

OF LIVING BY FAITH.

Now the just shall live by faith.—HEB. X. 38.

THESE words are used four times, Hab. ii. 4, Rom. i. 17, Gal. iii. 11, and here. In the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, they respect justification, Paul making use of them to prove that we are justified by faith. In Hab. ii. 4, and the text, they respect our conversation, and hold forth what should secure and support a righteous man in all dangers and necessities. It is plain in the prophet; for having, in chap. i., foretold the calamities which the Chaldeans should bring upon the Jews, in this verse he propounds faith as the security of just men in those miseries; he shall live by this, when others die by the sword; this shall keep him alive, hold his head above water, when that inundation of wrath shall break in upon Judea. And the apostle borrowing these words of Habakkuk (save that he follows the Seventy, and not the Hebrew text in the latter part), holds out this as the security of the Hebrews, 'in the midst of all trials, temptations, and persecutions, while they are in this world, till the Lord, who has promised to come, do come, and give them the end of their faith; he exhorts and encourages them to perseverance and constancy from verse 26, and propounds patience as a means necessary to this end, verse 36. And that they may be patient, tells them the exercise of it will not be tedious, nor fruitless, verse 37. The Lord will come suddenly, and reward their patience with a triumph in glory. And in the mean time they are well provided for, they have that which will keep them alive, will secure them in all necessities, against all dangers. 'The just shall live by faith.'

Obs. It is the privilege, or the duty, of the just to live by faith.

In the prosecution of it I shall observe this method: What? How? When?

I. What is it to live by faith?

Ans. This living by faith is not a single and transient act, but something habitual and permanent. And therefore its nature, as of other habits, will best appear in its acts and objects.

1. The acts of faith. The Scripture holds them forth under the notion of dependence and recumbency. And we may thus describe it: living by faith is constant dependence on God, as one without whom we cannot live. Three things concur to its constitution.

(1.) A sense and acknowledgment that we cannot live without God. This is presupposed. Our life depends on him; and it is our life to depend, life in its latitude; life and all that pertains to it; life and livelihood; life of body and soul; in its being and well-being; in its being and actings, and all that maintain it in both. God is that to the soul, which the soul is to the body, enlivens it and acts it; so Christ quickens and acts the soul. The body cannot live, or move, or act, or grow, it cannot hear, or see, or smell, or touch, without the soul. No more the soul without Christ. Christ is the life of the soul, and faith is the bond, the *copula* which unites the soul to Christ. And so by means of faith we live, faith uniting us with the principle of life. Both these are remarkably holden forth, Gal. ii. 20, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I live is by faith in the Son of God.' Even as we may say, the body lives; yet not the body, but the soul lives in it; and the life that it lives, is by means of its union with the soul. So in a spiritual sense, the soul lives; yet not the soul, but Christ lives in it; and the life that it lives, is by faith in Christ uniting Christ to it.

(2.) There is a relying on God for all these, for continuance of what we have, and supply of what we want; rolling ourselves, and the burden of our affairs, on God. This is the formal act of faith. And because it is above us, and few are acquainted with it, I will draw it down to your capacities, and offer it to your senses in a simile or two, which the words, whereby the Hebrews express it, afford us. The first is שָׁעוּ, to lean, to stay upon, to rely. It is used 2 Sam. i. 6, where it is said of Saul, 'he leaned upon his spear,' שָׁעוּ עַל-דֶּלְיָו, the same word: Prov. iii. 5, 'Lean not to thine own understanding,' i. e., as some render it, 'trust not.' For these are used as synonymes: Isa. l., 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God;' שָׁעוּ and בָּטְחוּ are of the same force. For to trust God, is to stay ourselves on him. Even as one standing upon a high precipice, and perceiving himself ready to fall, takes hold of some bough, and stays himself by it, and hangs there, he is said to live by staying himself there, because it saves him from death, so we live by faith, because by this we stay ourselves on God, and so escape falling into hell, sin, and eternal death, though we stand continually on a precipice. We live by faith, because, were it not for faith, we should die; but for this stay, Satan would push us into hell, and our hearts into a gulf of sin, wherein we might sink and perish; but that faith, laying hold on Christ, leaning upon him, is held above water, and so lives by faith, as a drowning man lives by means of that which stays him from sinking.

The other word for faith is אָמֵן which comes from אָמַן to nourish, and thence אֵמָה, a nurse. This affords another simile, which clears that other act, whereby we rely on God for all we want. As the infant depends and hangs upon the breast of the nurse, and so by depending and sucking is said to live, so we do live by such an act of faith. The Lord draws out and offers to our faith his promises, providences, ordinances, as so many breasts, on which faith hangs, and sucks out of them life, comfort, nourishment. As infants live by sucking, so the just live by believing, by faith.

(3.) Constancy, frequency. It is a continued thing; a life of faith, not one act of believing; a whole life of acts. Since we always stand upon the brink of sin and death, and have no security from falling, but God's maintaining, and our apprehending of him, we should continually

depend and hang upon God, never let go our hold ; for then we fall without recovery. If we live by faith, when we neglect faith, we die. Our whole life should be a continued act of dependence on God—when we eat, or drink, or sleep, or work, or pray, &c. ; apply ourselves as often to God by faith, as the infant to the breast, without which it cannot live. We should exercise faith more frequently than we use bread ; for we live more by it than by bread. ‘ Man lives not by bread, but by every word,’ &c. If we believe, God can command other things to nourish in the want of bread. This for the act, the objects follow.

2. The object of faith is God in Christ, as made known in his attributes, offices, relations, promises, and providences. We may refer the objects and support of faith to these heads.

(1.) Divine attributes. Those are the pillows and grounds of faith, rocks of eternity, upon which faith may securely repose : ‘ Though the earth should be removed,’ &c. ‘ The name of the Lord’ (*i. e.*, his attributes) ‘ is a strong tower, the righteous fly into it,’ and faith admits and there secures them. Hence this is faith’s ordinary plea in Scripture. ‘ For thy name’s sake,’ *i. e.*, for the glory of those attributes whereby thou art known to us, as men are known by their names. These are frequently propounded and made use of as the objects and supports of faith.

[1.] Power. This is it on which the heroical faith of Abraham fixed : Rom. iv. 21, ‘ Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.’

[2.] Wisdom. This upheld Peter’s faith, when Christ, so often questioning his love, might have made him doubt of it : ‘ Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest I love thee,’ John xxi. 17. And David’s faith acts upon the omniscieny and immensity of God, Ps. cxxxix.

[8.] Justice. This was David’s plea : Ps. cxliii. 11, ‘ For thy righteousness’s sake bring my soul out of trouble.’ And Daniel’s, ix. 16, ‘ O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee,’ &c.

[4.] Faithfulness. This was the foundation on which Solomon raised that prayer, so full of faith, 1 Kings viii. 33, ‘ There is no God like unto thee, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants ;’ and Dan. ix. 4, Heb. x. 23.

[5.] Truth. David useth this, Ps. cxv. 1, ‘ For thy truth’s sake ;’ and frequently, ‘ Do this according to thy word,’ Ps. cxix. 154.

[6.] Mercy. Faith never finds more strong support, nor ever fixes with so much delight as here : Ps. cxix. 149, ‘ Hear my voice, according to thy loving-kindness ;’ Ps. cxxx. 7, ‘ Let Israel hope in the Lord : for with the Lord there is mercy ;’ Ps. lii. 8, ‘ I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.’

(2.) The offices of Christ. These are strong supports to faith as any, though less made use of : in special his

Priestly office. The apostle, Heb. iv. 14–16, urges them from this consideration to approach God with faith and confidence, to come boldly unto the throne of grace. Paul, Rom. iii. 24, makes Christ’s satisfaction the object of our faith, ‘ whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.’ And this, joined with his intercession, raises his faith into a triumph, so as he makes a confident challenge to all opposers : Rom. viii. 33, 34, ‘ Who shall lay any thing to the charge,’ &c. ? ‘ Who is he that condemneth ?’

Regal Office. Peter, persuading the Jews to believe, holds out Christ not only as a Saviour but a Prince : Acts v. 31, ‘ Him hath God exalted to

be a Prince; and Nathanael's faith pitches here, John i. 49, 50, 'Thou art the King of Israel.'

Prophetical Office. This was prophesied: Deut. xviii. 15, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet; unto him he shall hearken,' i. e., believe; and cited twice in Acts iii. 21, and vii. 37, to persuade faith.

(3.) Mutual relations betwixt God and his people. These are the sweet food of faith, which, digested, nourish it into strength, and enable it to vigorous actings; and to this end we find them frequently used by the saints: Ps. cxix. 94, 'I am thine, save me;' and Jer. xiv. 9, 'Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave [us] not.' And from particular relations: servant, Ps. cxliii. 12, 'Destroy all them that afflict my soul; for I am thy servant.' And Jer. iii. 14, the Lord, to encourage the faith of the backsliding Jews, clothes himself with the relation of a husband: 'Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married to you.' Father, Isa. lxiii. 15, *ad. fin.*, 'Doubtless thou art our Father;' where there are the strongest actings of faith upon divers relations.

(4.) Promises. These and faith are so usually joined, as though they were relatives. These are the breasts of consolation, out of which faith sucks. These are the wells of salvation, out of which faith draws joy, &c. These have been the supports of the saints' faith upon all occasions. Many instances will be needless. See it in Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 24-26, 'Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him.' So Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 9, 12, 'Thou hast said, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee,' &c.

(5.) Providences of God are objects and encouragements to faith. The consideration of what he has done for others, and for themselves, has supported the saints. These are the hands of God stretched out, on which faith takes hold. David, Ps. cxix. 132, 'Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou art wont to do to those that love thy name.' And from his own experience, 1 Sam. xvii. 37, 'The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.' This was Paul's support when all forsook him in his greatest extremities, 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. Some will not believe God, except, with Thomas, they may see and feel. Now herein God offers himself to be seen and felt, and leaves men without excuse if they continue in unbelief.

II. How do they, how must we, live by faith? Here I shall give particular directions how faith may act with most advantage upon its several objects formerly propounded, and shew what support and encouragement faith may find from them in all its actings.

1. Attributes of God. For the direction and encouragement of faith in acting upon them, observe eight particulars:

[1.] Study the attributes. Labour to know them distinctly, effectually. Though faith be not knowledge, yet it is not without it. Nay, the more we know, the more we believe: Ps. ix. 10, 'Those that know thy name will trust in thee;' thy name, i. e., those excellencies whereby God is made known. Be much in thoughts of God, frequent, delightful, consistent, efficacious thoughts; such as bring a divine influence into the soul, and fill it with heat and light; leave deep impressions of God upon the heart, abstract him from all imperfection, and lift him above all perfections visible or imaginable, such thoughts as beget veneration; for high apprehensions beget great expectation, and this makes the actings of faith easy. Those

who have known much have believed much ; much in contemplation, strong in faith, as Abraham, Moses. Imitate David, who, studying the omniscience and immensity of God, Ps. cxxxix., cries out, ver. 17, 'How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God,' &c. Then follows the actings of his faith, ver. 19, 'Surely thou wilt slay the wicked.' Let what you have seen of these divine beauties make you sick of love till you see more. Learn Moses's importunity to see God : 'Let me see thy glory,' Exod. xxxiii. 'Shew me thy glory : cause thy goodness to pass before me.' Display thy glorious excellencies ; dart out some lightsome beam that may discover thee ; unveil thyself : open my eyes, scatter clouds, remove interpositions. The more ye see, the more ye believe.

[2.] Assure thy interest in the attributes. Let thy knowledge be applicatory. Be not satisfied that thou seest God, till thou see him to be thine ; what he is in himself, but what he is to thee. It was a great refreshment to Moses that he was admitted, from the top of Pisgah, to view the promised land ; but how would he have rejoiced if the Lord had assured him that he should enjoy a share in it ! It is a great encouragement to faith to view the excellencies of God in an abstracted sense ; but the assurance of interest therein raises it to a triumph, to say with David, Ps. lxxiii. 26, 'God is my portion for ever ;' and Ps. xvi. 5, 'The portion of mine inheritance.' For if the Lord be thy portion, then thou mayest conclude, Omnipotency is my portion, immensity, all-sufficiency, &c. Say not, If so, then I should be omnipotent, &c. There is a vast difference betwixt identity and interest, betwixt conveying of a title and transmutation of nature. A friend gives thee an invaluable treasure, and all the securities of it that thou canst desire ; wilt thou deny it is thine because thou art not changed into its nature ? The attributes are thine, as thy inheritance, as thy lands are thine ; not because thou art changed into their nature, but because the title is conveyed to thee, it is given thee, and improved for thy benefit. If another manage it, who can do it with greater advantage to thee, than thou to thyself, it is no infringement of thy title. Even so the Lord has given thee himself, and interest in all his glorious attributes, that whatever is in him shall be thine, and for thee ; but he improves these for thee, and does it with infinite more advantage than thou canst for thyself. It is true, he drives another interest, his own glory, but never separates it from thy happiness : these are accumulative, not privative. Whenever God advances his glory, he at the same time promotes thy interest : nor does this make thy title to God less than thy title to thy estate, for that is managed for God's glory too, else thou gainest nothing by it. It is true, we see not, we enjoy not, the total of these rich revenues which daily arise out of this glorious inheritance, but it is treasured up for us till we come at age in glory. Then the treasury shall be opened, and then we shall see that all the glorious outgoings of God, the appearance of his excellencies in this world, have been with special respect to enrich us, to enhappy us, when we never thought of it. Oh what support, what encouragement to faith, to be assured that all God's attributes are mine, thine ; as much thine, as the portion thy father left thee as thine inheritance ; as the drink in thy cup, or the meat on thy trencher ! for so much is holden out in those expressions, Ps. xvi. 5, *כִּנְתִּי הֶלְקִי וְכֹסִי*, phrases taken from those shares which were assigned to every one in feasts, Gen. xliii. 84, 1 Sam. i. 4, &c., 'My lines are fallen in a pleasant place,' &c. With what confidence may faith take possession, and make use of them, at all essays, upon all occasions !

But some may say this is a high privilege, far above poor weaklings, and

requires a high degree of grace to attain it. Not so; the lowest degree of faith gives thee interest in this, for the least act of faith puts thee into covenant with God; and the tenor of the covenant is, that God will be thy God. Faith begets assurance, and assurance begets faith; yet this is not a circle, because not *ad idem*. A weak faith will assure, but assurance begets a strong faith.

[3.] When thou art acting thy faith, so dispose and methodise the attributes of God as thou mayest thereby prove and make it evident to faith that God is both able and willing to do what thou wouldst believe. That God is willing and able are two *ansas*, two handles, on which both the hands of faith may take hold, and so act more strongly (as we do) than if it use but one. A man ready to drown, if he can lay hold upon anything with both hands to keep him from sinking, is more secure than if he can but stay himself by one. Faith is but weak when it fastens but upon one of these; the doubting of either will keep off faith from its steadfastness. Martha's faith was not steadfast, John xi., when she questioned whether Christ was able; and the leper's faith staggered when he doubted whether Christ was willing, Mat. viii. 2: 'If thou wilt thou canst.' The way to make it strong in its daily actings is to confirm it in both these, which we may do by making use of the attributes to prove it. That he is able, faith may be persuaded from his omnipotency, omniscieny, all-sufficiency; that he is willing, from his mercy, faithfulness, immutability; and some prove both these, as his infiniteness, immensity, eternity. Learn to draw arguments from these; and when these two premises are confirmed, faith will easily draw sweet and strong conclusions. Thus, the Lord is able to subdue my lusts, to make all grace abound, to tread Satan under my feet, and the Lord is willing, &c.; faith will easily conclude these shall be done. It is true the *minor* needs most confirmation; we are most subject to doubt of God's willingness; but the Lord has provided against this remarkably; for whereas there is but one attribute to prove God able directly, viz., his power, for the other do it by consequence, there are many titles that directly prove him willing, as mercy, goodness, bounty, grace, love, loving-kindness, compassion, bowels of compassion, patience, long-suffering. Get faith fixed upon this double basis, and it will stand firm.

[4.] Let faith fix on that attribute which is most suitable to thy condition. And here faith may meet with many encouragements: *first*, there is no condition thou canst possibly fall into but some attributes afford support; *secondly*, there is enough in that attribute to uphold thee, as much as thou standest in need of, as much as thou canst desire; *thirdly*, there is infinitely more; though thy condition were worse than it is, worse than ever any was, yet there is more than thou needest, more than thou canst desire, more than thou canst imagine, infinitely more. Some one attribute will answer all thy necessities; some most, some many. For, *first*, some of God's attributes encourage faith in every condition.

Omnipotency. When thou art surrounded with troubles and dangers, there is the power of God to rely on; so Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. Art thou called to difficult duties above thy strength, strong lusts to oppose, violent temptations to resist, weighty employments to undertake? Let faith support thee and itself on omnipotency, as Paul: 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.' Art thou called to grievous sufferings? Imitate the three children, act on God's power: 'Our God whom we trust is able to deliver us.' Dost thou want means for effecting what thou expectest, and so seest no possibility in reason or nature for obtaining it?

Act like Abraham; believe he is able, Rom. iv. 21, to perform without means, or against means. Art thou afraid to fall away? Stay thyself on God's power: 'We are kept by the power of God through faith.'

Omniscieny. Wantest thou direction, knowest not what to do, at thy wit's end? Eye omniscieny: 2 Chron. xx. 12, 'Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee.' The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous. When thou searchest thy soul, and art afraid a treacherous heart should deceive thee, trust omniscieny. He searches the heart, and can teach thee to search it. Art thou upbraided for hypocrisy, and borne down by Satan's suggestions, so as thou almost suspectest thy integrity? Let omniscieny support thee here; he knows, he sees the least gracious motion. Fearest thou secret plots of Satan, crafty conveyances of wicked men, such as no eye can see or discover? Trust omniscieny.

Immensity. Art thou deserted by friends, or separated from them by imprisonment, banishment, infectious diseases? Let faith eye immensity; as Christ, 'Yet I am not alone,' &c. Fearest thou remote designs in other countries, nay, in the other world, in hell? Thou canst not be there to prevent; ay, but the Lord is everywhere.

All-sufficiency. Let faith set this against all thy wants. I want riches, but the Lord is all-sufficient; liberty, children, friends, credit, health, he is liberty, &c. I want grace, the means of grace, comfort; he is these. Dost thou fear death? The Lord is life. Dost thou fear casting off? The Lord is unchangeable. Nay, whatsoever thou fear, or want, or desire, there is one more that will give universal and full support.

Mercy. This will hold when all fail. It is the strength of all other supports, and that in all conditions. There is no condition so low but mercy can reach it, none so bad but mercy can better it, none so bitter but mercy can sweeten it, none so hopeless but mercy can succour it. It bears up faith, when nothing else can, under the guilt of sin and sense of wrath; in misery, that is the time when faith should eye mercy. Hence you may argue strength into faith. If one attribute answer many, yea, all, conditions, will not all answer one?

Secondly, There is enough in any one attribute to support thee as much as thou needest or desirest, let thy corruptions be never so strong, thy wants never so many.

Thirdly, There is more than enough, than thou needest or canst desire; more than is necessary for thy condition, for a worse than thine, for the worst that ever was. If thy dangers were greater than can be paralleled in former ages, if the impetuousness of all those lusts that have broke out since the creation were united in thine, yet there is more power in God than is needful for thy condition. If thou wert pinched with all the wants that all the indigent men in the world were ever pressed with, yet all-sufficiency can do more than supply. Suppose there were many more worlds, and in each ten thousand more sinful creatures than in this, and every one's sins ten thousand times more sinful than thine, yet mercy could do more than pardon. And faith may say, If mercy can pardon, more than pardon, so many more than mine, and so much more heinous, why may not mercy pardon mine?

[5.] There is no condition possible but some attribute encourages faith; so there is nothing in God that discourages faith in any condition, the most formidable condition. The most formidable attributes administer comfort and confidence to a believer, as purity, jealousy, justice. Oh, says a doubting soul, I am impure in heart, life, in my best services, and the

Lord is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; what encouragement can I have to approach God in faith? Yes, enough; there is support in that which thou makest use of to deject thee. The Lord is pure, and loves purity; therefore may faith say, he will make me pure. He is jealous of sin, he hates it, punishes it; therefore faith concludes he will destroy my lusts, for they are the objects of his hatred, not my person; he will be a consuming fire to them, not to me. Faith may feel God embracing with one hand while the other is wounding his lusts.

Justice, both punitive and remunerative, encourage faith. That which is a rock of offence to crush unbelievers and grind them to powder, is a rock of repose and security to faith. The most terrible attribute is comfortable. Lord, I have sinned, deserved wrath; but my Surety hath done and suffered all that thy righteous law requires,—‘he was wounded for my transgressions,’ &c.,—and it is not consistent with justice to punish the same offences twice: ‘Shall not the Lord of heaven and earth do justice?’ Hence faith may conclude, justice itself cannot condemn, cannot lay anything to my charge, Rom. viii. 33, 34; nay, justice is my security that I shall not suffer, for that would be injustice. Punitive justice has now another object, thine enemies, sin, to subdue it, Satan, to trample him under foot, the wicked, &c.: ‘It is a righteous thing with the Lord to render vengeance to those that trouble you,’ 2 Thes. i. 6, 7.

[6.] Learn to draw arguments for confirmation of faith in acting upon attributes. These we may raise: *first*, from ourselves, laying this ground, that whatever engages God encourages faith; for it is easier to believe that one will act for us who is engaged, than one who has no inducement thereto. Now, to speak after the manner of men, yet not without Scripture warrant, the Lord seems to be engaged and induced to employ his attributes for us: 1, by our necessities, I am poor and needy; 2, our impotency, ‘We have no strength against this great multitude,’ as Jehoshaphat; 3, deficiency of other helps, ‘Help, Lord, for vain is the help of man;’ 4, danger, ‘Save us, or else we perish;’ 5, misery, ‘I am brought low,’ Ps. cxlii. 6; ‘attend to my cry,’ &c.

Secondly, From the attributes themselves separately considered. To instance in two that faith makes most use of, power and mercy. Power renders everything easy. This consideration much strengthens faith. For if we have a friend who can do for us a business of great importance with ease, without trouble or expense, with turning of a hand, or motion of a finger, or speaking a word, it is no hard matter to believe he will do it. Now thus it is. There is nothing that we stand in need of, but the Lord can do it as easily as we can move a finger, or speak a word. And can we doubt the Lord will not do it.

Then for mercy, this pleases him. ‘He delights to shew mercy.’ Now can we doubt the Lord will do that for us which he delights to do? Jer. ix. 24.

Thirdly, From attributes associated. We may doubt of creature power, because it is limited, but he is omnipotent. The creature may have strength, but want wisdom, and this may disable him, and weaken our confidence; but God is omniscient. A friend may have strength and wisdom too, but may be far from us; oh, but he is omnipresent. A man may have all these, but be prevented by death; but God is eternal. A man may have power, wisdom, propinquity, life, but not be willing; but God is merciful, gracious, compassionate, and joins other attributes to his mercy, the more to confirm faith. Mercy endures for ever; there is eternity.

Over all his works ; there is immensity. Abundant in goodness, there is its infiniteness. His compassions fail not, there is unchangeableness.

Fourthly. From God's design in manifesting his attributes, viz., his glory. Here is a stronghold for faith. It is not only our interest, but the Lord's concernment, to employ his attributes for us ; not our happiness only, but his own glory. Hence that argument so frequently used, 'For thy name sake.' It is no matter for us, Lord, though we perish ; but what wilt thou do for thy great name ? He will not lose his end, nor be crossed in his design. If faith may confirm itself in acting by one argument, how much strength will all add ?

[7.] Compare the attributes with what men usually trust, and see how infinitely they transcend ; how much more reason there is to rely on God's attributes than on riches, strength, princes. Riches are an uncertain, unsatisfying, insufficient, limited, deceitful nothing, Prov. xxiii. 5. God is an unchangeable, satisfying, all-sufficient, faithful, all things. Strength is a vain, depending weakness. God is perfect, independent, omnipotent. Princes are shaking, piercing, broken reeds, 2 Kings xviii. 20. God is the Rock of Ages. Is there not more encouragement to trust the Lord than to put confidence in princes ? to trust in the living God, than in uncertain riches ? to trust in the Lord of Hosts, than in chariots or horses ? Ps. xx. 7. Shall men think it reason to trust in a spider's web, Job xviii. 14, to trust in a shadow, Isaiah xxx. 8, in vanity, Isaiah lix. 4, in a lie, Jer. xxix. 81, in nothing, Prov. xxiii. 5, and shall not we think it reasonable to trust in the Lord ?

[8.] Learn from the attributes to answer all objections that may discourage faith, viz., I cannot believe, have used all means, &c. ; God is able to work faith. But my own impotency is moral, sinful, contracted by sin ; God is merciful. But I am unworthy ; he is gracious. But I have turned grace into wantonness ; he is patient. But I have abused patience, and what reason to expect he should longer forbear me ? his love. But I have played the harlot ; he is unchangeable. But he may cease to love me, as he did the angels, and yet be unchangeable ; he is faithful, his faithfulness was not engaged to the angels. But I am unfaithful, and the unfaithfulness of one party disengages the other. But he is infinite ; it is so, as you object, with men, but his thoughts are not as ours, nor his ways as our ways. But infiniteness discourages, if infinitely above ; there is an infinite distance ; how can, how dare my faith lay hold, approach ? There is a Mediator, which brings me to the second.

2. The offices of Christ. To direct and encourage faith herein, take these rules.

(1.) Acquaint thyself with the offices of Christ, what they contain and hold forth to us, and for us. If faith be left in the dark, it will stagger, not know where to fix ; may lay hold of a shadow, and rest upon a tottering basis ; cannot be steadfast nor confident. Knowledge of Christ is put for faith in Christ. 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,' Isaiah liii. 11. 'I know whom I have believed,' 2 Tim. i. 12. Find out what faith may lay hold on in every office, what are its supports in his

[1.] Kingly office. 1. As he is king, he is lawgiver ; writes laws in our hearts. Gives not only laws to be obeyed, but hearts to obey ; laws for obedience, and principles of obedience. 2. To subdue our enemies, Ps. ii. 6, 8, our lusts, the world, the powers of darkness. He will bruise them with a rod of iron. 'He leads captivity captive,' Eph. iv. 11, 12.

3. To rule us. The government is on his shoulders. He sets his throne in our hearts, and takes care that we live under his government in peace, plenty, safety; peace of conscience, plenty of grace, perseverance.

[2.] Prophetical. To declare his Father's will, the mysteries of salvation; to continue it as written and preached, and so to give pastors when he ascended, Eph. iv. 11; to make us understand it; to enlighten our minds; to send the Spirit of truth to clear up obscurities, resolve doubts, remove scruples, satisfy cases of conscience.

[3.] As priest. So he suffered, and intercedes. His sufferings are both satisfactory and meritorious. As satisfactory, he has redeemed us from the law's curse, God's wrath, death and hell. As meritorious, he has purchased all things, pardon, peace, grace, glory; and for this life all good things, a spiritual title to them, a sanctified use of them. He interceded on earth by fervent and affectionate prayers, with sighs and tears, Heb. vii. 5, John xvii.; and he now lives to make intercession, appearing before the Father, presenting his merits, and effectually applying them; silencing Satan's accusation, rendering our persons and prayers acceptable. Oh what work is here for faith! If the just had nothing else to live on, here is enough for the life of faith.

(2.) These offices are purely relative; wholly ours, for us, in reference to us; relative both *secundum esse et operari*, both in their constitution and execution. He was made king, priest, &c., for us, and does exercise these for us. They are essentially relative, depending on us, as one term of the relation upon another. As there cannot be a father without a child, so Christ had not been king without believers, who are his kingdom, 1 Cor. xv. 24. There cannot be a priest without a sacrifice; nor a sacrifice, except some for whom to offer it. It is otherwise in the former object; God's attributes are absolute essentially, their relation to us is but accidental. Their being is not for us, but only their acting. God had been omnipotent, omniscient, merciful, &c., if no creatures had ever received a being. Therefore here is more support for faith than in the attributes. Where there is more interest, there may be more confidence. Faith may plead, Christ is my king, and was anointed, crowned, in reference to me. For this end he came to the kingdom, that he might govern me. He is my priest, consecrated for my sake, in reference to my guilt, my necessities, that he might satisfy for me. Christ is my prophet; for this end he was anointed, and received the Spirit without measure, Isaiah lxi. 1, that he might instruct me; *ergo*, I will be confident.

(3.) These being the offices of Christ, he is to perform them *ex officio*, as a duty. He, who was independent, and stood in no need of us, was pleased, for the encouragement of our faith, to come under the engagement of a duty. The Father's command is upon him, and therefore not only called a son, but a servant: Isaiah xlii. 1, 'Behold my servant, whom I have chosen.' It is [not] out of courtesy to us, but out of obedience to God, that he acts; Christ submits to it: Ps. xl. 5, 'Mine ear hast thou bored. Behold I come to do thy will.' A perpetual servant. Safely we may say there is as strong an engagement laid upon Christ, as upon any of us, to do our duty. This brings us to such a dilemma. Either we must believe, or else think Christ is impotent, negligent, or ignorant; for none else omit their office. Can he be impotent, unable, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth? Or ignorant, who is the wisdom of the Father? Or negligent, who was 'faithful to him that appointed him,' by the testimony of God? Heb. iii. 2. Nay, faith may draw arguments from the

offices themselves to confute this blasphemous conceit, that Christ will not to the utmost execute his offices. If he should not, it must be for want of power, wisdom, or will. But the offices exclude these. As a king, he is able; as a prophet, he is wise: 'He that made the eye, shall he not see?' as a priest, he is willing, 'a merciful high priest.' So that you must either believe or blaspheme. Here is then as strong a plea as is imaginable: Lord, it is thine office to do this. It is true there was nothing that could oblige thee; but it pleased the Father so to appoint, and it pleased thee, dear Saviour, to submit, and undertake these offices. Such poor creatures as I may fail in our duties, and be unfaithful in our trust, but heaven and earth shall perish, the blessed angels shall turn devils, and glorified saints apostates, before my glorious Mediator fail his office; therefore I believe.

(4.) Christ, as he is Mediator, is both God and man, and executes his offices as Mediator. Here then faith hath all the encouragement that both heaven and earth can afford. He is God; for where he is called the Wonderful Counsellor, *i. e.*, our Prophet, and the Prince of Peace, that is, our King, there he is called the mighty God, the everlasting Father, Isa. ix. 6. And as our priest, so our God too; for his blood is called, Acts xx. 28, the blood of God. Therefore all the attributes of God are engaged for the performance of these offices. He is man too, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 'the man Christ Jesus;' and therefore all the affections of a man; not metaphorically, as they are ascribed to God, but properly: he loves, rejoices, delights, compassionates, as the sons of men. Nay, these affections are more tender in him than in any man; because his bodily constitution, upon which these motions depend, was more pure, and his temperament more exact. Nay, our faith in acting here has another great advantage, *viz.*, Christ's experience. It is some encouragement for those who are pressed under afflictions and sufferings to consider him whom they depend on for relief, of a sweet affectionate nature; but are much more confident if they know that he has had experience of the like sufferings, and groaned under the same afflictions, knows what it is, &c. Now this support faith has from the consideration of Christ's manhood. He himself has been a sufferer, a man of sorrows, acquainted with the same griefs that afflicts us, Heb. ii. 16. He was made perfect through sufferings. He ran through the whole circle of afflictions. And why? See verse 17, 'That he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest:' and verse 18, 'For in that he himself suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' For this end he suffered, that he might learn to pity them, and be as ready as able to relieve them. And this the apostle holds forth as a ground of confident access, Heb. iv. 15, 16. Art thou poor, despised? He was set at nought. Art thou calumniated? so he. Deserted of friends, and hated of most? tempted by Satan, forsaken of God? So he, when he cried out to heaven, to earth. Let faith conclude, he does pity, he will succour.

(5.) Let faith begin first to act on the priestly office. This is the basis of the other. The high priest, had a type of Christ, had a crown on his head, the ensign of royal dignity; and Urim and Thummim on his breast, emblems of the prophetic office, to denote that the kingly and priestly office are grounded on the sacerdotal. Begin then at the foundation. Persuade thyself that he is thy Priest, and it will be easy to believe him thy King and Prophet. If he have executed that, he will execute these. Believe that he suffered for thee, and thou mayest without difficulty believe

that he will sanctify thee, illuminate thee ; for faith has great advantage here. The worst is past, sufferings, the greatest employment is finished, the rest is small. That which is most difficult is overcome, the rest is easy. That which was painful and grievous is past, all that remains is delightful. That which was accompanied with shame and ignominy is past, that which is to be done is high and glorious. The conflict is over, that which remains is triumph and dividing the spoils. Here faith may act strongly. Has Christ suffered, done the greatest, the most painful, that which was ignominious ? Will he not do the less, that which is delightful and glorious ? Has he suffered ? Will he not do ? Has he conquered ? Will he not divide the spoils ? Was he wounded for my transgressions ? Will he not wound them ? Did he shed his blood ? Will he not shed his love in my heart ? Was he emptied of his glory, and filled with wrath ? Will he not empty me of sin, and fill me with grace ? Has he taken away the guilt of sin, which cost him so dear, so many prayers and tears, so many wounds and blood ? and will he not take away the power of sin, which he can do with a word ? 2. The other offices depend on this ; grace, peace, light, glory, must be purchased before they can be bestowed. The purchase belongs to the priestly office, the communication to the other. Let faith first believe they were purchased, and it is easy to believe they will be bestowed, especially if it consider, 8, that the end why they were purchased was that they might be communicated. Here faith may act strongly. The end why Christ purchased knowledge and holiness was that he might impart them. Surely though poor, weak, improvident creatures fail of their ends, Christ will never so dishonour himself, never be so disappointed ; especially in that which cost him so dear, in his master-piece, his greatest and most glorious design. Has he suffered so many things in vain, so much wrath, so much torture and soul-affliction, so much blood, &c., to sanctify me ? Oh I shall be sanctified !

(6.) They are adequate to our conditions. This is necessary for the life of faith, that in every condition possible it have something to rely on. And in these we may find it. When lusts are strong, temptations violent, grace weak, God's ways unpleasant, let faith look on Christ as thy king ; it is his office, it is his glory to succour thee ; he triumphs when we conquer. Christ will act as a king, will be royal and magnificent : Luke xxii. 25, *ἐσθιεῖται*, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship,' &c. He will give like a king, conquer like a king, like himself.

In sense of ignorance, want of the means of grace, want of the Spirit, danger of seducing, perplexity of mind, &c., look to Christ as your prophet ; it is his office, his honour.

In sense of wrath, guilt of sin, let faith go to Christ's satisfaction. In the sense of its pollution derived on our persons and services, go to his intercession. It would be too tedious to direct how faith should act in every particular. We will instance in one less taken notice of, the prayer of Christ upon earth, the pattern of his intercession in heaven, John xvii., where he prays for union, freedom from evil, sanctification, joy, perseverance, glory, for all believers. Here what he prayed for. How he prayed, see Heb. v. 7, 'In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears.' Upon this faith may thus act, and as strongly as upon any ground in the world. The prayers of poor sinners that believe on Christ are always heard, much more the prayers of the Son of God. Their weak cries never return unanswered ; how prevalent, then, are the strong cries of Jesus Christ ! Their tears are so precious, as the

Lord puts them in his bottle; of how much more value are the tears of Christ! They never wrestle with sighs and groans but prevail with God; how much more prevalent with God are the sighs and groans of Christ. Those prayers, cries, and tears are not forgot, they are on eternal record in heaven; they were presently answered, he was heard in that which he feared, and the answers shall be returned to the end of the world, and shall fall, may faith say, into my bosom; for he prayed for me, wept for me, cried for me, and therefore was heard for me, for he was always heard, John xi. 22. Let faith go to God on this account, Christ has prayed that I might be sanctified, united, &c.

(7.) Consider how affectionately Christ executed these offices on earth, and it will be a strong ground to believe he will not neglect them in heaven. He looked upon this as his work, that for which he was sent, to which he was called, his calling and vocation, and went about it with all his soul, all his strength, strong desires: Luke xii. 50, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.' This baptism was his death and the grievous sufferings that attended it; he was to be drenched in a sea of wrath and sufferings, which, being the most intolerable that ever were suffered, might have been most formidable. But even death, which, when but ordinary, nature shuns as the most fearful evil, Christ desires it, and so passionately as can scarce be expressed. 'How am I straitened!' *συνίχουμαι*, my soul is so big with desire, as there is not room for it in the body. How is my soul pained with desire to sacrifice my life, my blood, for my lost people! The intenseness of his desires appears in that sharp rebuke he gives Peter, when he persuaded him to save himself, not to expose his life: Mat xvi. 28, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me.' That temptation to save himself from death, which he so much desired, was as detestable, as offensive to him, as a suggestion of Satan, and he requites Peter with no better title for that unacceptable counsel, though immediately before he had pronounced him blessed, ver. 17. This appears in that he uses all means to bring men into a capacity of receiving benefit by his offices, invitations, commands, promises, threatenings, complaints, expostulations.

See with what delight: Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is written in my heart.' The will of God in which he delighted, was (as appears by the coherence, and the quotation of this place, Heb. x. 5) that Christ should make his soul an offering for sin, as more acceptable to God than all other burnt-offerings and sin-offerings. This law was in his heart, *בתוך מעי*, in the midst of his bowels. He did as much delight in it as we do in following those inclinations which nature has implanted in our hearts, as we do in eating and drinking. So he expresses it, John iv. 83, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' He was as willing to bleed and die for thee as thou art to eat when hungry. He delighted as much to be scourged, wounded, crucified, as thou delightest in meat when most delicious.

His sorrow you may see in his tears and pathetic complaints when men excluded themselves from the benefit of his offices: Luke xix. 41, 'He beheld the city, and wept over it.' There is his tears. And oh what a compassionate complaint was that, 'Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day!' &c.

For his joy, see Luke x. 21, 'In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit,' &c. For his zeal, it was so ardent, as the disciples apply that of the psalmist, Ps. lxxix. 9, to Christ: John ii. 17, 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me

‘*אכלתני*, *devoravit me*. The flame was so hot within, as to the vital moisture. *Exhaustit succum vitalem, et emaciavit*

‘I say, if the Lord was so affectionate on earth, certainly he in heaven, and will there execute his offices with as much zeal. He changes not, whatever we do. Where is his strength, &c. Can the Lord neglect? No; we are his dearer to him than his natural body. Can he forget? No; he who may forget her sucking child, yet cannot he forget us. We are upon the palms of his hands. He remembers very well who it is for whom he was pierced.

The Father and the Spirit are engaged for the execution of these offices. The Father, he decreed it, so Christ is a ‘Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’ He sent Christ: John xvii. 18, ‘As thou hast sent me into the world.’ He commands it: John x. 17, 18, speaking of laying down his life, he adds, ‘This commandment have I received of my Father.’ He approves it: when he entered upon his office, he had a wonderful approbation from heaven from the excellent glory, ‘This is my beloved Son.’ He therefore loves the Son: ‘Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life,’ John x. 17. He swears the continuance of Christ in office: ‘The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever,’ Heb. vii. 21.

[1.] Faith here grows confident. If the Lord have decreed, and sent Christ for this end, and commanded him to execute his offices, if he do approve and love him for it, and has sworn he shall do it, shall sanctify, justify, enlighten, certainly he will do it, here is no room for doubting.

[2.] Faith appropriates. He decreed him for me, to sanctify me, &c., sent him to enlighten &c., me, commands him to subdue my lusts, &c., loves him because he does so much for me.

The Spirit is engaged too; for, 1, he furnished Christ for the execution, Isa. lxi. 1. And will the Spirit lose his labour, come short of his end? 2. He co-operates with Christ in the execution. Sanctification is the great work of the kingly office; he is the Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4, illumination of the prophetic office, he is the Spirit of truth and wisdom. And the issue of the priestly office is comfort from the sense of justification; and he is the Spirit of comfort, of adoption. Faith hath all the security that heaven can afford in acting on the offices of Christ.

8. Promises. How faith may act with most advantage upon promises, and get support and encouragement from them in its actings.

(1.) Consider the latitude of them. There are promises suitable to all estates. No condition wherein faith may not find support from promises. Soul, body, estate, relations, actions, there are promises for all; promises, I say, that are explicitly, in express terms, *quoad formam*.

But besides these, there are innumerable more that we take little notice of, which are promises implicitly, virtually, or by just consequence. And there is little in the Scripture out of which faith may not extract the comfort of a promise, titles, assertions, relations, prayers, commands, threatenings.

The titles of God are virtually promises. When he is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding-place, a portion. The titles of Christ, light of the world, bread of life, the way, truth, and life; the titles of the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, and supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit; faith may conclude as much out of these

as out of promises. Is the Lord a sun? Then he will influence me, &c. Is Christ life? Then he will enliven me, &c.

Assertions. Many things delivered in Scripture as assertions may be applied promissorially. As, 'He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely;' *i. e.*, he shall walk surely: Gal. v. 22, 'The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Faith may conclude, therefore the Spirit in me will bring forth these fruits.

Relations of what the Lord has done for his people formerly are in effect promises, as is evident from Deut. viii. 3, 'He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna; that he might make thee know that man liveth not by bread only,' &c. This here is a bare relation, but Christ seems to make use of it as a promise, Mat. iv. 4. From relations of what God has done for his people in times past, faith may conclude, the Lord will do the like for the future. If he delivered others who trusted in him formerly, he will deliver me if I trust in him now: Ps. xxii. 4, 5, 'Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them: they cried unto thee, and were delivered,' &c. He is the same God, the same engagements are on him. And from such we may not only conclude the same mercies, but others also proportionable to them, nay, exceeding them. David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord, and prevailed. If I go in like manner against my lusts, I shall prevail against them.

Prayers of God's ancient people are virtually promises to us. What prayers they made for the church and themselves, we may, *ceteris paribus*, apply as promises. We have a remarkable ground for this, 2 Chron. xx. 9, where Jehoshaphat makes use of Solomon's prayer mentioned, chap. vi. 28, as of a promise, and urges several of his petitions as though they had been promises. The reason is this, whatever the faithful pray for, it is granted, therefore their prayers are promises, and the answers to them performances.

Commandments of God are virtually promises, equivalent to them. Not only by proportion, as that command, Luke xvii. 4, Mat. xviii., to forgive our brother till seventy times seven, faith may conclude, the Lord will forgive much more. But directly as that, 'Thou shalt love the Lord,' &c., we may read it as a promise; for whatever the Lord command his people, he has engaged himself to give strength to obey. So that every command may be read by the eye of faith as a promise in this sense, I will enable thee to love me, &c. 'The just shall live by faith;' faith reads it, I will enable the just to live by faith; 'mortify your members;' 'let him deny himself.' The reason is, because the Lord writes his law in our hearts, Jer. xxxi. 88. And every law written there becomes gospel, every precept a promise; for to write laws in our hearts is to make our hearts answerable to the laws, *i. e.*, both willing and able to obey: 'We are not under the law,' for it is in us, 'but under grace.' If a man command a thing, and engage to enable the performance, his command is equivalent to a promise. He works all our works in us.

Nay, which is strangest, *threatenings* are by just consequence promises. The threatenings denounced against the wicked are promises to the godly. Where any sin is threatened, a promise to the opposite virtue is contained in that threatening. This by the rule of contraries. 'The wicked shall be turned into hell;' faith may conclude, the godly shall be carried into heaven. 'Cursed are those that do the work of the Lord negligently,' therefore blessed are those that do it faithfully. The antithesis we find in

Scripture betwixt these warrants faith : ' Say to the righteous, It shall go well with him ; but woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him,' Isa. iii. 10, 11 ; ' He that believes shall be saved,' &c., that is frequent. And when one member of the opposition is not expressed, faith may be bold to add it, as following by necessary consequence. Faith may extract as much comfort out of that terrible chapter, Deut. xxviii., as out of any. Here is food enough for faith to live on.

(2.) Collect the promises ; treasure them up ; methodise them aright ; meditate on them. Many in one.

Gather them. They are the meat that you must live upon in this wilderness, angels' food. Be as careful to gather them as the Israelites to gather manna. Be often searching the mines. Suffer not these pearls of great price to lie neglected in the field. These must defray all the charges of your pilgrimage. The angels take much pains (so the word *παράνυλαι* implies) to pry into the gospel, much more should we ; for these are the sweetest strains, the quintessence of the gospel, and we are more concerned than they. If the angels had had such promises as believers, none of them had fallen. In reading and hearing, take special notice of promises. Treasure them up. Let your memories be like the pot in the ark, always full of this spiritual manna. Otherwise you confine God's gracious working by way of promise to times and means, to reading and hearing, whereas we always stand in need of promises, but have not always opportunities to read and hear. A promise treasured up will afford comfort in our beds, in our callings, in a dungeon, banishment. Faith will starve or be unactive at such times if you have no treasure.

Dispose them so as you may have some ready for all occurrences, emergencies, upon all occasions, that no accident, no employment may surprise you without a promise of support. To live by faith is to make every act of your life an act of faith ; and how can that be except you have a promise suitable to every act, condition, and accordingly apply it ? Pray, hear, eat, walk, work, all in the strength of a promise, for direction, protection, strength, success in all. This is the life of faith.

Meditate frequently and seriously on them. They are the sweetest lines that Christ writes to his spouse, will you not often peruse these ? There is majesty in the commands, severity in the threatenings, but love is predominant in promises, nothing but sweetness, we should let them stay long on our palates. What concoction is to the natural life, that meditation is to this life of faith ; no meat will nourish and preserve life except it be digested. They are sweeter than honey and the honey-comb ; you get little sweetness except you squeeze it out by meditation. This clasps faith and the promises together, removes discouragements, suggests arguments. The comforts and acts of this believing life are much weakened and interrupted by neglect of meditation.

(3.) Accustom yourselves to a holy kind of discourse and reasoning. Faith does not abolish, but improve reason. Whatever is requisite to the constitution of a man may be useful to him as a Christian. The application of promises is nothing but sanctified reason exercised by faith. Argue from general promises to particulars, from specials to you as individual, from typicals to reals, from temporals to spirituals, from spirituals to temporals.

From generals to individuals. All things shall work for good, &c., therefore this loss, affliction, distemper, temptation. All the ways of God are mercy, therefore this way, though cross to my desires, interests,

endeavours. Whatsoever ye ask, it shall be done; therefore this want shall be supplied, this lust subdued, this temptation conquered, this occurrence sanctified: 'It shall go well,' &c., Isa. iii., therefore now when it seems to be worst.

From specials to your own particulars. From those which seem appropriated to one person, if there be no peculiar reason for a restriction; for it is with these promises as with judicial laws, they are of universal extent if their reason be so. Hence the apostle applies that to the Hebrews which was made in special to Joshua: 'I will not leave thee,' Heb. xiii. 5. So may we those to Abraham: 'I am thy shield,' &c., Gen. xv. 1, 'I will bless those that bless thee,' &c., the same God, the like privilege. And that to Peter: 'I have prayed that thy faith fail not.' There is the same necessity, the like temptations, and as great weakness. And that of Paul: 'My grace shall be sufficient,' 2 Cor. xii. 9. The same engagements on God, such lusts in us, and less strength.

From typical promises to accomplishments in the antitype. There is ground for it, 1 Cor. x. 6, *τίποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν*. So Egypt was a type of our natural condition, Pharaoh of our spiritual enemies; the water out of the rock, and manna from heaven, of spiritual nourishment by Christ; the cloud and fire, of direction and protection, Canaan of heaven. The promises of these to them are promises of the antitype to us, and the accomplishment an encouragement to our faith, such as these: 'I will be honoured upon Pharaoh,' &c., Exod. xiv. 4; 'My presence shall go with thee,' Exod. xxxiii. 14; 'Ye shall eat the good things of the land,' Isa. i. 19.

From temporals to spirituals. From those to the body to those for the soul. Spiritual blessings are included in temporal promises. *Videntur temporalia proponi, quando speciale præmium occultè significatur*. Temporals are pledges of spirituals, hence Paul argues, 2 Tim. iv. 18, 'The Lord shall preserve thee from every evil work.' Christ useth the like argument to confirm faith: Mat. vi. 25, 'Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' And the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 9, 'Does God take care for oxen?' &c. An argument *à minori ad majus* is strong with God. Will he give his beloved food for the outward man, and let the soul famish? Will he guard the body with angels, and let the soul be a prey to Satan? Will he maintain the outward man in health and strength, and suffer the soul to languish under spiritual distempers? Will he heal all bodily diseases, and not the soul's more grievous and dangerous ones? Will he take care for the body, and neglect the soul? do less for precious souls than vile bodies? Will special love afford but common mercies? Shall the body prosper, and not the soul, when he delights more in the soul's prosperity?

From spirituals to temporals. This is strong in all respects, *à majori ad minus*. Will he do the greater, and not the less? Will he give the kingdom of God, and not add the inconsiderable things of earth? Will he give the most precious things in heaven and earth, and not paper and thread to wrap them in? Will he afford the entertainment of a Father's house, and not a few husks? Will he deliver the soul from death, and not the feet from falling? Will he give special, eternal, and not common mercies? the upper springs, and not the lower? the fountain, and not a few drops? Faith may here be confident.

(4.) Confine not God in his performances to things, degrees, times, or persons. Let not faith so act, as to limit him in acting. This limiting of God occasions disappointments, and these discourage; and discouragements

weaken faith, impair its strength and life. Expect not peremptorily, either the individuals which seem to be promised, or the degrees of them. The conclusions of faith in its arguings must not exceed the premises. *Conclusio sequitur deteriorem partem.* Conclude not peremptorily, but when the promise is peremptory. There are some things which God does not promise peremptorily, degrees of grace, arbitrary assistances, outward blessings, inward joy. In applying such promises, faith need not conclude absolutely, but either conditionally, I shall have this if it be good for me; or disjunctively, I shall have either this, or something better. It is an ordinary, but, I think, a great misapprehension, that we do not believe, but when we confidently expect the very things promised. I think it is more than God requires in applying any promises, but those which are necessary for our being; in those which concern our well-being, we do hereby limit the Holy One of Israel, where he hath not limited himself. This is not to believe, but to tempt God.

For times. In applying promises, we must not always expect a present accomplishment, but wait and depend. These are vital acts of faith, and to continue in the exercise of these, is to live by faith. Times and seasons are in God's hands, it is his prerogative to fit acts to seasons. We take notice of time, but he only knows opportunity, as what is good, so when it is so. When he seems slack, though time pass, yet he never lets slip an opportunity. How long did the faithful Jews expect the Messiah's coming, and Japhet's persuasion, yet both promised! How long have we expected the fall of Babylon, and erecting of David's tabernacle? The like for particular persons. Abraham had a son promised, he stayed long for performance. And so David for the kingdom; it was so long deferred, till his faith was near expiring; it was very weak, when he said, 'I shall one day fall by the hands of Saul.' The liveliness of faith is never more evident than in long expectations. 'He that believes makes not haste,' Isa. xxviii. 16. It is unbelief that hastes, Ps. xxxi. 22, cxvi. 11.

Confine not the accomplishment to persons. It is probable Isaac believed the promises made to him and his father should be accomplished in Esau, God performed them to Jacob. If the promise be performed to you or yours, to this child, if not to that; God is faithful, and faith is not in vain.

(5.) As to conditional promises, if you have the qualification in sincerity, let not the want of degrees discourage you from application. The lowest degree of grace entitles to the promise. It may be grace is not broke forth into a flame; it is acceptable to Christ when it does but smoke: 'He will not quench,' &c. It may be you are not grown to the tallness of a cedar, Christ delights in a reed, a bruised reed: 'He will not break the bruised reed.' He deals not with poor worms, as one that sells, but gives. Therefore he propounds conditions of so low a rate, as in contracts with men would scarce admit the notion of conditions; gives, if ask; satisfy, if desire; accept, if come; bestow, if receive. And in this respect the covenant of grace is in reality absolute, though, according to the form of proposal, it seems conditional.

God descends to as low conditions as are imaginable; and yet the least degree of the lowest condition gives interest in the promise. 'Blessed are the pure,' &c., he says not perfectly pure. Oh but I am impure in heart and life, how can I apply this promise? The Lord comes lower, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst.' To thirst after purity, is less than to be actually pure. Oh but thirst is a high degree of desire, I fear mine amounts

not to so much. The Lord comes lower : ' If there be a willing mind, it is accepted,' 2 Cor. viii. 12. ' Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,' Rev. xxii. 17. Willingness, the lowest degree of desire, and desire, the lowest condition imaginable, entitles to the highest degree of blessedness.

But further ; suppose you have but the qualification in so weak a degree as you do not discern it, yet should not this discourage from applying the promises. For observe it, believing is more acceptable to God, and gives clearer title to the promise than any condition annexed thereto. For this is the principal condition of the covenant, others are but accessories ; this makes others acceptable, none can be accepted without it ; by this the rest are attained, none are attainable without this. Therefore ye should believe, that ye may be qualified, not refuse because ye are not. If you bring faith to a promise, you bring that which most pleases God, and that which will bring the rest.

(6.) He that can lay just claim to one promise, has interest in all ; he that can apply any one, has property in every one. This observation is necessary to advance the present design. For all the promises are requisite to maintain the life of faith ; he that excludes himself from any, confines the influence of faith to some part of his life, which should be diffused through all. Yet this is ordinary with weak believers, to apply some, but restrain themselves from others, as pertaining only to saints of higher attainments and greater eminency. This is a mistake. He that applies one, should apply all ; all the promises are his, as clearly as his inheritance ; he that possesses one is heir of all. The first act of faith gives interest in Christ ; and he that hath Christ, hath all ; for in him all the promises are yea and amen, 2 Cor. i. 20. The least act of faith admits you into covenant ; and the promises are but parcels of the covenant, he that has the whole has every part. If the Lord has given you possession of any one, though by the weakest act of faith, he has given you interest in all ; and therefore let no discouragement hinder from applying any. ' He that overcomes shall inherit all things,' Rev. xxi. 7. All promises are included in this one. And who is he that overcomes ? John tells us, 1 John v. 4, ' This is the victory, even our faith.' He, then, that believes has right to all promises, and shall inherit all ; and therefore should confidently apply all.

(7.) The Lord's word is more valuable in his account, than all his works ; he will suffer all the works of his hands to perish, rather than fail in the least degree to perform the most inconsiderable promise. Angels and men shall be destroyed, heaven and earth shall be annihilated, rather than one tittle of a promise shall fail of its full accomplishment : Luke xvi. 17, ' It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one tittle of the law to fail ;' and Mat. v., neither *iōra*, nor *κεφάλαια*, nor the least letter, nor the least point. His glory is as much interested in the gospel, therefore he uses an expression comprehensive of both : Mat. xxiv. 35, ' My words shall not pass away.' The heavens shall vanish into darkness, and the earth sink into nothing, rather than the least letter of a promise shall not be fulfilled. Faith resting on a promise, has a surer foundation than the earth, and stronger pillars than the heavens ; therefore let it repose there with confidence in every act, and live there secure in all occurrences.

8. Persuade thyself, that God had a particular respect to thee in every promise. This is the great objection, which does much prejudice faith in its life and actings. The Lord did not intend this for me ; he might respect

others, those with whom he conversed familiarly, but not such a worm as I. This is an error which, though you think it arises only from a mean conceit of yourselves, yet indeed it proceeds from too low apprehensions of God, the impartialness of his love, and the infinite comprehensiveness of omniscience.

If the Lord should appear to you in a visible shape, as to Abraham, and make you a promise, as one friend to another, then you would not question his intention and respect. Why, consider you were as full in the eye of God when he engaged himself by promises, as Abraham was when he talked with him face to face. Nothing is past or future in respect of God's all-seeing eye. Things past to us will be present to him unto eternity. Things future from us were present to him to* all eternity. Nothing is hid or unobserved, Heb. iv. 18, *τετραχρηλισμένα*. The faces of all things are naked and open, as one of our faces to another; even those things which are so small, as they seem unworthy to come under divine cognisance; every sparrow, every hair, much more his jewels, his peculiar treasure. All believers that were, are, or ever will be, were as fully and distinctly in God's eye, while he was purposing to engage himself by promise, as our fingers are to us, when our eyes are fixed most intensely upon our hands: 'I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.' The Lord had as special and distinct a respect to every believer in each promise of the covenant, as a father has to each child in every legacy that he bequeaths by will, when he divides his estate among them, and sets out every child his portion. And therefore faith may with as much confidence make use of every promise, and live upon them, as any child may upon the portion left him by his father's will. This notion is well grounded; for God's covenant is not only called *συνθήκη* a compact, but *διαθήκη*, a will or testament, Mat. xxvi. 28, and so the Seventy-two ordinarily render *בְּרִית*. What a sweet encouragement is this to act and live by faith, to consider you were in the thoughts and eye of God promising, as a child in the eye of a father making his will; and that God gave you the promises to live upon, as a father gives a child an inheritance, a portion; and his eye as full upon you, as upon Abraham or David, when he made them promises face to face!

(9.) Consider, it is all one with God to do as to say, to perform as to promise; it is as easy, he is as willing, as able, to one as the other. There is no such distance betwixt God's saying and doing, as amongst men. His saying is doing: Ps. xxxiii. 9, 'He said, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' His *ἐὸ λόγος* is *κοσμοποιεῖν*: ver. 6, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;' Heb. xi. 3, 'The worlds were framed by the word of the Lord.' There is omnipotency in his word, both of command and promise: therefore called, 'the word of his power,' Heb. i. 3. One word of his can do more in an instant, than the united powers of heaven and earth can do to eternity.

This consideration removes at once the chief discouragements that hinder the lively actings of faith; for what is it that weakens our confidence of the promises' performance, but because we look upon the accomplishment as uncertain or difficult, or future and afar off! Now from hence faith may conclude the performance is certain, easy, and present.

It is *certain*. The root of all certainty is God's will. He is willing to promise, for he has actually done it. He is as willing to perform, for it is all one with him to do as say.

It is *easy*. What more easy than a word! An act is not more difficult.

* Qu. 'from'?—Ed.

And one word will give accomplishment to all the promises : no pains, trouble, cost, hazard. The covenant is our tree of life, the promises are its branches, laden with all precious fruits. The least word, the least breath, from God's mouth, will shake all the fruits into your bosoms. Will not he speak so little who has done so much, sent his Son to suffer so much, let his Spirit strive so much ? There is but one word betwixt you and all the happiness contained in the great and precious promises. And is it not easy for faith to believe that it is easy for God to speak one word ? This may be faith's plea, Only speak the word, and it shall be done. Nay, it is done, the accomplishment is *present*, the word is passed out of his lips. You have as much for the accomplishment of promises, as all things that now exist had for their creation, God's word. He does when he says ; his saying is doing. Nothing remains on God's part to be done further. That which suspends your enjoyments is want of faith ; do but believe, and all is said, all is done, to make you happy. You may as easily believe that he will perform, as that he has promised. It is easy to believe that he has promised : you question not that. There is as much reason to believe he will perform, for it is all one to him. Men promise great things, but cannot perform without trouble, expense, or hazard ; therefore may we doubt of them. But there are no such things incident to God's performances ; no more trouble or pains to perform a promise than to make it. He can perform all with less trouble than we can speak, do all he has said as easily as anything he does.

10. Believers have a just and unquestionable title to all things promised, besides that title which the promise conveys. They have right to them, and therefore have no reason to doubt but the gracious God will bestow them, especially when he has confirmed the former title by promise. All that is promised was bequeathed to believers by the eternal will of the Father, and purchased for them by the precious blood of Christ, and they are instated therein by many endearing and interesting relations. They have as much right thereto as an heir to his inheritance, or a wife to her jointure ; for they are co-heirs with Christ, and married to him : 1 Cor. iii. 23, 'All is yours.' All. This is more than if he had said a kingdom, though this is much ; nay, more than if he had said, all the kingdoms of the earth ; nay, more than if heaven and earth were yours. What then is all ? Why heaven and earth, and all in both. All in heaven that you are capable of, and all in earth that is desirable and good. Not only angels and men ; not only riches, pleasures, glory ; but the Father (that which is more than all), Christ, and the Spirit ; all that they are, have, can do, so far as these are communicable, attributes, offices, functions. All these are your own, though you do not believe it. You have *jus ad rem*, right to these, upon other accounts besides the promise. Faith gives *jus in re*, actual possession. Here is great encouragement for believers to act faith in the promises, from this consideration. Will a child doubt that a pious and indulgent father will not give him his own, though he do not promise it ? But if he engage himself by promise, he will be confident. Shall we be more confident of the justice of men, than the righteousness of God ? He has made all your own, and will he be so unjust as to detain it ? He has promised to give all that is yours, and will he add unfaithfulness to injustice, such injustice as is odious amongst men ? Shall not the Lord of heaven and earth be righteous ? Faith cannot doubt here. Either you must believe, or cast such horrid aspersions on God, as though he were as unjust or unfaithful as the worst of men.

The whole glorious essence of God is engaged for the performance of every promise. It is of as much concernment as the Deity. He would cease to be God if he should fail to perform any promise. This would undeify him. For he ceases to be God, when he ceases to be most perfect ; for this is the proper and essential notion of God, to be *quid perfectissimum*. If there be absence of any perfection, or the presence of any imperfection, he would not be God. But non-performance argues both ; this divests him of all perfection, and consequently makes him most imperfect.

Faithfulness. He is not faithful amongst men, who answers not his engagements ; he fails his trusts who keeps not promise.

Truth. 'He that believes not, makes God a liar ;' for how is he true who doth not what he says he will do ?

Justice. That does *sum cuique tribuere*. The promise makes every thing promised our own, and it is injustice not to give it.

Goodness. He is bad amongst men, who is not as good as his word.

Holiness. His promise is as sacred as our vows to him. Violation of a vow is a profanation, so is non-performance of a promise. If he perform not, it is because either he will not, and then where is mercy ? or cannot, and then how is he all-sufficient ? If he cannot, it is either for want of wisdom, and then where is his omniscience ? or ability, then how is he omnipotent ? or opportunity, then how is he omnipresent ? Nothing but absence in him can occasion the want of an opportunity. Either he never intended it, and then how is he upright ? It is odious dissimulation, with men, to speak what they never intend. Or he did once intend it, but now does not ; then how is he unchangeable ? If he is not unchangeable, he is not eternal ; for there is no succession, no variation in eternity. If not eternal, not infinite. If not all these, not God.

As sure as he is God, as sure as he has any perfection, he will perform his promises. He that doubts of performance, doubts of God's being by consequence. Unbelief is horrible atheism, it dethrones God. You may as well say there is no God, as say there shall be no performance. The glory of his being is concerned ; that is infinitely more than our happiness. He loses nothing if he perform ; all, if he do not.

His engagements are infinite. Every perfection engages, and every perfection is infinite ; therefore the obligations are strong, and the performance sure, above the apprehension of men and angels.

We have all the confirmations and assurances, *ad extra*, that the most suspicious heart can desire.

God's word. That is more than the word of angels, more than all his works, as much as himself. He engages himself when he engages his word ; he should deny himself if he should fail. Men may be men, though unfaithful, but God cannot be God : his being is concerned.

Writing. We have them under God's hand, have his hand to shew. He would not have us to depend upon uncertain revelations, here Satan might have deluded us, but inspired holy men of God to write what he dictated, has delivered it as his act and deed. His word of promise written, is more assuring than a voice from heaven would be, 2 Pet. i. 19.

Sealed. The sacraments are seals of the righteousness of faith, seals of the covenant wherein faith apprehends that righteousness. 'The covenant of promises.' 'The New Testament in my blood.' A double seal : without, the impressions are Christ's sufferings in blood ; a seal within, the Spirit, Eph. i. 13 ; 2 Cor. i. 22.

Sureties. A surety equal with the principal. He who counts it no rob-

bery to be equal with God; equal, both in faithfulness and sufficiency, as willing and as able; no robbery to be equal with God, a disparagement to be compared with men or angels; he who sees no steadfastness in saints or angels, sees nothing else in him: he has engaged with himself his Son and heir, and made him the mediator of this better covenant, Heb. viii. 6, and ix. 15; Heb. vii. 22, he who values his faithfulness more than his life.

Pledge. Of as much worth, and more than heaven and earth, the eternal Spirit: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit;' chap. v. 5, 6, 'Who hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident,' &c.; Eph. i. 13, 14, 'In whom ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.' God will forfeit his Spirit, rather than fail his promise.

Oath. He has confirmed it by an oath, Heb. vi. 17, 18; we have no more cause to fear the promise will not be performed than that God will be perjured.

Witnesses. Besides those in heaven who bear witness with the Father, the Word and Spirit; and those in earth, 1 John v. 8, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; 'Christ the faithful witness,' Rev. i. 5; and the 'Spirit which beareth witness with our spirits,' Rom. viii. 16; we have heaven and earth, men and angels, to witness. These things were not done in a corner. As the Lord calls heaven and earth to witness against the unfaithfulness of men, so may we call them to witness the faithfulness of God.