

The aspect of faith upon this wonderful Person, how relieving, how reviving, how abundantly satisfying is it? God will never divorce the believing soul, and its comfort, after he hath married our nature to his own Son, by the hypostatical, and our persons also, by the blessed mystical union.

SERMON VI.

Of the Authority by which CHRIST, as Mediator, acted.

JOHN vi. 27.

For him hath God the Father sealed.

YOU have heard Christ's compact, or agreement with the Father, in the covenant of redemption; as also what the Father did, in pursuance of the ends thereof, in giving his Son out of his bosom, &c. also what the Son hath done towards it, in assuming flesh. But though the glorious work be thus far advanced, yet all he should act in that assumed body, had been invalid and vain, without a due call, and commission from the Father, so to do: which is the import of the words now before you.

This scripture is a part of Christ's excellent reply to a self-ended generation, who followed him, not for any spiritual excellencies that they saw in him, or soul-advantages they expected by him, but for bread. Instead of making his service their meat and drink, they only served him, that they might eat and drink. *Self* is a thing may creep into the best hearts and actions; but it only predominates in the hypocrite. These people had sought Christ from place to place, and having at last found him, they salute him with an impertinent compliment, "Rabbi, whence camest thou hither?" verse 25. Christ's reply is partly *dissuasive*, and partly *directive*. He dissuades them from putting the secondary and subordinate, in the place of the principal and ultimate end; not to prefer their bodies to their souls, their fleshly accommodations to the glory of God. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." Wherein he doth not take them off from their lawful labours and callings; but he dissuades them, *first*, from minding those things too intently: and, *secondly*, he dissuades them from that odious sin of making religion but a pretence for the belly.

And it is partly *directive*, and that in the main end and business of life. "But labour for that meat which endureth to eternal life;"

to get bread for your souls to live eternally by. And, that he might engage their diligence in seeking it to purpose, he shews them not only where they may have it, [“which the Son of man shall give you”] but also how they may be fully satisfied, that he hath it for them, in the clause I have pitched on; “For him hath God the Father sealed.”

In these words are three parts observable.

1. The Person sealing or investing Christ with authority and power; which is said to be *God the Father*. Though all the persons in the Godhead are equal in nature, dignity and power, yet in their operation there is an order observed among them; the *Father* sends the Son, the *Son* is sent by the Father, the *Holy Ghost* is sent by both.

2. The subject in which God the Father lodges this authority, [*Him*] that is, the Son of man. Jesus Christ, he is the *πρωτον δεξαμενον*, the first receptacle of it; and he must here be understood exclusively. God the Father hath so sealed him, as he never sealed any other before him, or that shall arise after him. No name is given in heaven, or earth, but this name by which we are saved, Acts iv. 12. “The government is upon his shoulders,” Isa. ix.

3. Here is farther observable, the way and manner of the Father’s delegating and committing this authority to Christ; and that is, by *sealing him*. Where we have both a *metonymy*, the symbol of authority being put for the authority itself, and a *metaphor*, *sealing*, which is a human act, for the ratifying and confirming an instrument, or grant, being here applied to God. *Like as princes, by sealed credentials, confirm the authority of those that are sent by them*; as the Dutch Annotators well express the meaning of it. Hence we note,

Doct. That Jesus Christ did not of himself undertake the work of our redemption, but was solemnly sealed unto that work by God the Father.

When I say, he did not of himself undertake this work, I mean not that he was unwilling to go about it, for his heart was as fully and ardently engaged in it, as the Father’s was: so he tells us, Psal. xl. 7. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart.” But the meaning is, he came not without a due call, and full commission from his Father. And so it is to be understood in opposition to intrusion, not voluntary susception; and this is the meaning of that scripture, John viii. 24. “I proceeded and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.” And this the apostle plainly expresseth, and fully

clear;* Heb. v. 4, 5. "And no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: so also, Christ glorified not himself to be made an High-priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son.'" And on the account of these sealed credentials, he received from the Father, he is called the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Heb. iii. 1. *i. e.* one called and sent forth by the Father's authority. Our present business, then, is to open Christ's commission, and to view the great seal of heaven by which it was ratified.

And, to preserve a clear method in the explication of this great truth, into which your faith and comfort is resolved, I shall,

First, Shew what was the work and office to which the Father sealed him.

Secondly, What his sealing to this work doth imply.

Thirdly, How, and by what acts, the Father sealed him to it.

Fourthly, Why it was necessary that he should be thus sealed and authorized by his Father; and then improve it in its proper uses.

First, What was that office, or work, to which his Father sealed him? I answer, more generally, he was sealed to the whole work of mediation for us, thereby to recover and save all the elect, whom the Father had given him; so John xvii. 2. "It was to give eternal life to as many as were given him: it was to bring Jacob again to him," Isa. xlix. 5. or as the apostle expresses it, 1 Pet. iii. 18. "That he might bring us to God." More particularly, in order to the sure, and full effecting of this most glorious design, he was sealed to the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, that so he might bring about and compass this work.

1. God sealed him a commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation to sinners. This commission Christ opened and read in the audience of the people, Luke iv. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, &c. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

2. He also sealed him to the priesthood, and that the most excellent; authorizing him to execute both the parts of it, *viz.* *oblatory* and *intercessory*. He called him to offer up himself a sacrifice

* That there can be no other thing inferred from this expression of the apostle, but this, that Christ was called to the office of Mediator, by him whose Son he was. *Cameron's Myrotheca*, p. 317.

for us. "I have power (saith he) to lay down my life; this commandment have I received of my Father," John x. 18. And upon that account, his offering up of his blood is, by the apostle, stiled an act of obedience, as it is, Phil. ii. 8. "He became obedient unto death." He also called him to intercede for us; Heb. vii. 21, 24, 25. "These priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath; by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever:" because his sacrifice is virtually continued, in his living for ever to make intercession, as it is, verse 24. Yea,

3. He called him to his regal office; he was set upon the highest throne of authority by his Father's commission, as it is, Matth. xxviii. 18. "All power in heaven and earth is given to me." To all this was Christ sealed and authorized by his Father.

Secondly, What doth the Father's sealing of Christ to this work and office imply? There are divers things implied in it: As,

1. The validity and efficacy of all his mediatory acts. For, by virtue of this his sealing whatever he did was fully ratified. And in this very thing lies much of a believer's comfort and security; forasmuch as all acts done without commission and authority (how great, or able soever the person that doth them is, yet) are in themselves null and void. But what is done by commission and authority, is authentic, and most allowable among men. Had Christ come from heaven, and entered upon his mediatory work without a due call, our faith had been stumbled at the very threshold; but this greatly satisfies.

2. It imports the great obligation lying upon Jesus Christ to be faithful in the work he was sealed to: for, the Father, in this commission, devolves a great trust upon him, and relies upon him for his most faithful discharge thereof. And, indeed, upon this very account Christ reckons himself specially obliged to pursue the Father's design and end, John ix. 4. "I must work the works of him that sent me." And John v. 30. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Still his eye is upon that work and will of his Father. And he reckons himself under a necessity of punctual and precise obedience to it; and, as a faithful servant, will have his own will swallowed up in his Father's will.

3. It imports Christ's complete qualification, or instrumental fitness to serve the Father's design and end of our recovery. Had not God known him to be every way fit, and qualified for the work, he would never have sealed him a commission for it. Men may, but God will not seal an unfit, or incapable person, for his work. And, indeed, whatever is desirable in a servant, was eminently found in Christ: for *faithfulness*, none like him. Moses

indeed was faithful to a pin, but still as a servant : but Christ as a Son, Heb. iii. 2. He is the faithful and true witness, Rev. i. 5. For *zeal*, none like him. The zeal of God's house did eat him up, John ii. 16, 17. He was so intent upon his Father's works that he forgot to eat bread, counting his work his meat and drink, John iv. 32. Yea, and love to his Father carried him on through all his work, and made him delight in the hardest piece of his service ; for he served him as a Son, Heb. iii. 5, 6. All that ever he did was done in love. For *wisdom*, none like him. The Father knew him to be most wise, and said of him before he was employed, " Behold my servant shall deal prudently," Isa. lii. 13. To conclude, for *self-denial*, never any like him ; he sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him, John viii. 50. Had he not been thus faithful, zealous, full of love, prudent, and self-denying, he had never been employed in this great affair.

4. It implies Christ's sole authority in the church, to appoint and enjoin what he pleaseth ; and this is his peculiar prerogative. For, the commission God sealed him in the text, is a single, not a joint commission ; he hath sealed him, and none beside him. Indeed there were some that pretended a call and commission from God ; but all that were before him were thieves and robbers,* that came not in at the door, as he did, John x. 8. And he himself foretels, that after him some should arise, and labour to deceive the world with a feigned commission, and a counterfeit seal, Matth. xxiv. 24. " There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders : insomuch, that " if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." But God never commissioned any besides him, neither is there any other name under heaven, Acts iv. 12. Thus you see how the validity of his acts, his obligation to be faithful, his complete qualifications, and sole authority in the church, are imported in his sealing.

Thirdly, Let us enquire how God the Father sealed Jesus Christ to this work, and we shall find that he was sealed by four acts of the Father.

1. *By solemn designation to this work.* He singled him out and set him apart for it : and therefore the prophet Isaiah, chap. xlii. 1. calls him *God's elect*.† And the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 4. *Chosen of God*. This word which we render *Elect*,‡ doth not only signify

* All that came before me (that is, whom I did not send, but who ran unsent, giving themselves out for the Messiah) are thieves and robbers ; after their guileful manner, they have contrived certain false doors to heaven, by which they have thrown men down headlong into the abyss of everlasting misery. *Dutericus*,

† בְּיָדָיו Elect, i. e. choice, surpassing, excellent.

‡ See the *Dutch annotations* on this place.

one that in himself is eximious, worthy, and excellent, but also one that is set apart and designed, as Christ was, for the work of mediation. And so much is included in John x. 36. where the Father is said to sanctify him, *i. e.* to separate, and devote him to this service.

2. He was sealed, not only by solemn designation, but also *super-eminent and unparalleled sanctification*. He was anointed, as well as appointed to it. The Lord filled him with the Spirit, and that without measure, to qualify him for this service. So Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach," &c. Yea, the Spirit of the Lord was not only upon him, but he was full of the Spirit, Luke iv. 1. and so full as was never any beside him; for God "anointed him with the oil of gladness, above his fellows," Psalm xlv. 7. Believers are his fellows, or co-partners of this Spirit:* they have an anointing also, but not as Christ had; † in him it dwelt in its fulness, in them according to measure. It was poured out on Christ, our Head, abundantly, and ran down to the hem of his garment. "God gave "not the Spirit to him by measure," John iii. 34. God filled Christ's human nature, to the utmost capacity, with all fulness of the Spirit of knowledge, wisdom, love, &c. beyond all creatures, for the plenary and more effectual administration of his mediatorship: he was full *extensively*, with all kinds of grace; and full *intensively*, with all degrees of grace. "It pleased the Father "that in him should all fulness dwell, Col. i. 19. as light in the sun, or water in a fountain, that he might not only *fill all things*, as the apostle speaks, Eph. i. 22. but that he might be prompt, expedite, and every way fit to discharge his own work, which was the next and immediate end of it: so that the holy oil that was poured out upon the head of kings and priests, whereby they were consecrated to their offices, was but typical of the Spirit, by which Christ was consecrated, or sealed, to his offices ‡.

3. Christ was sealed *by the Father's immediate testimony from heaven, whereby he was declared to be the person whom the Father had solemnly designed and appointed to this work*. And God gave this extraordinary testimony of him at two remarkable seasons; the one was just at his entrance on his public ministry, Mat. iii. ult. the

* From Christ come the name Christians, which is as much as to say, Partakers of an holy unction: True Christians have not merely the name without the thing; but they who are called by the name of Christians have the anointing which the name imports. *Glass*.

† These gifts, considered absolutely, and in themselves, were finite; even as the human nature of Christ itself was finite; yet in respect of us, they were indeed without measure. *Dr. Alt. Explication of the Catechism. Part II. p. 170.*

‡ Exed, xxx. 23, 24, 25, 31, 32.

other but a little before his sufferings, Matth. xvii. 5. This voice was not formed by such organs and instruments of speech, as ours are, but by creating a voice in the air * which the people heard sounding therein: by this God owned, approved, and as by a seal ratified his work.

4. Christ was sealed by the Father, *in all those extraordinary miraculous works wrought by him*, in which the Father gave yet more full and convincing testimonies to the world, that this was he whom he had appointed to be our Mediator. These were convictive to the world, that God had sent him, and that his doctrine was of God. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him," Acts x. 38. And so, John v. 36. "I have a greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Therefore he still referred those that doubted of him, or of his doctrine, to the seal of his Father, even the miraculous works he wrought in the power of God, Matth. xi. 3, 4, 5. And thus the Father sealed him.

Fourthly and lastly, We will enquire why it was necessary Christ should be sealed by his Father to this work: and there are these three weighty reasons for it.

1. *Else he had not corresponded with the types which prefigured him, and in him it was necessary that they should be all accomplished.* You know, under the Law, the kings and high priests had their inaugurations by solemn unctions; in all which this consecration, or sealing of Christ to his work, was shadowed out: and therefore you shall find, Heb. v. 4, 5. "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron:" so also (mark the necessary correspondency betwixt Christ and them) "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son."

2. Moreover, *hereby the hearts of believers are the more engaged to love the Father, inasmuch as it appears hereby that the Father's love, and good will to them, was the original and spring of their redemption.* For had not the Father sealed him such a commission, he had not come; but now he comes in the Father's name, and in the Father's love, as well as his name; and so all men are bound to ascribe equal glory and honour to them both, as it is, John v. 23.

3. And especially Christ would not come without a commission, because, *else you had no ground for your faith in him.* How should we have been *satisfied* that this is indeed the true Messiah,

* Caryl on Job i. 7.

except he had opened his commission to the world, and shewed his Father's seal annexed to it? If he had come without his *credentials* from heaven, and only told the world that God had sent him, and that they must take his bare word for it, who could have rested his faith on that testimony? And that is the true meaning of that place, John v. 31. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." How so? You will say, doth not that contradict what he saith, John viii. 14. "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true." Therefore you must understand truth, not as it is opposed to *reality*; but the meaning is, if I had only given you my bare word for it, and not brought other evidence from my Father, my testimony had not been authentic and valid, according to human laws; but now all doubtings are precluded. Let us next improve this.

Inf. 1. Hence we infer the *unreasonableness of infidelity*, and how little rejecters of Christ can have to pretend for their so doing. You see he hath opened his commission in the gospel, shewn the world his Father's hand and seal to it, given as ample satisfaction as reason itself could desire, or expect; yet even his own received him not, John i. 11. And he knew it before-hand, and therefore complained by the prophet, Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report?" &c. Yea, and that he is believed on in the world, is by the apostle put among the great mysteries of godliness, 1 Tim. iii. 16. A man that well considers with what convincing evidence Christ comes, would rather think it a mystery, that any should not believe. But, Oh the brutish obstinacy, and devilish enmity, that is in nature to Jesus Christ! Devilish did I say? You must give me that word again, for he compelled the devil's assent; "We know thee, whom thou art." And it is equally as wonderful to see the facility that is in nature to comply (meanwhile) with any, even the most foolish imposture. Let a false Christ arise, and he shall deceive many, as it is, Matth. xxiv. 24. Of this Christ complains, and not without great reason, John v. 43. "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: If another come in his own name, him will ye receive," *q. d.* You are incredulous to none but me: every deceiver, every pitiful cheat, that hath but wit, or rather wickedness, enough to tell you the Lord hath sent him, though you must take his own single word for it, he shall obtain and get disciples; but though I come in my Father's name, *i. e.* shewing you a commission signed and sealed by him, doing those works which none but a God can do, yet ye receive me not. But in all this, we must adore the justice of God, permitting it to be so, giving men up to such unreasonable obstinacy and hardness. It is a sore plague that lies upon the world, and a wonder that we all are not ingulphed in the same infidelity.

Inf. 2. If Christ was sealed to his work by his Father, then *how*

great is the sin of those that reject and despise such as are sent and sealed by Jesus Christ? For look, as he came to us in his Father's name, so he hath sent forth, by the same authority, ministers in his name; * and as he acts in his Father's, so they in his, authority. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world," John xvii. 18. And so, John xx. 21. "As my Father hath sent me, so have I sent you." You may think it a small matter to despise or reject a minister of Christ, (a sin, in the guilt whereof, I think no age hath been plunged deeper than this;) but hear, and let it be a warning to you for ever: in so doing you despise, and put the slight both upon the Father that sent Jesus, and upon Christ that sent them: so that it is a rebellion, that however it seems to begin low in some small piques against their persons, or some little quarrels at their parts and utterance, tones, methods or gestures; yet it runs high, even to the fountain-head of the most supreme authority. You that set yourselves against a minister of Christ, set yourselves against God the Father, and God the Son; Luke x. 16. "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." God expects that you behave yourselves, under the word spoken by us, as if he himself spake it; yea, he expects submission to his word in the mouths of his ministers from the greatest on earth. And therefore it was that God so severely punished Zedekiah, "because he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12. God was angry with a great king for not humbling himself before a poor prophet. Yet here you must distinguish both of *Persons*, and of *Acts*. † This reverence and submission is not due to them as men, but as men in office, as Christ's ambassadors; and must involve that respect still in it. Again, we owe it not to them, commanding or forbidding in their own names, but in Christ's, not in venting their own spleen, but the terrors of the Lord; and then to resist is a high rebellion and affront to the sovereign authority of heaven. And, by the way, this may instruct ministers, that the way to maintain that veneration and respect that is due to them, in the consciences of their hearers, is by keeping close to their commission.

* This form of the mission of the Apostles by Christ, evidently enough shews the dignity of their office, in their authority and power, which was supreme and incomparable. *Cameron*.

† As if a master of a family should first prescribe to his servant what he should order to be done in the family, and then should say, Whoso heareth you, heareth me; it would not thence follow, that it is impossible for that servant to depart from what his Master had prescribed to him; or whenever he should do so, he should be obeyed. *Cameron, Myroth. p. 130.*

Inf. 3. Hence also we infer, *how great an evil it is to intrude into the office of the ministry without a due call.* It is more than Christ himself would do; he glorified not himself: the honours and advantages attending that office, have invited many, to run before they were sent. But surely this is an insufferable violation of Christ's order. Our age hath abounded with as many church-levellers as state-levellers. I wish the ministers of Christ might at last see and consider, what they were once warned of by a faithful watchman: 'I believe (*saith he* *) God hath permitted so many to intrude into 'the ministers' calling, because ministers have too much meddled 'with, and intruded into other men's callings.'

Inf. 4. Hence be convinced of *the great efficacy that is in all gospel ordinances duly administered:* For Christ having received full commission from his Father, and by virtue thereof having instituted and appointed these ordinances in the church, all the power in heaven is engaged to make them good, to back and second them, to confirm and ratify them. Hence, in the censures of the church, you have that great expression, Matth. xviii. 18. "Whatsoever ye bind "or loose on earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven." And so, for the word and sacraments, Matth. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. "All power "in heaven and earth is given unto me: Go therefore, &c. They are not the appointments of men; your faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. That very power, God the Father committed to Christ, is the fountain whence all gospel institutions flow. And he hath promised to be with his officers, not only the extraordinary officers of that age, but with his ministers, in succeeding ages, to the end of the world. O therefore, when we come to an ordinance, come not with slight thoughts, but with great reverence, and great expectations, remembering Christ is there to make all good.

Inf. 5. Again, here you have *another call to admire the grace and love, both of the Father and Son to your souls:* It is not lawful to compare them, but it is duty to admire them. Was it not wonderful grace in the Father to seal a commission for the death of his Son, for the humbling him as low as hell, and in that method to save you, when you might have expected he should have sealed your *Mittimus* for hell, rather than a commission for your salvation? he might rather have set his irreversible seal to the sentence of your damnation, than to a commission for his Son's humiliation for you. And no less is the love of Christ to be wondered at, that would accept such a commission, as this for us, and receive this seal, understanding fully (as he did) what were the contents

* Mr. Strong.

of that commission, that the Father delivered him thus sealed, and knowing that there could be no reversing of it afterwards.

O then, love the Lord Jesus, all ye his saints, for still you see more and more of his love breaking out upon you. I commend to you a sealed Saviour this day; O that every one that reads these lines might, in a pang of love, cry out with the enamoured spouse, Cant. viii. 6. "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame."

Inf. 6. Once more; Hath God sealed Christ for you? *Then draw forth the comfort of his sealing for you, and be restless till ye also be sealed by him.*

1. Draw out the comfort of Christ's sealing for you. Remember that hereby God stands engaged, even by his own seal, to allow and confirm whatever Christ hath done in the business of our salvation. And on this ground you may thus plead with God: Lord, thou hast sealed Christ to this office, and therefore I depend upon it, that thou allowest all that he hath done, and all that he hath suffered for me, and wilt make good all that he hath promised me. If men will not deny their own seals, much less wilt thou.

2. Get your interest in Christ sealed to you by the Spirit, else you cannot have the comfort of Christ's being sealed for you. Now the Spirit seals two ways, *Objectively* and *Effectually*; the first is by working those graces in us, which are the conditions of the promises: the latter is by shining upon his own work, and helping the soul to discern it, which follows the other, both in order of nature, and of time. And these sealings of the Spirit are to be distinguished, both *ex parte subjecti*, or the quality of the person sealed, which always is a believer, Eph. i. 13. for there can be no reflex, till there have been a *direct Act* of faith; and *ex parte materiae*, by the matter of which that comfort is made: which if it be of the Spirit, is ever consonant to the written word, Isa. viii. 20. And partly *ab effectis*, by its effects: for it commonly produces in the sealed soul, great care and caution to avoid sin, Eph. iv. 30. Great love to God, John xiv. 22. Readiness to suffer any thing for Christ, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. Confidence in addresses to God, 1 John v. 13, 14. and great humility and self-abasement; as in Abraham, who lay on his face when God sealed the covenant to him, Gen. xvii. 1, 2, 3. This, O this brings home the sweet and good of all, when this seal is super-added to that.