John 8. v. 36.

If the Sonne therefor shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

In this Chapter we have Christ continuing of his contest with the wrangling peevish Jews, in answering all that they said, notwithstanding they snarled at every word almost that past. But however it was with the multitude, yet there were some that were taken with what he said: for in ver. 30. it is said, As he spake these words many believed on him, at least there were some beginnings of faith, or some preparations to it. And Christ tells them ver. 31. That if they continued in his word, then they were his disciples indeed: as if he should say, it is not enough that you are stirred for the present and profess you believe in me: I will not take you for my disciples, unless you continue in my word: how often do the flashes that are upon the hearts and consciences of men vanish and come to nothing? they continue not in the word of Christ, and therefore are not his disciples. Christ tells them further, that they must understand more concerning their condition than yet they apprehended. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. v. 32. as if he should say, though you have some confused apprehensions of things for the present, yet it is but very little you know of your condition: but if you will go on in the way that God is beginning with you, in stirring your consciences; if you will continue, you shall come to know more then yet you know, Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free; and then in ver: 33. say they, we are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; bow sayst thou, ye shall be made free. See here, they begin to snarl again.
againe. Master Calvin, I remember, thinks that these are the words rather of some other of the Jews that were present, then of those that are said before to believe: but others think it may be understood even of those that are said to believe; for though they did begin to assent to the doctrine of Christ, and were very much convinced, yet there was still abundance of frowardness, perverseness and crookedness in their spirits: so that they begin again to wrangle with Christ, especially when he doth but intimate to them any thing of their bondage. It is a usual thing for many people, that have some stirrings of conscience, and some beginnings of the working of God's spirit in them, and it may be saving ones too, yet to continue a long time in much frowardness and perverseness of spirit, if they be opposed in their way. Therefore, say they, doe you speak to us of bondage, and tell us of freedom? why, We were never in bondage to any. ver. 33. What never in bondage to any? were not the Jews in bondage to the Babylonians, when in captivity to them? and were they not at this very time in bondage to the Romans? and yet we were never in bondage: thus carnall hearts, till grace fully subdue them, are very loth to know their wretched condition; they love not to heare of any thing that discovereth to them the misery that they are in: they were never in bondage, they say, but yet Christ pittyeth them: he did not take advantage to fling away presently, because he saw them continue still in their perverseness, and snarling at what he spake, but tells them, what bondage he meant. As he should say, the truth is, though you think your selves free, yet there is a bondage that you are in, and such a bondage that none can deliver you, but the Son of God alone. If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. Thus we come to the words of the Text.

These words, you see, then, hold forth unto us the blessed liberty of the Gospel; that freedom that believers have by Christ.

I come then presently to the maine doctrinal conclusion, which is this:

There is a blessed liberty, that Christians enjoy by Christ, and only by him. This doctrine of Christian liberty that is enjoyed by
Christ, is a Treasury of abundance of admirable consolation, and much of the mystery of the Gospel is contained in this doctrine. I should enlarge my discourse too farre, and seek to gripe too much, should I think to give you but a view of this doctrine in all the points of it. If we should intend to handle it at large, I should shew to you. 1. What that is that Christ doth set believers free from. 2. The privileges of this freedome they have by Christ. 3. The Subject of it: who it is that hath this freedome. 4. By whom it comes: how it is by the Son, and onely by him. 5. The price and purchase of this freedome. 6. The interest that believers have in this freedome: how they come to be enfranchised and to have interest in it. And 7. the application of it. But should I goe this way to work, it is but little I should be able to doe: therefore I will not grabe so much. I intend therefore to handle but one speciall thing in this our freedome by Christ.

If I should shew to you, first of all what we are freed from; then there is the freedome from the law, the freedome from the power of sinne, the freedome from the bondage of feare, the freedome from an accusing conscience, the freedome from slavishnesse in the performance of holy duties; we are set at liberty in holy duties; the freedome from death, and the evill of that; the freedome from the slavery of the devill, and the freedome from the ceremonial law; but neither must we seek to gripe all these particulars: to shew you our freedome in these, I shall onely pitch upon one, and that is our freedome from the law. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The doctrine of freedome from the law, is the subject that we are to handle at this time: and when I speak of freedome from the law, I meane, not freedome from obedience to the law: tis an errourous conceit, to think we are freed from obedience to the law: and it is a conceit too meane and absurd for us to spend time about it now, that have so little, and having to deal in a matter of so great consequence as we have; for what is the law, but the image of God, the very blame of
the wisdome and holinesse of God himself, if you look at it, as requiring obedience; and for any to say, we should be freed from obedience to the law, is as much as to say, we should be freed from the image of God, from the beame of the wisdome and holinesse of God himself, therefore we will spend no time about that, but when I speak of freedome from the law, I mean freedome from the rigour of the law, from the condemning sentence of the law, in which all the rigour of it appeares.

Wherefore then it is necessary, first to give you a view of the bondage that we are all in, under the law, unless delivered by Christ.

And then Secondly, I shall endeavour to open to you, wherein the liberty of the Gospel doth consist, that Christ hath purchased for us. These two things (brethren) have in them the chief doctrine of divinity, and except you be well instructed and settled in these two, you cannot know aright any point of religion.

For the first: I will be but briefe in that, though there be many particulars in it, for it is the second I chiefly intend. And for a preparation to this first, this I shall tell you before hand, that I shall name many things unto you that will seem exceeding hard; but yet take this consideration along, that although the things I name to you appeare never so hard, yet they are but in order to that which I shall afterward deliver to you, that shall have much comfort and peace in it. If I tell you any thing of your bondage, it is onely to this end, that you may know the blessednesse of your freedome and liberty.

Wherefore then, for the rigour of the law (that you may know what you are freed from) you must know what this is, and what you are all under by nature as considered out of Christ, for so the holy Ghost expresseth our subjection to the law, he saith, we are under it. Rom.6.14. Now ye are not under the law: there was a time when they were under the law; first, then the rigour of the law is in this, it requires hard things of those that are under it. I shall shew you afterward, how the things are not so to those that are set free by Christ: but to.
those that are under the law it is a hard yoke, it requires hard things, things that are croffe and contrary to the hearts and dispositions of all that are under it; things between which and their hearts there is an enmity and antipathy. Now to require such things as one hath no minde to, but are quite contrary to ones nature, and that ones nature hath an antipathy against; this is very tedious; and yet such are all the duties of the law, to those that are in bondage to it.

Secondly, the law requires not onely hard, but impossible things, impossible to be performed by those that are under it, the law it is a yoke that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear Acts 15:10. But that you will say is meant of the ceremoniall law. I, but there is more in it then so, for do but consider the occasion of that speech, it was upon this ground, there were some that came from the Church of Jerusalem to the Church of Antioch, and they troubled the disciples there with two doctrines, the doctrine of the necessity of the ceremoniall law, and the doctrine of being justified by the law; now this Church of Antioch sends to the Church of Jerusalem, to be satisfied about both these questions, and that which is spoken is spoken concerning them both, not onely the ceremonial law was that whereby they lookt for justification, but the morrall law too, and both were a yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear; and the rather it must be meant of both, because in the very next words we finde it opposed to the grace of Christ, in veri. 11. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they. As if he should say, you must not think to be saved by the law, but by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is opposed to our justification, by obedience to the morrall law, as well as to the ceremonial: so that the morrall law is a yoke that neither we nor our fathers were able to beare. It requires of us such things as are impossible to be done by those that are under it. We must not dispute now how this can be, or the justice of it; that will fall in afterward.

And then thirdly, the law exacts all of us under the condition of perfection: the law accepts of nothing but that which
is compleat and absolutely perfect every way, both in regard of the principle from whence, and the manner how, and the rule by which, and end to which, it requires absolute perfection.

Fourthly, the law accepts of no surety, it must have it done in our own persons: like a severe creditor that will be paid to the utmost farthing, and by our selves. I say the law, in itself considered, lookes for a perfect righteousness of our own persons, or else it condemnes us, this is the righteousness of the law, That he that doth the things therein contained, shall live by them. Rom. 10: 5. He that doth: there must be doing, and that by himself personally, or not at all.

But it may be, though there be much required, yet upon some endeavours there may be some remission.

In the first place therefore, such is the rigour and severity of the law, that let us endeavour never so much to obey it, yet all our endeavours are rejected, if they come not up to perfect obedience: Tis a vain pleasure of many people to say, they doe what they can, and desire well, and endeavour well; It is true, this is somewhat to those that are children, and have freedome by Christ (as you shall heare by and by,) but to those that are under the law, endeavours to obey, though never so strong, if the work be not done, are not accepted by God.

Sixthly, the law requires constancy in all these: Suppose we could obey the law, or goe on very farre in many things, yet such are the termes between God and us, as we are under the law, that if we were able to obey the law in every thing as long as we live, till the very last moment, and should offend but in any one particular at the last moment, were it not for this freedome we have by this Son, we were utterly undone for ever; you may see by the way still as you goe of what infinite concernment our freedome by Christ is. You must look to yourselves how you get deliverance by Christ, for certainly this is your condition as long as you are under the law.

Seventhly, the law exacts the obedience it requires exceeding rigorously, in a way of violence upon all that are under
der it, it comes roughly upon them as Pharaoh's task-masters; it requires the work, and looks not at strength, strength or no strength, the work is required, and required with exceeding rigour, with dreadful threatening if it be not performed: therefore it is, the law was delivered in so dreadful a manner with thundering, and lightning, and earthquakes, and fire, so that it made even Moses himself to shake and tremble at the manner of delivering it, and in Deut. 33.2. it is called a fiery law, it came with mighty rigour: that is the seaventh.

Eighthly, there is this rigour in the law too, that upon any breach of it in the least thing, it doth by the severity of it break the soul, so that it doth utterly disenable it for ever performing any obedience to it again: there is such hardnesse in the covenant of the Law, the Law is like an Iron or Brazen wall, that upon any breach of it, the soul is but as an earthen vessel, that dasheth against it, and is broken in pieces; so that there must be a creating power to make it whole again: consider I beseech you, I say, this is the condition of the Covenant of works, which was made with us in Adam, which is now the covenant of the Law, that upon any one breach, by the severity of it, it breaks the soul, so that it doth utterly disenable it, for keeping it again: it roots out all the principles whereby the soul should be enabled to obey again: sinnes against the Gospel do not do so, as you shall hear hereafter. And this is the very ground, why upon the first sinne of Adam, we were all gone, and so were the Angels upon their sinne, because they had to deal with God onely in a covenant of works. But if upon the breach of the Law, we come to have all principles rooted out by which we should keep it, afterward, it will (we hope) pitty us, and not exact obedience from us.

Therefore in the ninth place, notwithstanding this, the Law goes on in its curse, and requires as perfect obedience, and that upon pain of eternall death, to every thing of it, as if we had all principles that might enable us to keep it. Still: this is the severity of the Law, it doth not remit at all of the threatening, or punishment, or exactnesse of obedience, notwithstanding this.
standing we have lost all power to obey it.

Yea further in the tenth place, it requires this of us, and gives us no strength at all, to do what it requires; it finds us divested of those principles that once we had to yield obedience, and it affords us no new principles; therefore some have compared the severity of it to Pharaoh's Task-masters; it requires the tale of brick, but gives no strength at all.

Yet further in the eleventh place. In all it doth, it strikes at our life; the Law is satisfied with no affliction; let it be transgressed in the least degree, all the afflictions that can possibly be in this world, will not satisfy it; such is the severity of it (I say); that it strikes at life, and at eternal life, it follows to pursue us to our blood, to temporal and eternal death, and here I might open the condemning sentence of the Law, but that would require a subject by itself, therefore I only name what is in this head, that it strikes at our lives, upon every transgression of it.

Again twelfthly, the severity of it is in this, that upon any breach it doth presently bind over the soul (though it do not execute it presently) by the strongest bonds that possible can be, to everlasting death; it suspends execution, but the bond is immediately sealed upon the breach of it; so that all men, upon every breach of it, have chains clapt upon their souls, which is the guilt of sin, whereby they stand bound to eternal death, by such bonds as all created power in heaven and earth is not able to loose.

Thirteenthly, in the next place, such is the severity of the law, that when it is once offended, it will never be made amends again by any thing we are able to do. Suppose we have offended the Law in some one thing, and that but once; if after this, we should endeavour what we can for our lives, and striving our heart bloods to obey the Law, and think to make up the breach we have made, yet we can never make it amends again. It is true, some, though they be offended, yet by double diligence may be pleased again: but we must never think to do so with God; being under the law, when we have once broken it, we cannot with all our care and diligence be able to make it amends, and that is a great part of the severity of the Law.
I, but what have we to doe, but to mourn and cry, and rent our hearts because of this distressed condition we are in.

Fourteenthly, Nay the Law accepts of no repentance; it will not discharge the guilt of any one sin, for all the sorrow in the world. And here lieth a great mistake of people, when they have offended, they think they will be careful to make amends; and they will mourn and repent, &c. It is true, if you be under the covenant of grace, this is something; but if you be in your natural condition, should you weep your hearts out, and send streams of blood from your eyes, in mourning but for any one sin; suppose that which thou countest a little matter, a sin in thought, shouldest thou resolve to cry out and mourn for that one sin all thy life, it will not be accepted, unless thou commit under the blessed liberty purchased by Christ: therefore know the difference of being under the Law and under the Gospel.

Fifteenthly, Yet further, such is the rigour of the Law, that when it hath opened our wounds and miseries, it goes no further; it shews us no means of deliverance: like a Surgeon, that opens the wound, but applies no remedy. Certainly were it not for a Mediator, we should finde the Law onely to open our wound, and there leave us.

Sixteenthly, but yet again, such is our bondage to the Law, that instead of mortifying any of our sins, it rather stirs them up, and makes them more: it threateneth indeed grievous things against the transgressors of it, but it doth not mortifie any sin; it doth stir up lust, (though accidentally) and makes our sin out of measure sinfull.

Seventeenthly, Yea there is one thing more, after all this: If we should keepe the Law, yet the promises of it are but mean and low in comparison of the promises of the Gospel. I doe not say they are but temporall, though before the Gospell was revealed, there was but little of Spirituall promises, yet we know what the Apostle saies, 2 Tim. 1.10. That life and immortality is brought to light through the Gospel. And though I do not say, there are none, yet there are very few Scriptures of the old Testament that speak of eternall life.

Thus
Thus you see your bondage under the Law, and surely you will now think it a blessed condition, to be freed from the Law. And 'tis one Argument that a soule is delivered from the bondage of the Law, when it can heare all this, and yield to God's justice in it, and can have the heart raised to God in the hearing of it. But if the soule at the hearing of these things, think them so hard and unreasonable, that it is ready to rise at them, it is a signe that the spirit is not acquainted with them; and although these things may seem hard unto us, yet if we consider but three or foure particulars, they will not appear so hard.

First, doe but consider, you have to deale with a God of infinite justice and worth; indeed did we look upon God, as we look upon a creature like our selves, we should think it mighty hard: but now, when we have to deale with a God of infinite worth, we should not think it hard.

Secondly, we shall not think it hard, if we consider that state of perfection wherein God made man at first: however it is with us now, yet God did at first give us a stock to trade in the way of obedience, and to enable us to doe what the law required.

And then Thirdly, if you did but understand aright what sin is, then you would not think it hard, that upon that sin, we should be given up to such a woful condition we speak of: if you look upon sin as that which strikes at an infinite deity, at the very being of God himself, as much as in us lyeth, then you will not wonder that one sin should bring us into such a hard condition.

Fourthly, if we consider those things that we all take for granted that yet are as hard as these, and doe but lay them with them, and they will not seem so hard. As that God for one thought, should cast the Angels into eternal torments; and not so much as parly with them about any terms of peace: and that God for one sin in Adam, should condemne all mankind, you all grant this in the general; yea further, that God the Father should deal so with his own Son, the Son of his love, as to make him a curse for man; and should lay the weight
weight of his wrath upon him, so as to make him sweat drops of blood, and to cry out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? if you had never heard of such a thing, this would seem as hard as any thing we have spoken of.

Now before we come to speak of the other, let that which hath been said teach us, that surely then, all men in their natural condition are in a hard case: as the Israelites when the bondage they were in under Pharaoh encreased upon them, the Text sayes, they saw themselves in an evil case. O that upon the hearing of these things, you would learne to see what you are out of Christ: that you would see your selves in an evil case, in a sad and dangerous condition.

Secondly, if this be the case that every soul naturally is under such a bondage to the law: then the saving of a soul is a great and a mighty work; yea such a work, that God must make heaven and earth to move to save a soul; and to deliver it from the bondage of sin: the reason why people doe so slight this great work of salvation and mediation by Christ is, because they know not their bondage. Understand but this bondage aright, what it is to be under the law (I have not told you all this while of the condemnation of the law or the curse of the law: I have onely set out to you the bondage of the rigour of the law) and by this you will see it is a great work to save a soul.

Thirdly, you may see by this, how that vaine plea of carnal hearts comes to nothing: what will you trust now to your good meanings, good desires, and good intentions? and you will mourne and grieve, because you are no better; and you will doe what you can for God: tis true, these are good things but are these the things you rest in for standing before God? if they be, certainly you know not the termes you stand in to God, nor what your bondage is.

Fourthly, if God reveales himself to a man only by the law, it is impossible but the soul of that man must flye off from him, and look upon God and his law as enemies to him, unless it were revealed together with the Gospel. Which is that I am now to tell you of, even that liberty we have by the Gospel.
Therefore then for the liberty of the Gospel, it is a precious liberty, wherein the treasury of the mystery of grace is laid up: it is the only ground of support to our souls; and Saint Paul that was the great instrument of God in opening the doctrine of the liberty of the Gospel, sets it down in all his Epistles; and in many places elegantly: and in one Text wherein is some difficulty, In Gal. 4, from verse 21, and so forward, Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not heare the law? for it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free woman: but he who was of the bond-woman, was borne after the flesh, but he of the free-woman, was by promise: which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants, the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage which is Agar; for this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children: but Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all: for it is written, rejoice thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry thou that travell'st not: for the desolate hath many more children, then she which hath an husband. The Text seemes at the reading of it, to be somewhat obscure; and yet doth most excellently set out this doctrine I am now upon, of bondage under the law, and liberty under the Gospel: the allegory, you see, is from the two sons, Abraham had one Son by a bond-maid, another by a free woman; It is an allegory, fayes the Apostle, and it signifies the two covenants; the covenant of workes, and the covenant of grace: the covenant of workes, that was from mount Sinai; there was the law revealed, which is Agar; for this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia. I remember Luther fayes, that Agar in the Arabian tongue is as much as mount Sinai, they call it so in the Arabian tongue: and so the Apostle alludes to it; therefore the law that is of Agar, that tends onely to bondage. Agars posterity were Gentiles, and in bondage, and were not to have the priviledge of the Sons of the free woman: therefore all those that have to deal with God in the covenant of workes, are bond-men; and are not to have the priviledge of the children of the free woman, of the children of God. Well, This-Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth
The Saints Treasury.

 recht to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children, he sets out the estate of the Church of the Jewes, the Jerusalem that now is, to be an estate of bondage, in comparison of the Church of the Gospel; because they had so little knowledge of the Gospel, but were in bondage unto the law, and knew little else but the law. But Jerusalem which is above, that is the state of the Church under the new Testament, is above, in regard of the Gospel, which is free, and is the mother of us all: the Church of God under the Gospel is the Jerusalem which is above; but now it is written, rejoice thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. That is, those that acknowledge the doctrine of the liberty of the Gospel, at first are but as desolate, as the barren woman, before it be revealed; as Sarah was barren for a while, but afterward she had a child: so the doctrine of the liberty of the Gospel, is but as a barren thing for a while, till people are acquainted with it; and we that are Ministers of the Gospel, it is our work to beget children to Christ. If we should be legal and preach only the law, we should beget children to bondage, to Agar, but this is our chief work, to beget children to the free woman; to beget children to the free grace of God in Christ. And O that I could beget one childe to this free woman! I cannot think, but that there may be many here that are children of Agar, that it may be have had terrors, and feares in their consciences; and yet are but children of the bond-woman still: Now it is the Gospel that proclaims the Trumpet of Jubile to those that are under bondage; therefore it is observable what time the Trumpet of the Jubile was to be blown, Levit. 29.9. Then shalt thou cause the Trumpet of the Jubile to sound, on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the Trumpet sound throughout all your land. What was this day of atonement? it was the day of the publick humiliation of all the people for their sins: the day of fasting and prayer appointed by God to afflict their souls, is called a day of atonement, and the Trumpet to proclaims the Jubile must be blown upon that very
The Saints Treasury.

day, wherein the people had been afflicting their souls for their sins: therefore now, if there be any soul that hath been humbled before the Lord and hath been afflicted for sin; behold, this is the work that is now to be done, to blow the Trumpet of Jubile to such a soul, and to proclaim liberty in the name of Christ unto you, and as the Psalmist says, Psalm 89. 15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. It is translated by some, they are blessed that know the joyful sound of the Jubile. Now this Jubile having reference to our Jubile by Christ, blessed are they that hear this joyful sound that we have here in the Gospel.

Now the first thing of this joyful sound of the Jubile, and liberty we have proclaimed by Christ from the law, is this, thou shalt not be cast for thy eternal estate by the law; the law may terrify thee, but it shall not cast thee; indeed it must cast the children that are in bondage to it, for their eternal estate; but if thou beest a believer in Christ, if thou art a child of the free woman, this is thy liberty. I say, thou shalt not be cast for thy eternal estate by the law; we do not love to have any business of great concernment to be cast by those that are rigid and severe, be of good comfort, O believer, thou hast heard of much severity in the law: but the great business concerning thy soul and eternal estate, is above the law; it hath nothing to do with thee; thou hearest many times dreadful threats of the law, and these threats it may be do often terrify thee, and thou art ready to say, who can stand before this holy God? but peace be to thee, thou believing soul, for thou art set at liberty from the law by Christ; and this is the first joyful sound.

The second joyful sound of liberty thou hast by the Gospel, is this, thy law-giver is no other then he that is thine husband, thou hast to deal with no other now, in the matters of thy soul but with him that is thy husband, and thy advocate by whom all is ruled, John 1. 2. 1. If we sin, we have an advocate with the Father: an advocate, that is, thou hast to deal now with Christ thy law-giver, who upon every transgression presently is thy advocate with the Father, who stands up to plead for thee.
The Saints Treasury.

Theee, and to answer all accusations against thee; I say, he that undertakes for thee, and engageth all the interest he hath in his Father, for thee, thou hast to deal with him, for thy law-giver, about thy soul and eternal estate; and this is the second joyful sound thou hast of the Trumpet of the Jubile of the Gospel, of the liberty thou hast by Christ.

Thirdly, being delivered from the bondage of the law, this is now thy liberty, that thou art made a law to thyself. I meaneth thus: there is nothing now required of thee but it is written in thy own heart: God writeth his law in the tables of stone: and all that is required of thee in obedience to it, is written in thy heart: so that thou dost not now so much yield obedience to the law, because of the condemning power of it, and punishment due unto it, as from a principle of love to it: For we must know, that we are not set free by Christ from obedience to the law, we are bound to obey the law still; but here is the difference, we are not servile to the law, we keep it freely: thou keepest the law now, by being a law to thyself, and having all that God requires of thee in his law written in thy heart, by the law of sanctity that he hath given thee; that is the third joyful sound.

The fourth joyful sound, is this; by the liberty thou hast now by Christ, this is thy condition, that whatever thou doest, though there be never so many imperfections in it, yet if God can spy out but the least good thing in thee, he will take notice of that, and cast away all the evil: if God sees but any thing of his own spirit in thee, he will be sure to take notice of that. If there be but one dast of Gold, though it be mixt with abundance of dross, God will not loose it, but will finde it out: God he is not strict to mark what is done amisse by his children, but he is strict to marke what is done well by them. Indeed the law tells us, nay a moral man will tell us, that to make an action good, all circumstances must concurre: but the liberty of the Gospel tells us, that where there is any good, any grace in an action, God observes and takes notice.
notice of it. To give but one instance for this, and it is
an excellent one for this purpose, Peter 1. 3. 6. the Apostle
propounds Sarah as a pattern for good women, Even as
Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord. She never calls him
Lord; but then when she did it unbelievingly, and yet
God takes notice of that word, and never mentions her
unbelief. Now Sarah was a free woman, and this is the graci-
ous dealing of God with the free woman; and if thou beest
a child of the free woman, this is thy privilege, that God will
take notice of every good action thou dost. Isa. 42. 3. A bruised
reed shall he not break, and the smaaking flax shall he not quench.
The word signifies as soon as ever the flax begins to be black,
God will not reject it: so that if there be but the least degree
of good, it is accepted. And that is the fourth joyful found by
the Gospel.

The fifth joyful found, is this, suppose thou canst not doe
any thing, yet if there be but a will, a desire in thee, God ac-
cepts that will for the deed. Many carnal hearts please them-
selves with this, but this is the case of those that are set at li-
berty by Christ: perhaps thou canst not pray; I but present
thy self before God, as the Apostle speakes, and that shall be
accepted of God; and know if there be any excuse to be made
for thee, Christ will finde it out, and make it before God for
thee; that is the fifth joyful found.

The sixth thing wherein the liberty we have by Christ con-
stitutes is, that though the Gospel call for obedience, yet it doth
it in such a sweet and loving way that it would make any
heart in the world in love with it, it draws by the cords of
love. 2 Cor. 5. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as
though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ stead, be ye
reconciled to God; and Philip. 2. 1. If there be therefore any conso-
lation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit,
if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, &c. The Gospel comes
not as the law upon mount Sinai, with thunder and lightning,
and darkness, but it comes in a milde and gentle way, and
by that allures and draws the soul unto itself; and that is the
sixth joyful found.
The seventh joyful sound of the Gospel is, that the Gospel and liberty of it comes, as gently, so with abundance of life and strength, together with it: it comes as the spirit is, and where the spirit is, there is power, as the Apostle speaks, I remember Luther hath this note upon Rom. 8. sayes he, the law is a spiritual law, because it is the law of God; but it is not the law of the spirit of life: tis the law of the Gospel that brings the spirit of power and life along with it; there goes a virtue together with the commands of the Gospel to strengthen the soul to obedience: And the Gospel gives grace and strength beyond what Adam had, two ways: the grace that Adam had was onely a power to doe, but there was not the will and the deed given: but the grace of the Gospel, it gives both the power, and the will, and the deed.

The eighth joyful sound of the Gospel, is that tender pity and compassion that is in God to those that are made free by it. This is the difference between the sins of those that are under the law, and those under the Gospel: the sins of those under the law makes them hated by God: but the sins of those that are under the Gospel, makes them pitied by God.

The ninth joyful sound is this: the Gospel hath a mighty efficacy to melt the heart, and to resolve it into sorrow and mourning, & such mourning, that is one of the most acceptable things to God in the world; the law, I told you, accepts not of repentance: I, but the Gospel doth; the tears of repentance that come from believers, next to the blood of Jesus Christ, are the most precious things in the world. I say, next to the drops of the blood of Christ, the tears of thy tears, coming from Evangelical repentance, are most acceptable unto God: That is the ninth joyful sound.

Tenthly, another is this; the Gospel it comes with healing: as it hath a melting power, so it hath a healing power. Christ is described to come with healing in his wings: water makes the lime burne the more, but oyle which provokes other things to burn quenches that: so it is with the oyle of the
the Gospel, Christ was appointed for this purpose, to heal thee, and to quench thy lust and corruptions. In Isai. 57.18. we have an excellent promise, vers. 17. He went on forwardly in the way of his heart, mark what follows, I have seen his ways, and I will heal him.

The eleventh joyful sound is, that now being set at liberty by Christ, though thou dost sin not only against the law, but against the Gospel, thy sins against the Gospel shall not have power to root out any habits of grace; but still the grace of the Gospel will uphold the habits of grace in thy soul. It is otherwise with the law, for one offence against the law doth not only root out the habit that is contrary to that offence, but all other habits also: but the grace of the Gospel is such that the habits of grace within us are not touched.

The twelfth joyful sound is this: the Gospel is so full of grace that it takes advantage of our misery; this is a good argument of the tenour of the Gospel, Pardon my sin O Lord, for it is great; strange argument of a childe of the bondwoman; but a good argument of a childe of the free-woman; and tis Gods argument, Gen.8.21. I will not destroy the world againe, for the imagination of mans heart is evil from his youth.

Thirteenthly, Another joyful sound of the Gospel is this the Gospel proclaims this liberty to us, that all that is required of us may be done, and accepted, by and from another, namely Christ.

Fourteenthly, Further the grace of the Gospel shewes a way wherein God shall have all the wrong made him, that ever thy sins did him: for suppose the Gospel had proclaimed that God were willing to pardon, this were not enough, as long as God stood wronged: but now the Gospel doth not only proclaime to thee, that God is content to forgive thee all thy sins, but it tells thee of a way how God shall have all the wrong made up that ever thou hast done him: and this Son that sets thee at liberty hath undertaken it, and hath done it.
The Saints Treasury.

Fifteenthly, And then another joyful sound of the Gospel is this, That there is a most absolute perfect righteousness made over to us; the righteousness of the Son of God is thine, made over to thee, to be presented before the Father for thee.

Sixteenthly, yet further: there is this joyful sound of the Gospel: It proclaims admirable promises, glorious and high things; even the infinite Treasures of God's grace: the Son is come from the bosom of the Father, and hath opened the treasures of the grace of God, and hath discovered those things that were kept secret from the foundations of the world.

Seventeenthly, And yet there is one thing more, that is necessary for the full consolation of the liberty of the Gospel, and this blessed Jubilee, that it may make a Jubilee indeed in thy heart; and that is this: that such is the covenant of the Gospel, and Christ hath so undertaken for thee, that it shall never be forfeited: this is the full, rich, and glorious grace of the Gospel, that now Christ hath undertaken, and engaged himself to the Father; and the Father hath promised, and hath engaged his own truth, and mercy, and faithfulness, that this covenant shall never be forfeited: yea the very condition of the covenant that is required of thee, is that which Christ hath undertaken to the Father to perform in thee. If perseverance be a spiritual blessing, it is part of the purchase of Christ; and must stand: and therefore peace be to thee, thou art in such a condition as thou canst not forfeit and breake the covenant: the marriage covenant between thee and thy Saviour can never be dissolved.

I should now have shewn you a little more the blessedness of this liberty, that all this grace comes in and by the Son; not from the bounty of God in general, but in a higher way, by the Son of God we come to be set at liberty, by being made one with

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him who is God and man, the heire of all things, and so are made co-heires with him. But I must here breake off.

This Sermon was preacht April 21. 1641.

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