things by their faith, in these verses; their persons are mentioned, and the fruits and effects of their faith, for which they are mentioned in these verses. Their persons are mentioned in verse 32, ye have their names there; their state, condition, and their order: their names, Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephtha, and David; their state and condition, some were kings, some were judges, some were prophets. Faith runs through all conditions and ranks of men; faith and true grace is able to make a plantation upon every condition of men. And as for their order here, Gideon is before Barak, and Samson is before Jephtha; yet if you look into the story in the Judges, you shall find Barak is before Gideon, and Jephtha before Samson. And here Gideon set first, and Samson first. Why? Because they excelled in faith; and those are most excellent in God's eyes, who are most eminent in faith; those are most excellent in God's eyes, who most excel in faith. But now as for the fruits and effects of their faith, they are many; here are no less than ten mentioned in these verses. They subdued kingdoms, verse 33: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms:" so the judges did, and so David also. And they wrought righteousness: so Samuel did, "Whose ox have I taken?" and so David did when he spared Saul. And they obtained promises; promises, that is the thing promised. God is so faithful, saith Beza, in fulfilling his promises, that the promise is put for the thing promised: they obtained the promises, that is, the thing promised. Now the promise they obtained, it was not the great promise of the Messiah, for that verse 39, "They received not the promise," that is, the great promise of the Messiah; but the promises they obtained, were particular

promises of deliverance, victories and kingdoms: so they obtained promises, and so Gideon, and Barak, David and others did. And then they stopped the mouths of lions; so David and Daniel did. And they quenched the violence of fire; so the three children did. And escaped the edge or mouth of the sword; so Elijah and Elisha did. And out of weakness were made strong; so Hezekiah was. And they waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens; so the judges and David did. And women received their dead raised to life again; so the woman of Sarepta and the Shunamite did. So that now here you may see, what great things the believers of the Old Testament did by faith. And so the doctrine that I shall pitch upon at this time, riseth from all the words, and not from any particular clause or passage, but from the whole:

That true, saving faith, will do very great things.

It is true faith that the apostle here speaks of, as appears by the whole chapter; and these things that they did, as appears to the reader at first view, were great things. So that I shall not need to spend any time, for clearing of the doctrine from the words that it doth arise from; and all these verses and words, they are witnesses to it, they cry out this doctrine with one voice: True, saving faith, will do very great things.

For the opening and clearing whereof, I shall labour to shew,

First, That true saving faith is a doing, working, stirring grace.

Secondly, That true saving faith will do great things. And,

Thirdly, How faith comes to do such great things.

First, True saving faith is a doing grace, an active, working, doing, operative grace. The more spirits any thing hath, the more active it is. Faith, true saving faith, hath the spirit of the gospel in it; the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, and true saving faith, it hath the Spirit of this spiritual dispensation; and therefore it must needs be a very spiritual and working grace. It is called a work itself, in 1 Thess. i. 3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith;" and in 2 Thess. i. 2, "The work of faith with power." Our Lord and Saviour Christ saith, it is the work of God; "This is the work of God, that ye believe:" it is in itself a work.

And it is a friend to work: true saving faith, it is a work, and it is a great friend to work, it is not an idle housewife. What is our sanctification, but our faith incarnate; it works love, it works by love; and love is very inventive, active and expensive: it is a friend to work; a work in itself, and a friend to work.

And it is also the first worker in the soul. "Trust in the Lord and do good;" not first do good and then trust in the Lord, trust in the Lord first: trust in the Lord and do good. It is the work that sets other works on work, the wheel that sets all other wheels a going, without which a man is idle though he be at work. As a child may be very busy at his play, yet but play; and a servant may be very busy about his own employment, and yet his master counts it an idleness, because he is not about his work appointed him. So, now, a man may be very busy in regard of the world, and yet he may be idle God-ward. *Nisi a Deo agendo, nil ages*: faith must be the first worker, and if faith be not the first, all other works are as nothing.

Yea, as faith is a work, and a friend of work, and a first worker, so it is an universal work. Faith is that grace that can turn its hand to every work; some can work exactly at one thing, but they are bunglers at another; but faith, true saving faith, can turn its hand to every business. Possibly a man may be sick, and he cannot pray himself, but yet he may believe; though prayer cannot turn its hand to this condition, yet faith can. Possibly a man may be very poor, and is not able to help another; liberality cannot turn its hand to this condition, but faith can work in it.

And not only so, but faith works best when it works alone, when it works all alone. If comfort come, and sense and feeling come, faith knows how to use these; but though a man have no sense and no comfort, yet faith can work, and faith works best when it works alone; when it works all alone, without these auxiliaries.

Yea, faith works best sometimes when it works in the dark; as it works best when it works alone, so sometimes it works best in the dark. Men can work well in the light but not in the dark, but though a man's condition be very dark, yet faith can work then: faith works best when it works in the dark. Faith loves to work like Christ, and Christ's great-

est action of obedience was in the darkest time, when he was on the cross. I remember a speech of that good old man, Mr. Dod; when a man that was troubled in his mind lay a dying, he said to him, Sir, what will you say to Christ? when he was dying, did he not say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And was not Christ's highest piece of obedience upon the cross, in the dark, in a dark condition? Faith works best sometimes in the dark.

Yet further, faith, it works best at the last, and the longer it works the better; for faith grows by experience, and the longer that faith works, the more experience it gets; and the more experience faith gets, the stronger it is, and therefore faith works best at the last. Now put all these together; faith is a work, and faith is a friend to work, and faith is the first worker, and faith is an universal worker, and faith works best when it works all alone, and faith works best sometimes in the dark, and faith works best at the last; and certainly you have the first, namely this, that true saving faith is a doing grace, it is a working grace. But,

Secondly, You will say, What are those great things that faith will do; for we have heard that faith is a doing grace, that is the doctrine; faith will do, and do great things; but what are those great things that faith will do still?

Faith will do as great things now, surely, in gospel times, New Testament times, as ever in Old Testament times; and I shall not instance in those ten particulars, only so far as to make forth the general doctrine, and to bring it unto ourselves, I shall shew you what great things faith will do still, and shall speak to that more positively and absolutely, and then comparatively.

Faith, true saving faith, it will resist great temptations, it will perform great performances, it will suppress all your fears, it will mortify all your cares, it will assuage and subdue all your griefs, it will make you a stranger in this world, it will keep your hearts steady and upright in all the turnings and changes of your life, it will make you faithful under all your trustments, it will realize eternity to you, and make those things visible to you that are in themselves invisible, and it will make you live in continual dependence on Christ, and fetch all from him. All these things are great things,

and I must not dwell upon any of them, but only touch upon each of them.

Is it not a great matter for a man to resist and overcome great temptations? Joseph did so; sorely tempted by his mistress, but he overcame the temptation. How? He believed: "How shall I do this evil, and sin against my God?"

Is it not a great matter for a man to perform duties to the hazard of his life? Thus Daniel did, he set open his windows when he went to pray, prayed and kept to his duty to the hazard of his life. Why? Because he believed. Again,

Is it not a great matter to mortify your fears, and all your fears, your great fears? This faith will do: "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." Again,

Is it not a great matter to mortify your cares and extreme thoughtfulness? This faith will do. In Prov. xvi. 3, "Commit thy work unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." Commit thy work, there is faith, and thy thoughts shall be established. And,

Is it not a great matter to have your griefs assuaged when they are great? Faith will do it. Hannah was a woman of a sad and a sorrowful spirit, and the Lord gave her in a word, a particular word, and she believed, and was no more sad.

Is it not a great matter to be kept straight, and even, and steady, in times of changes, the great turnings and changes of your life? This faith will do. Job met with many changes, but his heart was kept steady and upright in the midst of all; "Lord, though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee." Again,

Is it not a great matter to be a stranger to the world, to be a stranger from the world? Faith will do this. It is said of Abraham, in Heb. xi. 9, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country:" mark the expression, "he sojourned in the land of promise." There are some outward blessings that we have by prayer, that we have by promise; it may be a child, or such a relation, that we have by prayer, and by promise, and we think we may be very indulgent to our affection in regard of that mercy: but see here, Abraham was a stranger in the land of promise, as in a strange country. And then again,

Is it not a great matter for a man to be faithful under all

his betrustments? Caleb and Joshua were so; they were sent to spy out the land of Canaan, and when the other spies brought up an ill report, they were faithful in their report. Why? Because they believed, "The Lord hath given them into our hands as bread," say they; faith will make a man faithful under all his betrustments. And,

Is it not a great matter for a man to see those things that are invisible, to realize eternity, and to see those things that are invisible? "By faith Moses saw him that is invisible." And,

Is it not a great matter for a man to live in continual dependance on Christ, and fetch all from him? Faith will do this; for as Christ could do nothing without faith, he could do no great things there, because of their unbelief; so faith can do nothing without Christ, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Why? "Because I live by the faith of the Son of God." Faith will make a man live in continual dependance on Christ, and fetch all from him. Now, beloved, these are great things, every one of these is a great matter: but true, saving faith will do all these things.

But then to speak to it yet more comparatively; there are two or three great agents in the world, that are close at work, and faith will out-work them all, and do greater things than any of them. There is a carnal policy with power, which is a great agent, and worker, in reference to the affairs of the world. There is civil honesty, a great agent in reference to our dealing between man and man. And there are gospel gifts, parts, and common grace, which are great agents in reference to our religion. Now, not to shew the difference between them, but to give you a little taste, that I may make out the general doctrine, that faith doth work beyond all.

And if you compare it with power, power clothed with policy, or policy clothed with power: faith will do more than all policy and power can do. And I pray turn unto 2 Chron. xiii., where you shall see this clearly proved to you, verse 3. There is a great battle fought; "And Abijah set the battle in array, with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour:" Jeroboam had as many again, Abijah but four hundred thousand. Now if you look into verse 16., it

is said the children of Israel fled before Judah, and Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter, verse 17. So there fell down slain of Israel, five hundred thousand chosen men, such a slaughter as you shall not hear of: Abijah had but four hundred thousand men, and they slew five hundred thousand. Why? They had power enough, they were as many again: what was the matter, did they want policy? It is said verse 13. But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about them; so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them: here was power, and here was policy, and yet this great army is beaten with half the company, and five hundred thousand slain: how comes this to pass? Indeed you read of the children of Judah, that they cried unto the Lord "They cried unto the Lord," verse 14. But if you will have the reason, look to verse 18, "Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time: and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers." See faith can do more than all the power and policy in the world can do; true saving faith can do more in reference to the affairs of the world too: what power is able to turn the tide? if the tide come in and go out, you may bring in your vessels with it, or send out your vessels; who is able to turn the tide? What power on earth is able to turn the tide? And what power of men can turn the power of providence; or policy of men, can turn the tide of providence? But faith can do it, true saving faith can turn the tide even of providence; and therefore it can do greater things than all power, the greatness of the world joined with policy.

There is another great agent in the world, and that is civil honesty and morality, which deals much between man and man; how may it appear that faith can do greater things than this?

That appears plainly thus:

Civil honesty and morality doth trade but in small matters, and therefore the civil, honest, moral man, he never breaks in his profession. Why? Because he trades not in great matters. When do you hear a noise of a poor man's breaking? When a great, rich merchant breaks, you have the noise of it through the city. When do you hear of ships or vessels miscarrying in narrow waters? In the seas, ships

that launch out to sea, they are shipwrecked ; but those that trade in narrow waters, they seldom or never shipwreck. So those professors that launch forth into the ocean of the gospel, they break sometimes ; but the civil, moral man, he blesseth himself when he sees this ; these, says he, are unconstant men, these are uneven men, sometimes for this, and sometimes for that opinion ; but I am constant. Whereas the truth is, it is because he trades in narrow waters, in small things, and so never breaks, never suffers shipwreck. But now, true, saving faith trades in the high things of the gospel.

Though civility and morality may do much between man and man ; yet it will never make a man to leave all to follow Christ. The young man that came to Christ, said, "All these things have I done ;" but saith Christ, "Go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, and follow me ;" he could not down with that. So that civility and morality will never make a man part with all to follow Christ, but true faith will. If Christ say, Follow me ! saith faith ; I will follow thee wherever thou goest.

And though a civil man may do much in a way of righteousness between man and man, yet he doth not deal with God through morality, doth not deal with God through man ; faith doth, true, saving faith doth ; "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, for thou Lord hast done it." Morality can say the first part. Suppose a moral and civil man be reviled, out of the goodness of his nature he can say the first part, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth ;" but morality cannot speak the second part, "because thou Lord hast done it." Morality doth not deal with God through man, but faith doth, and so it doth greater things than this agent.

How may it appear that true, saving faith can do greater things than gospel parts, gifts, and common grace ?

It appears thus :

Though gospel parts and gifts are very useful and profitable for the edifying of the body, for edifying of others ; yet they will not humble a man and cause him to walk humbly with God. *Magnum non est magna facere*, it is no great matter to do great things ; but for a man to do great things and think himself nothing, this is great. Now parts and

gifts, they puff up; but true, saving faith doth humble. Mark the opposition in Hab. ii. 4: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up," towered up, saith the Hebrew, "his soul that is towered up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith."

True saving faith hath a *yet not I*. If you look into the New Testament, you shall find there is a threefold *yet not I*. One that relates to sin, Rom. vii., "I sin, yet not I." One that relates to spiritual life, "I live, yet not I." One that relates to duties, "I have laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I." True, saving faith hath this *yet not I*; parts and gifts know not this *yet not I*.

Though parts and gifts may be very useful unto the body, yet they will never make a perfect change in a man. Suppose a man hath very good parts and gifts and withal he be given to passion, ye shall observe his gospel parts and gifts will never take away his passion, but he is as passionate now as ever he was. Gospel parts and gifts never make a thorough change in a man, faith doth, and faith makes such a change, as a man is directly contrary unto what he was before. Zaccheus, an oppressor before, now saith he, "Lord, behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Why? Because he was a son of Abraham, a believer. And so the jailor, he whipt and scourged Paul and Silas; but when he came to believe, he takes them into his house and set meat before them. Why? For he believed and all his house. True, saving faith will make a perfect change; but parts and gifts will never do it.

As for common grace, though a man may rise to a very great profession thereby, he will never hold it; these colours are not laid in gospel oil, and it will never hold, it is but a varnish and it will off. But saith the apostle, "We are kept by the power of God through faith;" faith will hold. You see how it is with the leather that a man wears on his shoe, it will wear out; there are some poor people that go without shoes, and their skin is thin, not so thick as the leather, and yet it wears not off. Why? Because there is a life in it; the one grows thicker and thicker; the other thinner and thinner. Why? Because there is no life in it. So parts and gifts and common grace, they wear out because there is no life in them; but now, true, saving faith, there is life in it,

and it will not wear out. So that thus you see, true, saving faith is above all others, considered alone. It will resist great temptations, it will perform great performances, it will mortify all your fears, it will subdue all your cares, it will assuage all your griefs, it will make you a stranger in this world, it will keep your hearts steady, and even, and upright in all the turns and changes of your life, it will make you faithful under all your betrustments, it will realize eternity to you, it will make those things visible to you, that are in themselves invisible, it will make you to live in continual dependance on Christ, and fetch all from him, it will do greater things than policy joined with power, it will do greater things than morality and civility, it will outshoot that in its own bow, and it will do greater things than gospel gifts, and parts, and common grace. Surely then, true, saving faith will do great things.

But then, you will ask me how comes it to pass that true, saving faith can do such great things ?

Faith goes forth in the might of God's power, the almighty power of God, and therefore saith our Saviour, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible." And if you look into the scripture, you shall find that the great works of God, of his almighty power, are ascribed to faith, both in the Old Testament and in the New. In the Old Testament the great works of God were much expressed in victories over enemies ; and in the New Testament the great works of God much in cures of diseases ; and both these are given to faith ; the great victories of the Old Testament given to faith ; and the great miraculous cures of the New Testament given to faith ; and will you know the reason ? God will ascribe much to that grace that ascribes much to him ; and set the crown upon the head of that grace, that sets the crown upon the head of his Son. Now the more that any man can wait upon God in the use of low, and mean, and poor, and no means, the more he doth ascribe unto God and to his power. It is said, By faith the walls of Jericho fell down. Did faith pull down the walls of Jericho ? No, but it was the almighty power of God that pulled down the walls of Jericho ; but this is said to be done by faith. Why ? Because they did wait upon God in the use of ram's horns ; and when a man

can wait upon God in the use of ram's horns, then a man is said to live by faith.

As faith goes forth in the might of God's power, so in the might of God's promise; the promise is made to faith, the promise of doing great things is made to faith. In John xiv. 12. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father:" so that not only the promise is made to faith, but the promise of doing great things, is made to faith.

As faith doth go forth in the strength of the promise, so faith doth go forth in the strength of God's call: there is much might in God's call, faith goes forth in the strength and might of God's call. Read what the Lord said to Gideon, in Judges vi. 14. "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites:" what might was this? Go in this thy might, "have not I sent thee?" here is the might; go in this thy might: what might? the might of my call. God's call is a might, and when a man doth go forth in the might of God's call, he goes forth in a mighty strength; faith goes forth in the might of God's call.

As faith goes forth in the might of God's call, so it doth go forth in the sense of what God and Christ hath done for the soul; I know faith and sense and feeling differ; but I say, faith is very sensible of what the Father hath done, and what Christ hath done for poor sinners; and when a man is very sensible of what great things God hath done, and Christ hath done, then saith a man, Shall God do such great things for me; and shall Christ do such great things for me; and shall not I do great things again for God and Christ? Faith is very sensible of what God and Christ hath done for sinners. And thus faith makes a man do great things for God, faith goes forth in the might of God's power, faith goes forth in the the might of God's promise, faith goes forth in the might of God's call, and faith goes forth in the sense of what God and Christ hath done for the soul. And thus it comes to pass that faith will do very great things. And thus now I have done with the doctrinal part; I come to the application.

If this doctrine be true, true saving faith will do great

things, and very great things; then we may here see the reason why men do no great things for God, why men do no great things in their generation, and why there are no great things in their generation, and why there are no great things found in men's conversation, no great things for the most part. It is because men do want this true saving faith, it is a working grace, an active grace; and therefore if I be not a worker for God, it argues I have none of this faith. True saving faith, it will do great things for God; what shall we say to those that cannot do small things? It is a small thing to leave drunken company, a small thing to leave a foolish fashion, a small thing to leave an idle word, faith or troth; men cannot do small things; true saving faith will do great things, and very great things. Oh, what shall we say of those that are so far from doing great things, that they cannot do small things; have they faith? Let not men be deceived. I say again, true saving faith will do very great things. Was it not a very great matter for a young man brought up in the court, to leave all the court preferment, and to choose affliction with the people of God, rather than the preferments of the court? this Moses did by faith. Was it not a great matter for a people to venture into the sea, merely upon a command? this faith made the people do. By faith Peter ventured on the waters of the sea; by faith Israel entered into the sea. True, saving faith is a venturing grace, it will venture far for God, and far after God. Was it not a great matter for Rahab the harlot, an inn-keeper, a whore, to become a saint, a believer; for a drunkard and for an adulterer to become a believer, is it not a great matter? By faith Rahab the harlot believed. Certainly, where there is faith in truth, it will make a man do great things; there will be something that is great found in his life and conversation. Thus it was with these men, Gideon and Barak. It will be said that their faith was a faith of miracles, and they wrought miracles by it. Indeed some did, all did not; for "By faith they wrought righteousness," the text saith, and that is not a miracle: this is one of the great things. Oh, but their faith was strong, and our's weak. But Gideon's faith was weak, he was fain to have two or three signs to underprop his faith; and Barak's faith was weak, he would not go forth against the enemy without the woman Deborah. Oh, but these

men were busied about great works and great employment. Mistake not, you may do great things by faith in small employment. It was no great matter of employment for the poor woman to give two mites; it was a great matter she did: why? because she did it by faith. And so the woman of Sarepta, when the prophet said, Give me a cake first; it was no great matter that her faith was employed about a cake and a little that she did, but a great matter in giving him first. So that I say, faith may do great things, although it be not employed about great matters. Oh, but I do great things, and therefore I hope I have this true, saving faith. I do great things: that is well. But I pray only consider this, Those things are great, which are great in their own present generation: that which was a great matter heretofore, may be a small matter now; and that which was a small matter heretofore, may be a great matter now. In the times of the bishops, it was a small matter then to keep the doctrine of religion, and a great matter to oppose the ceremonies; now it is a small matter to oppose the ceremonies, and a great matter to keep the truth and the doctrine of religion. I say, that which was a great matter before, may be a small matter now; and that which was but a small matter heretofore, may be a great matter now. But if your faith be true, you will do great things; there will be some great thing or other found in your life, and such as are great indeed.

If this doctrine be true, in case, christians, that you have any great work to do, call in for faith, call in for faith. In case ye have a great outward employment, you will send to the most skilful man in that faculty; if it be to build a house or go to law, you will call in for the most skilful agent. True saving faith is a great agent, a great worker; and therefore if you have any great work to do, call in faith, look to your faith. It is said of Mr. Tyndale, in the story of his life; there being a conjuror in the Low Countries, where he lived, that would undertake to fetch a dish of meat off any prince's table, and make a great dinner for his friends; and it being reported he had often done it, they being met together to behold this skill, Mr. Tyndale would go in among them, and he sets himself to believe that this fellow should not be able to do it; and when all his company was met together, he could not do it; saith he, There sits the man that hinders

me. Oh, faith can do more than all the conjurors in the world. Have you any great matter to do, christians? call in for faith. And certainly there are yet great things to do: antichrist to fall, the Jews to be called, great things to be done for this land. God hath done great things, yet greater things are to be done; God hath done great things for your, and my family, there are yet greater things to be done; God hath done great things for your soul, there are yet greater things to be done. When any great thing is to be done, christians, christians, call in for faith, set faith a work now.

You will say, What shall we do, and how shall we so improve our faith as we may do great things thereby?

Study much the greatness of God; for the more you study the greatness of God, the more will your mind be grandeur'd, greaten'd, and your faith strengthened. Children do little things, because their minds are not upon great things. Kings and princes are the great men of the earth, they do great things, for their minds are great; they have great minds. Why? Because their minds are exercised about great things. Saith Solomon, I will build a house, a great house. Why? For it is to the great God. Would you do great things? Study much the greatness of God. Thus will your mind be great and your faith strengthened to do great things.

If you would so improve your faith, as you may do great things thereby, keep close to the ordinances of God. Faith lives upon God in the ordinances. Those that cast off the ordinances do not live by faith. What then? By experiences, by revelations, impressions, and visions, I had almost said by fancies; they do not live by faith; faith lives upon God in the use of ordinances, and it gathers strength thereby. Look I pray again into 2 Chron. xiii., and you shall see how Abijah's faith was raised; by faith he overcame Jeroboam, and slew five hundred thousand of them together. But I pray how did he strengthen his faith? Mark the words: "And Jeroboam came out against him, and Abijah stood upon a mountain, and said, Hear ye me, Jeroboam, and all Israel," verse 4. "Ought ye not to know, that the Lord God of Israel, gave the kingdom of Israel to David for ever?" And verse 9: "Have ye not cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands?" So that "who-

soever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock, and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods. But as for us, (see how he strengthens his faith,) the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business, and they burn unto the Lord, every morning and every evening, burnt sacrifices and sweet incense; the shew-bread also set in order upon the pure table, and the candlestick of gold, with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the Lord our God; but ye have forsaken him, and behold God himself is with us for our captain," &c. He argues God had not forsaken him, because they had not forsaken the ordinances. Would you therefore, so improve your faith, as you may do great things thereby? keep close to the ordinances.

If you would so improve your faith, as you may do great things thereby, do not check your faith, do not rate off your heart from believing, do not chide off your heart from believing, let your heart believe to the utmost. Our Lord and Saviour Christ, hath given us a very good encouragement in this respect; for, saith he, "I say unto you, whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them:" do but believe it, saith our Saviour Christ. I charge you, saith he, do not doubt, do not chide off your faith, do not check your faith, do not rate off your heart from believing; there are many do so, they check their faith by doubting and rate off their faith by unbelief.

If you would so improve your faith, that you may do great things thereby, use your faith to do small things, put your faith to work every day, use your faith to do small things. It is a good rule; do not commit any sin, because it is small; do not neglect any duty, because it is not great: and though the thing be small, put your faith to work in ordinary matters, put your faith to work. Sometimes you come to a great matter and you put on your faith there; but because your faith is not used to small things, your faith will not come on here. I remember a speech of Mr. Greenham concerning suffering; saith he, If you would suffer hard things from papists, be content to suffer small things from protestants; and if you would be able to suffer hard things from enemies, you

must be content to suffer small things from friends; saith he, you will never be able to suffer great things from enemies, if you are not able to suffer small things from friends. So say I in the point of doing; you will never be able to do great things by faith, if your faith be not used to do small things. And therefore, christians, in all things you do, the life you live in the flesh, put your faith to work in your particular callings, in small things; and when your faith is used to do small things, you will be able to do great things; but you will never be able to improve your faith to do great things, if you use not your faith to do small things.

Study much, and look upon the call you have to any work, and do not stand poring upon your own ability, or upon the difficulty of the work: thus these worthies, when the Lord called them, the work was great and difficult, and they were weak; but they looked upon God's call, and they did not stand poring upon their own abilities; but as Abraham considered not his own body, so these, and therefore they did great things by faith. Possibly a man is called to a place in the magistracy, and he looks upon it as a great work; I am not able, saith he, it is beyond me: so a man is called to the ministry, I have no parts, nor gifts, the work is beyond me. So for believing, a man is commanded to believe, but I cannot believe, my heart is dead, I cannot believe: whereas now, if men did but look upon the call of God, they would be able to do great things for God. Either, christian, thou art commanded to believe, or not: if thou art not commanded to believe then unbelief is no sin; and if you are commanded to believe, then you are called to it; do not stand poring upon the difficulty of your work, but look upon the call of God; and thus shall your faith work and do great things. And thus I have done with the main doctrine that grows out of these words. There are some particular notes, that as little twigs, do grow from this great oak, which I shall draw out, and so conclude; and that is out of verse 32.

In that the apostle saith, "What should I say more? for the time would fail me," &c. The number of believers in the times of the old testament, it seems was not small: "The time would fail me," saith he, to tell of the believers of the old testament: few shall be saved indeed comparatively;

but through grace many there are that do believe. If there were many in the old testament times, certainly then there are many now in the new testament times, that do believe.

In that the apostle doth here instance in Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah : Gideon and Barak, he instances in them, thus much you may note ; God will own that faith, that is but weak at first. Gideon's faith was weak at the first, Barak's faith was weak at the first ; it is more like to live, this faith that is weak at the first, than that which is born with teeth ; faith that is weak at the first, God will own. It is true, not only for faith that is weak at first, but all weak faith ; God will own the weak faith and commend the strong faith ; he will bear with the weak faith, and commend the strong faith. See it in the case of of Thomas ; " Thomas, (saith he,) reach hither thy hand, and thrust thy finger into my side : Lord, (saith he,) I believe, my Lord, and my God : " well, saith Christ, Thomas, thou believest : here he owns his faith though it is weak, but commends the strong faith : " Blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet hath believed. " Christ will own the weak faith, and commend the strong faith ; but I say, he will own the faith that is weak at the first. May be, here are some that are believers, that begin to look after Christ, some young christians that begin to look after God, and turn from their evil ways, and begin weakly at the first ; remember this, God will own that faith as weak as it is.

But God sets here Gideon before Barak, and Samson before Jephthah. The second note from thence is, though the Lord will own the weak faith, weak at the first, yet God doth most highly esteem of them that do most excel in faith ; Gideon is before Balak, Samson before Jephthah : those are in most account with God that do most excel in faith.

But then, in that the apostle doth here instance in Samson for a believer. It is possible that a great sinner may become a true believer ? Yea, possibly a man may have true faith, yet he may fall foully, so Samson ; but if he do fall foully, and be a believer, he is like to pay dearly for it ; so Samson, both his eyes went for it. But though a man do pay dearly for it, yet God will return again and own his faith, and record his faith. So Samson's faith is.

In that the apostle doth here make mention of Jephthah :

Jephthah, who was a bastard, under a reproach, yet recorded for a believer. Possibly a bastard may become a believer; one that lies under great reproach in regard of parentage may become a true believer. Behold what that is, that will roll away reproach from a family, it is faith, true saving faith. Behold, here was a reproach upon Jephthah and his family as a bastard; now he believes, and faith rolls away the reproach from his person, and from his family, and he is recorded as a believer. Let none be discouraged in regard of any reproachful condition that they are in; true faith will roll away the reproach, and by faith you may become of good report.

In that the apostle doth speak of David: "Of David, also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." Consider, I pray, these were extraordinary men. When then, God hath any extraordinary work to do, he will raise up extraordinary men to do it; and when God doth raise up a man extraordinarily, he will give extraordinary gifts. But what I would have you consider thence, is this; that we may make use of extraordinary examples to strengthen our ordinary faith: here are extraordinary cases, and brought in by the apostle to this end and purpose, to strengthen our faith. Be not discouraged, then, when you go into Scripture and read of extraordinary examples. Satan tells you, Aye, but this is an extraordinary example, and it reacheth not me: do not say so, God will make use of extraordinary examples to strengthen ordinary faith.

But to end all. You see what high esteem God hath of faith; these men did great matters, Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David; yet their great actions are brought in here, upon the account of their faith; *Fides nobilitat omnes*; it is faith that raiseth a man. Great things they did, but those things are upon record only as they were wrought by faith, and their faith was weak, and laboured under many infirmities. Look into this xith of Hebrews, here is no mention made of Samson's infirmities, here is no mention made of Rahab's infirmities; here is mention of their faith, but their infirmities past by, and not once mentioned; their faith is mentioned, and all the great things that they did, mentioned only upon the account of faith. What a great esteem hath God of faith! What a mighty encou-

agement, then, should this be to all that hear the word of the Lord this day, to get faith, to strengthen your faith. Oh, you that have no faith at all, and some such there may be here; you that have no faith at all, get faith, get faith; and you that have true saving faith, improve it to do great things by it; and the truth is, if you have true saving faith, you will do it, and there will be some great things found in your conversation: for you remember the doctrine, true saving faith will do very great things. And thus I have done with the first rank of believers. Their doing is first mentioned, their suffering follows.

SERMON V.

THE GREAT THINGS FAITH CAN SUFFER.

“ And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings: yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being afflicted, destitute, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy, they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”
—Heb. xi. 35.

THIS xith chapter of the Hebrews, being a chronicle of the Old Testament believers; we find here the report of a doing and a suffering faith. The doing faith is described and commended by several instances at large in the former part of the chapter, and more compendiously and briefly at verse 32: “What shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David, also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, women received their dead raised to life again.”

In the words that I have chosen to speak unto at this time,

you have another sort and rank of believers, famous in their generation for their suffering faith. I have spoken unto the former in a neighbouring congregation, having shewed that this faith will do great things. Now in these words we have a suffering faith; for by faith they should be carried through these sufferings: thus are the words to be understood. Others by faith were tortured; and others by faith had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; and others by faith were stoned, sawn asunder, &c. It seems, then, that these the apostle here speaks of, were such as lived in the time of the Maccabees; they did not live after Christ, for it is said at verse 39, "They received not the promise;" Christ was not come when they lived. And they did not live in the times of the prophets, or before; for the apostle had brought down his chronicle unto the days of the prophets, as ye read in verse 32. So that these must needs live in the times of the Maccabees. It seems, then, that ecclesiastical histories may at some times be made use of in the preaching of faith.

Now the things that these believers suffered were great, hard, and very many. Here are nine sorts of suffering set down in the text. It is said that they were racked, or tortured: some read it, beaten with clubs, but it comes all to a reckoning; for when they were racked, they were beaten with clubs. And the apostle saith, that "they accepted not deliverance, that they might be partakers of a better resurrection;" upon which words some do think that there are degrees of glory, and that the suffering saints should have a better degree of glory at the resurrection; but the word *better*, is spoken in comparison with that deliverance that was offered to them. In scripture phrase, afflictions are deaths, and when a man is delivered from an affliction he hath a resurrection. When a man hath been sick, and at the grave, and raised to health again, he hath a resurrection, in scripture language. Now this resurrection or deliverance is refused, hoping for a better resurrection, having an eye to the great, and last, and better resurrection. That is the first; they were tortured or racked. And they had cruel mockings: there is a mocking, and there is a cruel mocking, when a man shall insult over another, and laugh at him in his misery, this is a cruel mocking; as the Jews derided our Saviour on the cross; this is a great aggravation of affliction, this they endured. That is the

second; they had trial of cruel mockings. And they were scourged, and whipped up and down like rogues, as if the world was too good for them, they not worthy to live. And they were in bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder. And they were tempted; some read it, burned, by the change of a letter or two they read it so, "and were burned:" but it seems their afflictions were filled with temptations, and temptation is a great aggravation of affliction; so they were tempted. And they were slain with the sword. And they wandered up and down in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, in mountains and caves and dens of the earth, driven from their own habitation; and these are such of whom it is said here, "the world was not worthy." And these hard things they endured by faith, saith the apostle. So that here, now, you see what hard things faith will suffer, true saving faith (for of that the apostle speaks here) is a suffering grace, a bearing grace, it will carry us through all afflictions, although they be never so great: and so the doctrine from all the words is this:

True, saving faith can, and will suffer very hard things.

It is that grace that will carry us through all afflictions and sufferings, though they be never so great. True, saving faith can, and will suffer very hard things.

This doctrine lies upon the surface of the words and all the words together speak it; but for the further opening and clearing of it: First I shall labour to shew you that it is possible that a true believer, one very precious in the eyes of God, may meet with most unworthy things from the hands of men. Secondly: That faith will carry through these. And thirdly: How, and by what means, faith will carry a man through these.

First: It is possible that a true believer, one very precious in the eyes of God, may meet with most unworthy usage from the hands of men; these were hard things and unworthy that these believers suffered; yet they were such of whom the world was not worthy. You know there is an old enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; a malignant disposition in the men of the world against the saints and people of God, they must work as they are; the wicked and men of the world are an unworthy people. But

because you judge yourselves unworthy, saith the text, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles, because ye judge yourselves unworthy." "Go (saith our Saviour unto his disciples) and preach, and if any be worthy stay;" the men of the world are unworthy, an unworthy people. Yea, they are an unreasonable people, absurd men, impertinent men that have not faith. They are compared in scripture unto beasts for their unreasonableness; "beware of dogs," saith the apostle. When our Lord and Saviour Christ did send out his disciples to preach the gospel, "beware of men," saith he; I do not say, take heed and beware of lions and bears, but beware of men, you shall find such unreasonable dealing by men, therefore beware of men. Now if the men of the world be an unworthy people and unreasonable, will ye wonder that the saints and people of God meet sometimes with unworthy usage from them? It is possible. To raise it a little higher; possibly the more precious a man is, the more unworthy usage he may meet withal. The apostle Paul was a most precious man in his day and generation, and yet what unworthy usage had he? It is said in 1 Cor. iv. 11, "Unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things unto this day." We are the filth, we are made the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things unto this day. Some think that the apostle here doth relate unto that of one man dying for the people, the guilt of all the people being upon him. Others, that it is a similitude taken from a kind of tumbrel and vessel that goes up and down the city, that ye throw all the filth into. But I rather take the two Greek words, *περικαθαρματα* and *περιψημα* to relate unto that in Lament. iii. 45: "Thou hast made us as the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people." In the Hebrew: "Thou hast made us the off-scouring, and the filth, and refuse in the midst of the people." Thus Paul was made, and yet Paul a precious man; he laboured more abundantly than they all. So that I say, it is possible that the more precious a man is, the more unworthy usage he may meet withal from men.

Yea, to raise it a little higher; it is possible that a man may meet with most unworthy dealings therefore, because he is precious in the eyes of God; not only in regard of men; but in regard of God: for God doth sometimes so order things in his providence, that he doth put men to suffer hard things, because they are precious in his eyes. "Unto you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer." Suffering sometimes is a gift, it is a great gift. A suffering gift, saith Chrysostom, is a greater gift than the gift of miracles; for saith he, if God do give me a gift to work miracles by, I am in God's debt; but if God do give me a suffering gift, he is pleased thereby to become my debtor; suffering sometimes becomes as a reward for doing. Ye read of the heifers that brought home the ark out of the Philistines' country, that when they brought the ark home, the Israelites they take the heifers, and they offer up the heifers unto God for a sacrifice. Why so? saith one, it is an ill requital to the heifers. No, the heifers could not have a higher honour put upon them; this their suffering is a reward for their doing. And so what greater honour can a man have after all his doing for God, than to be called forth to suffer, and to bear witness to the truth? Indeed we do not think thus, but you will say, Oh, surely God doth not love me because he puts such hard suffering work upon me. But I pray tell me, suppose that a general should have some great work or service to do, and he should single and pick some half a dozen soldiers for to go upon this work; would these soldiers say, Surely the general doth not prize us, he doth not honour us, nor love us, because he puts us upon this hard service. No, but they will say the contrary; Surely the general prizeth us, loves us, and honours us, because he puts us upon such a hard service as this is. So here, it doth rather argue that the Lord doth honour, love, and prize you, in that he puts you upon a hard work and service. But now, if these things be true, then surely this first branch is sufficiently made out, That a man may be very precious in the eyes of God, and yet meet with most unworthy usage from the hands of men. That is the first thing.

Secondly: You will say, How shall a man be able to go through these hard things and sufferings; what will carry him through them?

True, saving faith will do it and nothing but this faith will do it; "I had verily fainted in mine affliction (saith David) but that I believed." It is faith and faith alone that will keep from fainting under suffering. And to make this out a little unto you :

The more assurance of God's love any man hath, the more able he will be to encounter with sufferings and with afflictions : the sight of God's love doth cause love in us to God, *Amor amoris causa*, love is the cause of love, and much water cannot quench love, it endures all. Now the assurance of God's love grows upon faith, it is the flower of faith ; faith is the stalk, assurance is the flower ; assurance is the cream of faith, "Let us draw near with full assurance of faith."

The more that any man is able to gather up and to manage his experiences, the more able he will be to suffer, to encounter with sufferings ; experience is a great help in suffering times. Now it is faith and only faith that can gather up and manage experiences. "The Lord (saith he) that delivered me from the lion and the bear : " it was faith that did gather up this experience and did manage it. So in Psalm lvi. 9, "When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back : " how do you know this ? saith he, "this I know," how ? "for God is for me ; " this I know, for God is for me. I have this experience of God, that he is with me and for me ; and therefore I know it. But

The more that any man is able to apply the promise, the more able he will be to suffer, to encounter with sufferings ; the promise is a great shelter in a rainy day. Now there is nothing but faith that can apply the promise ; the promise is the plaster that none but the warm hand of faith can lay on upon the sore : if it be laid on by any other hands, it will not stick. I have heard of a poor, doubting soul, drawing near to her death, and the minister pressing one promise after another ; O Sir, saith she, these are gracious promises, but they will not stick upon my heart. And what is the reason that the promise indeed doth not stick upon many hearts ? but because it is laid on by the chill and cold hand of unbelief. Remember faith hath a warm hand, and only faith hath a warm hand to lay on the promise. But then again,

The more that any man doth see his call clearly, his call to suffer, the more able he will be to encounter with his sufferings. Now it is faith only that doth trade with the call of God. God's call is a great wall, a strong wall; God's call can make a wall of water. When the children of Israel went through the Red Sea, the water stood like a wall on each side; it was God's call that made those walls. There is nothing but faith that doth converse with the call of God, and makes out the call of God. Three things call us to suffer: 1. The commandment of Christ: "If thou wilt be my disciple, thou must deny thyself, and take up thy cross." 2. The example of Christ, for thereunto are we called, in 1 Pet. ii. 5; Christ hath left us an example of suffering. And 3. Suffering strength with suffering opportunity. Now there is nothing but faith is able to discern these things; and therefore faith, and faith alone, is that grace under Christ, which can carry us through our affliction and suffering, although they be never so great.

But you will say, We have heard and read of many that have suffered hard things, and yet had none of this faith; no true, saving faith, and yet have suffered great and hard things.

True; you have heard, it may be, of some Jesuits dying for their religion. It is possible that a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion too; but, as Austin speaks, there is an unlikeness of suffering in the likeness of suffering. As, saith he, gold is in the same fire with the wood and with the straw; with the same fire the straw is consumed, and the gold is refined. Things suffered may be alike, and yet a great unlikeness in the suffering. And to clear up this to you, that you may see that faith alone is able to do this:

Though a wicked man may suffer very great and hard things, yet he may also suffer as an evil-doer. "If ye suffer for evil doing (saith the apostle), what thanks have ye?" But faith, true, saving faith, it doth well and suffers ill.

And though a wicked man may suffer much, and very hard things, yet he doth not suffer upon choice; he would choose rather, if it were at his choice, to make a breach upon conscience, than a breach in his estate, for to lose his conscience, than to lose his life; he doth not suffer upon choice,

faith doth. "By faith Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." True, saving faith, it suffers great and hard things, and that upon choice.

And though a wicked man may suffer much, yet he doth not lay the stress of all upon the word of faith; the stress of all is laid upon somewhat else. Faith loves to suffer, and it lays the stress of all a man's sufferings upon the word of faith.

Though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon an account of religion; yet it may be he is sullen, or froward, or discontented, not cheerful: but faith suffers cheerfully. Paul and Silas sung in the stocks; and the primitive christians took with joyfulness the spoiling of their goods. And so the martyrs in Queen Mary's days. It is reported that when Mr. Philpot was in the dungeon, the bishop sent to him to know why he was so merry? Seeing a pair of stocks in the dungeon, saith he, there is a pair of organs that I have not played on yet; making himself cheerful in the time he was in the dungeon. And meeting with a minister that had recanted, and informing him better, the minister made a recantation of his recantation, and was as cheerful as any others. Faith suffers cheerfully.

Though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion; yet he will rest upon his sufferings. Faith will make one suffer, and keep one from resting upon one's suffering. As in regard of duty, faith will make one perform a duty, and it will keep one from resting upon that performance; so in regard of sufferings, faith will make one suffer, and it will keep one from resting upon one's suffering. In case that a man hath done much, faith will put him on to suffer as if he had done nothing; and in case a man hath suffered much, faith will put him upon doing, as if he had suffered nothing: according to that of our Saviour, "He that will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Follow me; when? After a suffering; not to sit down and rest there, but to follow me after a suffering.

Again, though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion, and be very confident, yet he will give in at last. I have read of a great atheist that was burnt to death in Paris, for blaspheming of Jesus Christ.

And as he was going to the stake, saith he to the friars and priests that followed him : Behold, how boldly I go to the fire : as for your Lord and Master Christ, he went trembling to his death, and sweat drops of blood ; but I, in the strength of reason, under which I sacrifice my life, go with boldness unto these flames. But when he came there, and his tongue was cut out for blasphemy, the story saith, that then he cried out, and roared out like a bull. *Vidi ego hominem*, saith the author, I saw the man, I saw him when he was at the stake. In the time of his liberty he was loose ; in the time of his imprisonment, he was sullen ; and when he was at the stake, he was mad, with horror of conscience mad. Oh, but true saving faith will not flinch, and give in at last. The three children did not only come to the fire, but rid out the storm. But I say no more in this, only thus :

Though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion ; yet he doth not bring forth the quiet fruit of righteousness : but true, saving faith doth, it suffers, and brings forth the quiet fruits of righteousness. So that now you see by all this, that it is faith alone, it is true, saving faith, and faith alone, that will carry a man through sufferings. But then,

Thirdly, you will say, How and by what means can faith do this ? What is there in faith to do it, to carry a man through hard things, and through all sufferings, although they be never so great ?

It is the work of faith to make a man resign and give up his will to the will of God ; and when a man can do so, what may he not suffer ?

It is the work of faith, the proper work of faith, to cleave close unto the commandment of God. True, Satan, I am an unworthy creature ; but God hath commanded me to believe. True, I am a great sinner ; but God hath commanded me to believe. Faith doth peremptorily stick unto the commandment, and it leaves God to answer unto the objections and inconveniences that follow upon his obedience to the commandment ; it leaves that to God. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out, obeyed, not knowing whither he should go. Now when a man can do this, what may he not suffer ?

It is the proper work of faith to close with the gospel,

whereby the soul doth receive the fulness of the Spirit, the promise of the Father. Now when a man's heart is filled with the Spirit of God, what may he not suffer? Pray do but consider the apostles, after that the Spirit came upon them; you know they would suffer any thing, though it were never so great. Before the Spirit came upon them, though they had the personal presence of Christ, they could not suffer any thing, though it was never so small. Now faith doth close with the promise of the gospel, whereby the soul doth receive the Spirit of God, the promise of the Father.

It is the proper work of faith to look upon the recompense of reward. By faith Moses had an eye to the recompense of reward, and so chose affliction with the people of God. Saith our Saviour to his disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled." How so, Lord? Saith he, "I go to prepare a place for you: in my Father's house there are many mansions." Faith shews one the glory and the joys of heaven; and when a man sees those things, what may he not suffer?

The more that a man can see the hand of God as a Father upon the rod, the more able he will be to suffer, and the more cheerful. Ye bring a child to school, and he sees the school hung with rods, in every corner a rod, and the child is afraid: but if his father's house be set with rods, the child is not afraid in his father's house. Now faith, true, saving faith, will shew one the hand of a Father upon the rod: "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away," saith faith. "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, for thou, Lord, hast done it," saith faith.

The more a man can see to the end of his affliction and suffering, the more able he will be to go through it. Now faith tells a man that there is an end. "No temptation (saith the word of faith) hath befallen you, but what is common;" and with the temptation there is an outlet, there is a door, a door in the ark, although the door may be under water, and the outlet may be under water. Faith doth not only tell a man that there is an end, but that the end shall be good, and all shall work together for his good; yea, it tells a man that his affliction shall be but for a moment, and that moment shall be recompensed with abundance of comfort. Ps. xxx. 5: "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his

favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." So also in Isa. liv. 7. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercy will I gather thee: in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness, will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Faith tells us this. Now when a man knows, and considers this, what may he not suffer?

It is the proper work of faith to look on both sides of the dispensation; there is a dark side and there is a light side in affliction and suffering. Sense and reason look only on the dark side, but faith looks to both sides of the dispensation. It is written of Mr. Latimer, the blessed martyr, that when he was going to the stake, taking leave of his fellow prisoners, saith he, Be of good comfort, O my friends and brethren, for though we go to the stake to-day, and be burnt to fire, we shall light such a candle in England as shall never be put out; we shall make such a fire in England to-day, as shall never be quenched. He saw both sides of the dispensation, because he believed. Faith will shew one both sides of the dispensation.

It is the proper work of faith, to see one contrary in another, or through another. It will see the smiles of God in the midst of frowns; it will see love in the midst of anger; it will see order in the midst of confusion; it will see mercy in the midst of misery; it will see a door of hope in the valley of Achor. Faith, it looks upon things with the prospective of the promise; and the promise speaks on this wise, in Deut. xxxii. 36; saith the Lord there, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself of his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." Faith, I say, sees one contrary in another, or beyond another; and when a man can do so, what may he not suffer.

And if God do engage to help and succour in afflictions, and if the Lord do count himself engaged to succour, deliver, and help in affliction, because men trust in the Lord; surely faith can do very much in the day of affliction. Now I pray look into scripture, and you shall see that the Lord is engaged upon this account in Ps. xxxvii. 40: "And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the

wicked, and save them, because they trust in him." So in Isa. xxvi. 3 : "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Mark the words, Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, so you read it ; but in the Hebrew the words run thus : "Thou wilt keep peace, peace ;" not peace and doubting, not peace and trouble ; but peace, peace. Why ; Because he trusteth in thee. But I cannot trust in God, I have no assurance of God's love. Mark the words, he will keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on thee ; he doth not say, who hath assurance of God's love, but if it be but a faith of reliance, though it be not a faith of assurance ; he will keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Now if the Lord be thus engaged to help and succour men that do believe, then certainly faith can do very much in a suffering day. Now I have given you an account of the general, how it comes to pass that faith can do it. Faith will carry us through all our sufferings, though they be never so great, and you see how faith can do it, and so the doctrine is clear.

Now for application.

If true saving faith be such an accommodation unto all our suffering, then, in case that any of you are to suffer any great suffering, the first thing you do, call in for faith. As I said upon the former doctrine, seeing that faith will do great things ; and therefore if you have any great thing to do, call in for faith. So now I say upon this doctrine, Seeing that true saving faith can and will suffer very hard things ; in case you have any thing to suffer, first call in for faith, call in for faith. If you have a great sickness, you will send for the best physician that hath the most skill at such a disease. Faith hath the best skill at your sufferings, and therefore send and call in for faith as soon as ever you come to the brink of these waters, call for your faith, and look to your faith.

You will say, But these are no suffering times, the winter is past, and there is no suffering now.

Then bless God and praise the Lord that you have so much gospel liberty as you have. But our Lord and Saviour saith, that in the last days, there shall be such tribulation as never was ; and I am sure we are fallen into the last days. Our brethren in the vallies of Piedmont, they have suffered ;

and the apostle commands us to be in bonds with those that are in bonds, and to be afflicted with those that are afflicted; what do you know what your faith may do for them?

But to come a little nearer ourselves. Is there never a servant here that suffers from an evil master, that would fain go to the ordinance, frequent the ordinance, but checked, scorned, and despised by his master? Is there never a husband here, or wife here, that suffers hard things from his or her relation, merely upon the account of religion? Is there never a man or woman here that hath suffered hard things from the hand of his or her kindred, since they began to look towards Christ? Is there never a professor here that suffers from the hand of some professor? What devouring among us, biting, consuming one another? Of all reproachings and sufferings, you will find those most bitter that come from professors, when one professor doth reproach another, and slander another, and persecute another. Now if there be any here, unto you I speak, call in for faith, whatsoever your sufferings be, call in for faith.

But suppose there be none of these sufferings among us, who knows how soon you or I may be called forth to sufferings, if not in the public, yet in our particular? I have heard of a good man and woman, that were feasting at a great dinner upon the account of God's goodness and mercy to their family; and while they were at dinner, celebrating the goodness of the Lord to their family, them and their children, comes a messenger in and saith, One of your children is dropt into the well and drowned. Beloved in the Lord, who knows how soon a relation of yours or mine may be in the well; how soon such a comfort of yours or mine may be in the well? Wherefore call in for faith, in all your sufferings call in for faith.

You will say unto me, What shall we do that we may so strengthen or improve our faith, as that we may bear up in a way of believing against sufferings; for I am a man, or a woman that, I confess, have met with sufferings, and I am seldom out of sufferings, sometimes in my body, sometimes in my name, sometimes in my estate, sometimes in my relation, and the Lord knows what I may be called to suffer; what shall we do that we may so strengthen or improve our

faith, that we may bear up in a way of believing, against all our sufferings ?

Consider frequently what great things the Lord hath done for you already. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High ; I will remember all thy wondrous works," saith the Psalmist ; stirring up his faith and getting strength from faith. The consideration of what great things God hath done for you already, will engage your heart and make you willing to suffer. For example, go along with me a little, and I will instance only in that great matter of your first conversion and turning to God. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, all thy sins were pardoned, past, present, and to come ; I say, virtually those that are to come. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou wert made the child of God, and heir of the kingdom which is incorruptible, undefiled ; and which fadeth not away. That day thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou hadst the key of the scripture put into thy bosom, I say, thou hadst the key of the scripture put into thy bosom to wear it, I mean the Spirit of God. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thy old nature was taken away, and thou wert made partaker of the divine nature. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou wert received into union with Christ and into communion, thou wert received into union and into communion with the Father, and with Jesus Christ. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thy soul was freed ; those that the Son makes free, they are free indeed ; though your will were not *libera*, yet it was *liberata* ; as soon as a man is converted and brought home to God, he is free to duty, though not from duty ; and he is free from his sin, though he be not free to his sin. That day thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou wert received unto the special protection of God, though not to free, yet to sanctify and sweeten your affliction. That day you were converted and brought home to God, you had a right and title given you unto all the ordinances, *Jus ad rem*, though not *in re* ; they are your Father's plate, and as a child you may drink out of your Father's plate. That day thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou hadst a special right and title given thee

unto all the creatures: you may look up to heaven and see the stars, and say, these are my Father's candles; and when you hear the thunder, you may say, this is my Father's voice; and when you see the sea, you may say, this is my Father's fish-pond; and when you see the godly men of the world, you may say, these are my Father's children; and when you see wicked men, you may say, these are my Father's dish-clouts to make his children clean; and when you consider of the devils, you may say, these are my Father's hangmen, his executioners; and when you see the gold, and riches, and wealth of the world, you may say, this is my Father's dung-hill. I say, that day thou art converted and brought home to God, God doth great things for you in that moment. Now the more that you consider what great things God hath done for you, the more your heart is engaged to God; and the more your heart is engaged, the more willing and able you will be to suffer.

If you would strengthen your faith to suffer great and hard things, study much the book of the Revelation, which is a standing cordial for the relief of the saints, in suffering in antichristian times; and study and read and commend to your children, the Book of Martyrs, where you have examples to the life of the people of God, dying for the faith: but above all things, study much the sufferings of Christ. Faith, true saving faith, it loves to dwell in the wounds of Christ; and believe it, the sight of a suffering Christ will teach one to suffer; nothing like it: the example of Christ, especially the sight of Christ's sufferings, will not only teach you to suffer, but will sanctify your heart by the suffering, and will provoke you to suffer. What, shall the Lord Christ suffer such great things for me, and shall I suffer nothing for him? Study the sufferings of Christ.

If you would so strengthen your faith as you may be able to suffer hard things, consider much and frequently, the great gains of suffering, possess your heart therewithal. Beloved, suffering times are gaining times; and if your heart and mind were but possessed with that truth, it would not be a hard thing to suffer hard things, and that by faith: I shall therefore spend a little time to make out this, for the strengthening of your faith, that suffering times are gaining times.

Suffering times are teaching times; "Blessed is the man

whom thou chastisest, correctest and teachest out of thy law: *Schola crucis, schola lucis*: the cross is God's free school, where we learn much: suffering times are teaching times.

As suffering times are teaching times, so suffering times are sin-discovering times; afflictions recal sins past, and prevent sin to come; afflictions shew us the emptiness of the creature, the fulness of God, the vileness of sin. When Adonibezek had his thumbs and toes cut off, he could remember his own sin. You see how it is in winter, when the leaves are off the hedges, you can see where the birds' nests were; when the leaves were on in summer time, you could not see those nests: and so in prosperous times men do not see the nests of their hearts and lives; but when their leaves are off, then their nests are seen. Suffering times are sin-discovering times.

As suffering times are sin-discovering times; so suffering times are self-bethinking times. You see many a man run on in the day of his prosperity, and never bethinks himself. When the prodigal was pinched, then he bethought himself; and Manasses in prison, then he bethought himself: and saith Solomon, praying for the people in adversity, "If then they shall bethink themselves." There is many a man that, I may say, doth owe his conversion to his affliction, and can say, If I had not been afflicted, I had never been converted. Suffering times, are self-bethinking times.

As suffering times are self-bethinking times: so suffering times are fruitful and growing times: "Every branch in me he pruneth, that it may bring forth more fruit." Suffering times, then are growing times.

As suffering times are growing times; so suffering times are truth-advancing times: in the time of prosperity we lose truth, in the time of adversity we find truth and bear our testimony for truth, then truth is advanced. It is a good observation that Marloret hath upon Dan. viii. to shew that truths were advanced by suffering; verse 11., it is said of the little horn, "He hath magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down: and an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground, and it prac-

tised, and prospered :” that is, saith he, not the horn, as it is ordinarily carried ; for it is in the feminine gender, which only can relate to the word truth, not to the horn ; he cast down the truth, and the truth practised and prevailed. So that suffering times are truth-advancing times.

As suffering times are truth-advancing times : so suffering times are uniting times : in times of prosperity, professors they wrangle, fall out, divide ; but when the shepherd’s dog comes, then the sheep run together. Suffering times are uniting times.

As suffering times are uniting times ; so suffering times are praying times ; he that will not pray, we say, let him go to sea, there he will be sick, and that will make him pray, that is the meaning ; “ In their affliction they will seek me early.” Suffering times are praying times.

As suffering times are praying times ; so suffering times are soul-assuring times : there is many a man or woman goes up and down many years doubting, and hath no assurance ; and when they grow sick, God doth send in his evidence for heaven by the hand of that sickness, and he hath assurance for heaven that never had it before : according to that in Hos. ii. 14., “ I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart.” “ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God ; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, because her iniquity is pardoned.” When ? In the day of her warfare : “ for her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned ; for she hath received double from the hand of the Lord.” Suffering times are soul-assuring times.

As suffering times are soul-assuring times ; so suffering times are weaning times : when this mustard is laid upon the breast of the world, then are we weaned. Suffering times are weaning times.

Suffering times are heavenly times and glorious times ; when the world is most bitter, heaven tastes most sweet and glorious ; for, saith the apostle, “ then shall the Spirit of God and of glory rest upon you.” When ? In suffering times, when the people of the Lord doth suffer, the Spirit of glory shall rest upon them. Suffering times are glorious times. And if all these things be true, then surely you will say with me, suffering times are gaining times. And if you would but think of this, and possess your heart with it, you would be

more willing and able to suffer. Christians, they boggle at sufferings and they startle at sufferings; what is the reason they do not know the gains of suffering. But is this true? That suffering times are gaining times; that suffering times are teaching times; that suffering times are sin-discovering times; that suffering times are self-bethinking times; that suffering times are growing times; that suffering times are truth-advancing times; that suffering times are uniting times; that suffering times are praying times; that suffering times are soul-assuring times; that suffering times are weaning times; that suffering times are glorious times? then surely suffering times are gaining times. And if thou wouldst strengthen thy faith, christian, so as thou mayest be able to endure hard things, think upon this much, and press it upon thy own soul, carry this away with thee, if no more; suffering times are gaining times; Oh my soul, suffering times are gaining times: and thus you shall be able to hold out and suffer. And thus I have done with the main doctrine. There are two or three observations that lie about the words; I will only give you them and so conclude.

You may consider here, what the persons were that suffered hard things. The text saith, they were such of whom the world was not worthy. Then greatness of sufferings and afflictions, are no sufficient reason why you should doubt of God's love, or of your own everlasting condition. Here were very hard things that these believers suffered, and yet they were such of whom the world was not worthy. Shall I then doubt of my condition, or question God's love, because my afflictions are great? I must not. But you will say, My afflictions are very strange, and none like mine; one cannot hear of such an affliction as mine is, not in an age. And I pray, in your age, have you heard of a man or woman sawn asunder? Thus were these, of whom the world was not worthy. But my afflictions are thick, they come very thick. And so did their's here. But my afflictions are filled with temptations; I am not only afflicted, but I am tempted, and temptations grow upon mine afflictions. So it was with these here, they were tempted; not only afflicted, but tempted; and yet such of whom the world was not worthy. But my afflictions are such as make me unserviceable. So, in the eye of reason, these afflictions made these believers; they

were whipped up and down like rogues. And I pray you tell me, who would ever have thought, in the eye of reason, that Paul's ministry should have done any great good, after he had been whipped up and down like a rogue? Yet Paul's ministry was blessed; and, though you think your afflictions make you unserviceable, if God call you to them, he will take care for your service. But my afflictions are such as find me all alone; I am afflicted and afflicted, a man or woman of affliction, and I have none to pity me. So it was here with some of these; they wandered in the wilderness, and they were in the caves and dens of the earth, and such of whom the world was not worthy. Possibly then, thy afflictions, man or woman, may be very great, and yet thou mayest be precious in the eyes of God, and such an one of whom the world is not worthy. And therefore now, if there be ever a man or woman here in all this congregation, that labours under any great burden; I say to that person, Question not thy condition, doubt not concerning God's love, because of the greatness of thy affliction; thy affliction may be very great, and yet thou mayest be a person of whom the world is not worthy in God's account. I will give you this parable, apply it yourself. Suppose you see a company of children playing together one while, and may be afterwards fighting; and then you see a man come and carry away one of these children, and he strikes him, but he lets the others alone, and he strikes them not; which of these children, will you say, this man is a father unto? Will ye not say, in all likelihood he is a father unto that child that he carries away and strikes. I leave you to apply it.

You may observe upon what account they suffer these hard and grievous things; upon the account, saith the text, of a better resurrection. Then what shall we say to those that would steal away from you the doctrine of the resurrection? It may be, men will not speak out here with you, but they have done it with us, and nibble at this doctrine. What shall we say to them? They are enemies to your faith, they are enemies to your great relief in suffering times, they are enemies to your good conscience; a good conscience is a great matter in suffering times. I remember a speech of a good minister, when he was silenced in the bishops' time, and had his living taken from him; Well, saith he, I praise

the Lord, though I have lost my living, I have saved my conscience, and this conscience is a great matter in suffering times. Now by their having an expectance of a better resurrection, they refused the present deliverance, and so kept their conscience. Do there therefore come in men among you, to steal away this great doctrine of our resurrection? Avoid them, avoid them, that they may be ashamed; hold close to this doctrine. As you desire, christians, to have comfort in a rainy day, and a bottom for your faith in suffering times, hold fast this doctrine of the resurrection, and this doctrine that you have been instructed in from the word.

And so to end, ye may observe here, by what means they suffered these hard things, and that is, as you have heard, by faith. Surely then, it is no easy thing to believe, with this true, saving faith; a hard thing to believe. This true, saving faith, can do great things, and can suffer hard things. True, saving faith, will make it easy to do great things, and easy to suffer hard things; but it is hard to get this true, saving faith. You will say, If a man were in the sun, he might go round the world in a day; but it is hard to get into the sun. So this true, saving faith, will make a man to do great things, and to suffer hard things; but it is a hard thing to get it, and few there be that have it. We read of Elias, that when the Lord had given him a power to shut heaven, that it rained not for three years and a half, he went away and hid himself; they could find him before: ordinary men might be found; but Elias that did this great work, could not be found. So an ordinary faith may be found out; but this true, saving faith, that doth great things, and suffers hard things, is hardly to be found. There is a common faith that grows every where. As it is in your flowers and plants; ye have your field thyme, and your garden thyme; ye have your field rose, and your garden rose; your field rose grows every where, but your garden rose grows not every where. You have pebble stones every where, but diamonds are not to be found every where. So there is a pebble faith, and a field faith, an ordinary faith, and this you may have every where. But this diamond, this garden faith, to suffer hard things, it is hard to be found; few there be that have it, and therefore few can do great things for God, or suffer hard things from

men. Wherefore, beloved in the Lord, give me leave to end with this exhortation, to beseech you in Christ Jesus to get this faith; above all getting, get this faith; you that have not this true, saving faith, get it. Some there be here, it may be, that have faith good enough to swear by, but not faith good enough to live by; true, saving faith, a believer can live by, but he cannot swear by it. A true believer is very sensible of his unbelief: saith he, There was never a more unbelieving heart than mine; I think there is not a man or woman in the world, is troubled with such an unbelieving heart as I. True, saving faith, is sensible of unbelief; and therefore you that have not this true, saving faith, labour to get it; above all, get it. Get this true, saving faith; and you that have this true, saving faith, improve it, use it, do great things for God, and suffer hard things from man. Yea, certainly, if you have this true, saving faith, you will be able to do great things for God, and to suffer very hard things from man: for that is the doctrine at this time, True, saving faith, can and will suffer very hard things.