

SERMON XV.

In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.—VER. 13, 14.

I HAVE proceeded unto these words in opening of this chapter. The coherence of these words with the former is both natural and elegant. He had spoken of an inheritance which they were predestinated unto, so ver. 11; which inheritance was purchased for them by Jesus Christ; so, ver. 14, it is called 'the purchased possession.' Being appointed them and purchased for them, he telleth them, in the 13th verse, that the gospel brought the first news of it to them: 'After you heard,' saith he, 'the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' Upon their hearing of it, their faith closed with it, and by believing they obtained that inheritance; so saith the 11th verse. Now, because that this inheritance, though the right unto it was obtained by believing on Jesus Christ, though it was appointed for them from everlasting,—they were 'predestinated according to his purpose,' so saith the 11th verse,—although purchased by Jesus Christ, yet they stood still out of the possession of it. In the meantime, therefore, 'till the redemption of this purchased possession,' till the time should come that they should enjoy it, he giveth them the Holy Spirit, who had both sealed them up to it, and had given them the earnest of it in their hearts. 'After you believed,' saith he, 'you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance.'

For the division of these words,—I mean the first part of them, viz., those in the 13th verse, 'In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,'—they fall naturally into these parts:—

First, Here is A WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST DISTINCT FROM FAITH: 'After you believed, you were sealed.' There is a work of SEALING, to open which will be the greatest difficulty that I shall have to do with at this time.

Here is, *Secondly*, THE ORDER OF THAT WORK: it is 'after they had believed.'

Here is, *Thirdly*, THE VIRTUAL CAUSE, if I may so call it, in whom this sealing was wrought: it is *in Christ*, 'in whom after ye believed ye were sealed.' *In whom* referreth to sealing, as I shall shew you anon.

Fourthly, Here is THE PERSON THAT IS THE SEALER; it is the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Trinity; and he is set forth unto us, as he is a sealer, two ways:—

First, He is the 'Spirit of promise.'

Secondly, He is a 'holy Spirit.'

Then, *Fifthly*, here are THE PERSONS SEALED: 'After ye believed,' speaking to the Ephesians, 'ye were sealed,' &c.

I. To begin with the *first*. I shall profess merely to perform the part of an expositor, and but mention such observations concerning *sealing*, which

in itself will afford a large field of discourse otherwise, as the text affordeth. And first, concerning this sealing, let us inquire what that is.

I shall *first* shew you *what it is not*; which some interpreters have given to be the meaning of it too.

Secondly, I shall endeavour to shew you *what it is*.

First, What it is not. I will not trouble you with what Popish interpreters make this sealing to be, because they are enemies to assurance of salvation. But, first, Piscator and some others do take it for the work of faith itself; and so they express the meaning of it to be, that in believing, in the work of faith, the Holy Ghost did seal up the truth of the promise unto their hearts. The like saith Calvin upon this place; and they have these two reasons for it. Because he is called the *Spirit of promise*, say they; because he sealeth up the truth of the promises, when men believe. And whereas he had called the gospel the 'word of truth' in the words before, he speaks, say they, to these Ephesians, and telleth them, Ye know it by this to be the truth, for the Holy Ghost did seal it up to you, when you believed.

Their meaning, that I may explain it to you, as I understand it, is this: there is a *twofold assurance*.

There is, first, an assurance of the truth of the promises,—and that is their meaning,—whereby a man's understanding is spiritually convinced that the promises are true and from God. And, secondly, there is an assurance of a man's interest in those promises.

Now, when they say that the Holy Ghost, in believing, seals believers, their meaning is, that he sealeth up the truth of the promises to them. Now to confute this interpretation in a word or two. I do grant them *three things* concerning it.

The first is, that it is a truth that in all faith there is an assurance of the *truth* of the promises wrought. I do not say there is an assurance of a man's *interest* in the promises. No, but whoever believeth hath unbelief thus far subdued, that he fully believeth this promise is true, and giveth up his soul unto it. There is a prevailing assurance of the truth of the promise, above all doubting, in every believer. I do not say it excludeth doubting; neither do I say it is an assurance of a man's own personal interest in the promise. I could shew you this by Scripture, but I must not insist upon it.

In the second place, I grant that this is a work of the Holy Ghost. It is not all the light of reason that can convince a man spiritually of the truth of a promise, or draw his heart into rest upon it. Speaking of the conversion of the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. i. 5, and of the Apostle's entrance among them when they first were turned to God, he saith, that 'the gospel came not unto them in word only, but in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.' The *Holy Ghost* and *assurance* are both there joined together.

Nay, in the third place, the Holy Ghost's convincing a man of the truth of any promise is called a sealing. I grant that likewise. Job, chap. xxxiii. 16, speaking of the manner of God's converting men in those times, which was done by visions and by dreams, 'then,' saith he, 'he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.'

But yet, though all this be granted, this is not the meaning of the place, to speak of the work of faith. For, first, if you mark it, it is not a sealing up of the promise, the truth of it, a sealing of *instruction*, that the Apostle here speaks of; but it is a sealing of their *persons*, and so their personal interest in the promise: 'by whom,' saith he, '*ye* were sealed;' he doth not

say the promise, or the truth of it, was sealed to them, but *their persons* were sealed.

Then, secondly, it cannot be meant of that sealing of instruction that is wrought in believing, for it cometh after believing; 'after ye believed,' saith he, 'ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise.' I know Piscator readeth the words otherwise, but I shall meet with his interpretation anon, (for the order of it,) when I speak to that point.

Again, it is evident he speaks of this sealing as a distinct thing from faith. For suppose this sealing were at the same time that men believe; suppose he had said, When you believe you were sealed; yet it is evident that it must needs be a distinct thing from faith. If a man saith that he did such a thing when such a thing was, it argueth he speaks of two things.

Lastly, if he had spoken of the sealing of the Spirit as the cause of faith, he would not have said, 'when you believed you were sealed with the Spirit,' but 'through sealing you did believe.' He would have spoken of faith as an act of theirs, and of sealing as an act of the Spirit, the cause of faith. And so much to confute that interpretation.

I find, again, in the other place, that Zanchy doth acknowledge—as a man must needs do—that sealing here is a distinct work from faith. But then he interpreteth it of the work of regeneration, and of sanctification, and renewing the image of God upon a man's heart; and his reason is this: for, saith he, a seal doth import the impression of an image; he giveth many reasons, but that is the main. Now, because that sanctification beareth the image of God, therefore, saith he, the sealing of the Spirit is the stamping of holiness and of all the frame of graces upon the heart; which, saith he, is upon believing, is wrought in a man by faith.

Now, my brethren, to confute this. I do grant that the seal here mentioned doth imply and import, in a secondary sense, the stamping of the image of God upon the heart, and therefore this attribute of *holy* is given to the Spirit as he is a sealer. But yet it is not the meaning of the Holy Ghost here, not the principal meaning of it, especially not the first work of sanctification; and the reasons are these:—

For, first, besides that many divines hold—and I think not without ground—that all the principles of sanctification are wrought in the heart before an act of faith, they are all wrought together; this is a truth, that the acts of sanctification depend upon the acts of faith foregoing them, (it will decide a controversy;) I say the acts of sanctification, our acting of love to God and obedience, do follow the acts of faith, laying hold upon Christ, and free grace; but yet the working of the image is presupposed before faith in order of nature. I might prove this unto you at large.

But, secondly, if the working of the image of God upon the heart were the thing here intended to be the seal, he would not say, 'after ye believed.' Why? Because that believing and faith is part of the image of God, part of the image of Christ, as well as any other holy disposition in us. It is said, we 'receive grace for grace' of Christ, John i. 16. That is, look what graces he had, we also have, and faith amongst the rest; and therefore, 1 John v. 1, he that believeth is said to be born of God.

And then there is this third reason for it also, why the first work of regeneration is not here intended in this metaphor; for the Apostle followeth an allusion of making sure an inheritance. Now, when the Scripture speaks of the work of sanctification and of regeneration, he nowhere calls it the seal of the Spirit, but he calleth it the writing of the law in the heart. For you know, when you will make a thing sure, you write the covenants, and when

you have done, you seal to it. Now sanctification is the writing in the heart, as the scripture is written in the book. So you have it, 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Forasmuch,' saith he, 'as ye are declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.' Here is sanctification; now the Holy Ghost is as ink, and that is as writing; but here the Holy Ghost is as the seal, and the work here which the Holy Ghost works is as the thing sealed.

That which occasioneth this mistake is this: because every seal hath an image in it, it was therefore supposed that the main intent of sealing was this stamping of an image; but that is not the main intent of a seal. It is true every seal hath an image upon it which it leaveth upon the wax; but yet the main intent of a seal is to assure or ascertain, to certify and make known, and to convey and make sure a thing; that is the intent of a seal, that is the primary intent of it; only, *ex consequente*, by way of consequence, and because you may know this seal is true, you have an image annexed to it. So I have confuted those interpretations that put most fair. It was necessary for me to do it, for they that read comments will find that these are the great interpretations.

Secondly, Now then, in examining *what it is*, I shall do that first in general.

It is, first, a work of the Holy Ghost. That is certain, he may be called an *earnest*, the Holy Ghost's person may be so called; but he is not called a *seal*, but in relation to an act of sealing. It importeth a work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart. This giving of the person of the Holy Ghost to a man is the highest earnest of heaven, more than all your graces. But if you speak of the Holy Ghost as a seal, it importeth a thing sealed, an act of his, a work upon a man's spirit. That is the first.

Secondly, It is a metaphorical expression, or a similitude; and if you will open this similitude, you must have recourse to the use of seals, what use seals serve for.

Divines give many uses of a seal that they apply to this particular in the text. They say, God sealeth his children, because he owneth them to be his by way of appropriation, setteth them apart to be his, as you merchants seal your goods, and so distinguish them from other men's goods; as, Cant. iv. 12, the spouse is called a sealed fountain unto Christ. The meaning of which metaphor is this: the Jews, you know, whose drink was water, there were some fountains and springs more delicate than others. Those that were great men, such as Solomon, the kings and others, if they had a delicate spring of waters, they rolled a stone upon it, (so you read they did of their wells, Gen. xxix. 3,) and then when they had done they would seal that stone, that their servants or others, walking in their enclosed gardens, might not taste of that spring. They would reserve it for themselves. As in Matt. xxvii., 'they sealed up the stone that was rolled upon the sepulchre to make it sure;' so they used to do to their fountains—rolling a stone upon them, they sealed them up. It is an allusion to what one's wife or spouse should be to him. She should be as a sealed fountain, appropriated unto him alone; and so, saith Christ, is the Church to me. Prov. v. 15, 18, 'Drink waters out of thine own cistern;' 'Let thy fountain be blessed,' saith he, speaking of a man's wife; 'rejoice with the wife of thy youth.' And so now, to appropriate the soul to Christ, to make the soul that sealed fountain, this is one interpretation they give of it.

So likewise for *estimation*, and for *security*, and the like. They give many such. But, my brethren, I cut off all such interpretations in a word or two.

And the first is this: that you have all these upon believing, as well as after believing. You are distinguished from other men, you are sealed in that sense, you are appropriated to God when you are first converted; but this sealing is after believing: therefore still this hitteth it not.

Secondly, let there be never so many uses of a seal, that which is proper to the scope here is sealing of an inheritance. You see the Apostle speaks of an inheritance, whereof the Holy Ghost is a sealer. 'We have obtained,' saith he, 'an inheritance by faith,' and having believed, we are 'sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.'

So that now, if you would know the proper meaning of the word, you must have recourse to the use of a seal in sealing up of an inheritance.

What use is there of a seal in sealing up of inheritances?

There is a double use of it. There is, first, a making the inheritance sure to a man in itself; and there is, secondly, a making the man know that it is his, to confirm and settle his spirit that it is his. Now let us see which of these two is the seal here meant.

First, it is not the sealing of it to make a thing sure, to make salvation sure, that is not the scope principally here, *to make it sure in itself*; and the reason is this: for to make salvation sure there needeth no seal after believing. No, there was a seal set to make salvation sure long before his believing, therefore that is not the Apostle's scope here. Look into 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his.' He speaks of God's eternal election; there is the seal now by which salvation is made sure in itself; therefore now for the Holy Ghost to seal it up, to make it sure in itself afterward, it needed not; there needed not a second seal to that end. No, upon thy believing, and by being sanctified, and receiving the Spirit at first, thy salvation is made as sure as by all the works of the Holy Ghost for ever after.

Well then, secondly, there is nothing, therefore, that is left that should be the meaning and the principal scope of the Holy Ghost here, but this, that they are sealed by the Spirit *to make them sure*, to make their persons sure of their salvation, to persuade their hearts, to put them out of question that this inheritance was theirs, that they might be able to claim it. In Jer. xxxii. 10, when Jeremiah did buy land, you read there that he had both the evidences written, and he had witnesses to them, and he had them sealed too; and all this in public, before public notaries, before the magistrate. It is the manner amongst men still; and the Holy Ghost alludeth to what was done then; he doth, I say, mention his sealing there unto that end, that there might be a public and a general notice, that he himself might be able to claim that land for ever.

Now, my brethren, this is that that I pitch upon to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost here. You must know that in ancient times, as likewise now, as the Scripture recordeth, when there should be a public certificate made that all men should take knowledge that such an act is authentical, it was done by a seal and without hands sometimes. Look into Esther viii. 8, 9, when a decree was made by the Persian monarch, it is said it was written in the king's name,—there was not the king's hand to it,—and it was sealed with the king's ring. Read on in that chapter; he wrote (at the 10th verse) in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring. All acknowledged that to be the king's seal when they saw it. The end of the seal was to make a certificate, that it might be known by those whom it did concern. And therefore now, to this day, you see, where the king's broad seal is, the king's hand is not to it; but there is the seal set, and it is

enough to assure all that see it that it is the king's act. The end of a seal here, therefore, is to make known, to assure, to persuade, and to certify that such a thing is an act of God's.

And, my brethren, not to make salvation *sure in itself*, but to make *us sure of it*, is plainly the meaning of the Holy Ghost here ; for, first, you shall see that in other Scriptures sealing is so taken. Take but one or two places ; I will name one eminent one, 2 Cor. i. 21, 'Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God ; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' As Musculus well observeth upon the place : There are, saith he, three similitudes used to express what he had said plainly at first ; he had said, 'he that stablisheth us with you ;' this same establishing is expressed both by anointing (for the Holy Ghost is given to teach us all truths, 'the anointing teacheth us all things,') and by sealing, 'who hath also sealed us,' saith he ; he assur-eth us of our interest in them, and he hath given us an earnest of them in our hearts ; and thus, saith he, the Holy Ghost establisheth a man. It is not making salvation sure, but it is making the person sure ; it is therefore expressed by 'establishing us with you.' And the scope of the Holy Ghost in this place is evident to be so, for mark by what degrees he setteth forth the revelation of salvation to believers. He telleth them, first, that the gospel brought them the first news of it ; it was the happy news of 'your salvation,' as the 13th verse hath it, and so Beza expoundeth it ; and as usually the first news of a thing is but confused, so is the first news of the gospel ; it is but an indefinite hint ; there is salvation, this salvation is offered to you, it may be yours. Well then, secondly, cometh faith, and that closeth with this salvation. 'You believed,' saith he, you gave your souls up unto it to be saved by it ; then cometh the seal of the Spirit after believing, and confirmeth a man, setteth and establisheth the soul (as the Apostle's phrase is in that of the Corinthians) that this salvation is his.

And then again, in the second place, if you observe it, he doth not say that your *inheritance* is sealed, as if it were made sure in itself ; but he saith the *persons* are sealed ; 'he sealed *us*, he sealed *you* ;' those are the phrases both here and in that of the Corinthians ; therefore the end of this sealing is to seal up their peculiar interest.

And then, again, there is this third reason for it likewise, that it is not making salvation sure in itself, but to make us sure of it, because that the inward work here of sealing answereth to the outward work of baptism. It is Zanchy's observation, though he doth not apply it : I say, the Apostle, instead of saying you are baptized and so sealed, mentioneth the inward work of baptism rather. You are sealed, saith he, by the Spirit. Now the end of baptism is to be a seal ; that is the outward seal, for it succeedeth circumcision, as appeareth, Col. ii. 11, 12, compared. Now, circumcision is called the 'seal of the righteousness of faith,' Rom. iv. 11. Now every ordinance hath his proper work ; the proper work of baptism, the inward work that answereth to baptism, is the seal of the Spirit, for that is the seal of the righteousness of faith. Now baptism supposeth regeneration, supposeth salvation sure in itself first. Sacraments are never administered to begin or work grace ; you suppose children to believe before you baptize them. Read all the Acts ; still it is said, 'they believed and were baptized.' I could give you multitude of places for it. Now then salvation is made sure upon believing ; but you are baptized, that is the seal to confirm. Answerably, salvation is made sure upon believing ; but the seal of the Spirit cometh as the fruit of baptism, which is the proper work of it. The

inward seal answereth to the outward. You shall therefore find in the Acts, that upon baptizing of men that were at years, the Holy Ghost fell upon them ; as, when the eunuch was baptized, Acts viii. 38, 'he went away rejoicing,' so saith ver. 39. He had 'joy in the Holy Ghost.' You have the jailor baptized, Acts xvi. 33 ; you have him rejoicing, ver. 34. So that now the seal of the Spirit in those primitive times did accompany the outward seal of baptism ; and so, to this day, the proper fruit you are to expect of your having been baptized, is to be sealed with the Spirit of promise ; it is not to work regeneration, but supposeth it. So now you see that sealing is an assurance of salvation.

But now there is a twofold assurance of salvation, that we may yet go further in examining what is intended in it ; for I must sift things to find out what is the proper scope, what is the *elixir* of the Holy Ghost's intention. There is, first, an assurance by sense, by conditional promises, whereby a man, seeing the image of God upon his heart, to which promises are made, cometh comfortably to believe that he is in the estate of grace. That there is a use of sense all acknowledge. But then, secondly, there is an immediate assurance of the Holy Ghost, by a heavenly and divine light, of a divine authority, which the Holy Ghost sheddeth in a man's heart, (not having relation to grace wrought, or anything in a man's self,) whereby he sealeth him up to the day of redemption. And this is the great seal of all the rest. The one way is *discursive* ; a man gathereth that God loveth him from the effects, as we gather there is fire because there is smoke. But the other is *intuitive*, as the angels are said to know things ; it is such a knowledge as whereby we know the whole is greater than the part, we do not stand discoursing. There is light that cometh and overpowereth a man's soul, and assureth him that God is his, and he is God's, and that God loveth him from everlasting.

Now the question is, Which of these two is intended here ? I shall give you an answer to it by consulting that in 1 John v. 8. He saith, 'There are three that bear witness' to a man's conscience, to a man's spirit. There is the *Spirit*, saith he, that is the Holy Ghost ; and there is the *water* ; and there is the *blood*. By water he meaneth sanctification, as all agree ; and by blood he meaneth the blood of Jesus Christ, by faith laid hold upon, which hath a witness in it : 'He that believeth,' saith he, 'hath the witness in himself,' ver. 10. You shall find both these in Heb. x. 22 : 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,'—there is blood, for, Heb. ix. 14, the blood of Christ is said to purge the conscience from dead works,—'and our bodies washed with pure water,' that is, our whole man sanctified, alluding to the types of the ceremonial law. But you see here, beside the testimony of blood, when a man cometh to believe, he layeth hold upon the blood of Christ ; when a man looks to Christ, though with a weak faith, Jesus Christ doth somewhat look upon him ; as when a man looks upon a picture, if he eye the picture, the picture seemeth to look upon him too ; this becometh some quiet to the soul. A man that is elected, and cometh to lay hold upon the blood of Christ, look as a man that is guilty of murder, when he cometh to the dead body the blood floweth : so when a man that is a believer looks upon Christ, there is a fresh flowing of the blood, and that strengtheneth faith ; no man looks upon Christ but cometh off more cheerly ; but this is a weak witness. Then cometh in water, that witnesseth too ; but yet, I say, if you mark it, here is the Spirit, that differeth from both these, therefore there is a further testimony than either from a man's sanctification or from mere faith. The

Holy Ghost witnesseth with both the other : for your sanctification cannot comfort you, if it were not for the Holy Ghost ; no, your faith could not comfort you, but that it is a work of the Holy Ghost. I will give you but one place for it, Rom. xv. 13. He prayeth that God would make them 'abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' If thou hast any hope wrought in thee, either by looking to Christ's blood, or by seeing grace in thy heart, it is by the power of the Holy Ghost. Well, why doth he say *Spirit*, differing from both *blood* and *water*? Because there is an immediate testimony beyond all these, which the Holy Ghost works in a man's soul.

Now, my brethren, to answer you which is meant here by the sealing of the Spirit. I answer in two things.

First, I say, that in a large and in a general sense all assurance wrought, whether by *water* or by *blood*,—for there are no other ways,—any assurance, what way soever it be, is a seal of the Holy Ghost. I shall give you something to confirm it. If you will take sealing for a *giving in witness* in a large and common sense, so whatsoever giveth a testimony through the power of the Holy Ghost is an irradiating of a believer, and is the work of the Holy Ghost, that may be said to be a seal. In John iii. 33, you shall see the use of the phrase of sealing. It is used there for the giving of a testimony : 'He that hath received his testimony,' namely, by believing, 'hath set to his seal that God is true.' So that now, in a large and common sense, any witness that is given to confirm a truth is expressed in the Scripture by *setting a seal unto*. Therefore now, when the Holy Ghost doth give in a witness that you have grace *by blood*, laid hold on by faith, that you have grace *by water*; if it be a witness, it may be called a seal. I will not exclude these two other ways of assurance. Witnesses did use to set to their seals as witnesses, as well as the conveyer of an inheritance, in ancient times. Therefore divines make degrees of sealing. They say there is a sealing by blood, and there is a sealing by water, by sanctification, and there is a sealing by the Spirit. They make them several degrees; as in passing a thing at court, it passeth the king, and then it passeth the privy seal, and then it passeth the broad seal. These are but three several degrees of confirming the same thing; but the broad seal doth the business, whereby a man authentically claimeth it for ever. So that I say, in a large sense, I will not deny but that sealing here may be put for all kinds of assurance.

But yet let me say this, that that which is here more eminently meant is the immediate testimony of the Holy Ghost, the special thing that is here aimed at; and my reasons are these—

First, If you follow the metaphor close, every witness is not a seal in a strict sense; when there are witnesses and a sealer too, the witnesses come in to confirm the seal, or to confirm the writing. Every seal indeed is a witness, and it is the highest witness that is; and therefore, though the Spirit and his immediate testimony is called a witness, yet he is called a seal too; but yet, on the other side, every witness is not a seal, not in a strict sense. There are many things that are signs that are not seals, as you have it, Rom. iv. 11. There are many witnesses that are not sealers, especially in matters of inheritances, where there is a conveying over by the person that sealeth.

Then again a second reason is this: if you observe the phrase, it is said you are 'sealed by the Spirit,' he only is mentioned. Now, if you have recourse to that 1 John v. 8, water is said to be a witness, and blood a witness, and the Spirit a third witness; the witness of water and blood are swallowed

up as it were in the witness of the Spirit, in respect of the immediate testimony of the Holy Ghost. His testimony, though it is joined with theirs, yet it is hid under theirs; it is not said so much to be the testimony of the Spirit, is the testimony of water and blood: whereas here it is said to be the testimony of the Spirit; therefore that third is rather meant than the other.

And then again, in the third place, in sealing of an inheritance, the witnesses, you know, are *extranei*; they are persons which are not the conveyers of the inheritance; he that selleth or conveyeth the inheritance is said to seal properly, he whose the inheritance is. Therefore now, though your grace and faith may come in as witnesses, yet when he speaks of a seal, he must mean the seal of the conveyer; which is therefore the seal of the Holy Ghost himself, as distinguished from these two, as principally aimed at.

Great persons, who stand upon their authority, use to seal without witnesses. If you will speak of the seal of a king, as this is the seal of God: so, Esth. viii. 8, they did but write in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: there was the seal, there was no hand to it. To this day the king writeth *teste me ipso*, 'witness ourself,' when he putteth his seal to. In some colleges, when they put the college seal to a thing, they put no hands to, neither of the fellows, nor of the master, but only the seal of the college. Saith Christ, John v. 33, 34, 'I receive not testimony from man.' Though John, saith he, hath given me a witness, yet I receive no testimony from him, I am witness enough myself. When the Holy Ghost cometh to seal up salvation, he will have no witness but himself; they may come in as under-confirmer of it; but he doth it himself; 'witness ourself.' That is the seal of the Holy Ghost.

God hath made a promise, and he hath made an oath, to confirm our salvation; he hath made a promise, and he hath set to his seal, to confirm salvation; now do but parallel these two. When God sweareth, he sweareth by himself, he will not swear by anything else. Will the Holy Ghost seal? he sealeth by himself, he will take nothing else: so you have it, Heb. vi. 13, 'Because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself.' Will he seal? he will seal by himself. There may be other witnesses, but they are *extranei*; they have not to do with the bargain; but, saith he, it is my witness. I will seal by myself, I will receive testimony from none. He doth it himself.

So now, my brethren, I have opened this thing unto you, and all that I have said tendeth plainly and clearly but to open the words.

Now I shall come to some observations from what hath been said.

Obs. 1.—In the first place, you see that *the work of faith is a distinct thing, a different thing, from the work of assurance*; that is the least that can be gathered from it. He speaks of faith as one thing, of the sealing of the Spirit as another thing. Those that have held *that faith is assurance*, and others that have held the contrary; there is a double mistake in the point. I shall shew it in a word.

First, it must be granted, that in all faith there is an assurance; but of what? Of the truth of the promise. If a man doubt, if he 'waver,' as St James saith, in the truth of the promise, he will never act his faith. But the question here is about the assurance of a man's interest; that is not always in faith.

Again, all faith is an application of Christ. But how? It is not an application that Christ is mine, but it is a laying hold upon Christ to be mine. It is not a logical application in way of proposition that I may say

Christ is mine ; but it is a real one, I put him on, I take him to be mine ; and that is the better of the two. Faith, my brethren, is distinct from assurance.

Obs. 2.—In the second place, the sealing of the Spirit here intended, especially that immediate assurance which is mainly aimed at, is a *light beyond the light of ordinary faith*, that ordinary faith which a man liveth by. Why ? Because he makes it to be a further work than believing. ‘After ye believed,’ saith he, ‘ye were sealed ;’ he makes it a further thing, and because it is the next thing to heaven, you have no more, you can have no more till you come thither ; for you are sealed, and it is the ‘earnest of your inheritance.’ Faith indeed doth give the soul up to Christ, it dependeth upon him, quieteth itself in the blood of Christ. A man feeleth the load taken off his conscience while he believeth, and while he washeth himself in that blood, and eyeth that blood ; but this of the seal of the Spirit is more. At the 17th verse, (it may perhaps prove the meaning of it, I shall consider it when I come to it,) he is called the ‘Spirit of wisdom’—I told you by *wisdom* is meant *faith*, in the 8th verse—‘and revelation.’ I will give you Job for an instance ; Job had an ordinary light he lived by, and an extraordinary light that came into his soul. Look Job xlii. 5, ‘Mine ear,’ saith he, ‘hath heard of thee, but now mine eye hath seen thee.’ He calleth this *vision*, in comparison of what he had all his lifetime. I think Job speaks it in respect of a sight of God himself, but you may apply it to the sight of a man’s interest ; it is a sight by which a man seeth it, though he did but hear of it before. I have heard it whispered to me by the Holy Ghost,—for the Holy Ghost whispereth secretly by blood and by water,—that I am in the state of grace, but now I see it, saith he.

I yield, my brethren, that the sealing of the Spirit is but faith, if you compare it to heaven. It is not the vision of heaven, and therefore, 1 Pet. i. 8, it is said, ‘Believing, you rejoiced with joy unspeakable and glorious.’ It is but faith in comparison of heaven, it is believing when you are filled with joy ; so, Rom. xv. 13, he prayeth that they may be ‘filled with all joy through believing.’ But let me tell you that it is faith elevated and raised up above its ordinary rate ; as Stephen’s eye with which he saw Christ was his natural sight, but it was his natural sight elevated, raised up above the ordinary proportion of an eye ; so is this, a light beyond the ordinary light of faith. I will give you but one instance to difference it unto you, and it is a clear one. You read in 2 Sam. xii. 13, that Nathan came to David as a prophet, and when he spake as a prophet, David believed it, he had faith to entertain this word ; and he telleth David plainly, that his sins of adultery and murder were forgiven, and he said that God had told him that he should not die. Well, this being a word of God, David had an ordinary light of faith to apprehend it, to believe it, as we believe the Scripture when it is read. Suppose thy name were written in the Book of God ; that thou foundest it in the gospel, as Cyrus’s name was in the prophets, that thou shouldst be saved ; thou wouldst believe it with such a faith as thou believest there is a God out of the Scripture, and a Christ out of the Scripture. Well, but David for all this was not satisfied ; he had a faith to believe that his sins should be forgiven, and that faith was an assurance that they should be pardoned ; but it was not a seal of the Spirit. Therefore, Ps. li. 12, after Nathan came unto him, he prayeth, ‘Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and establish me with thy free Spirit.’ He knew it before by an ordinary light, but the thing he seeks for here is the witness of the Holy Ghost.

Now, when we say that it is a Spirit of *revelation*, we do not mean as the

Papists do ; they say, a man cannot be assured of his salvation but by vision, and by an angel appearing to him, and by immediate messages from heaven. Neither do I mean such revelation as Paul had, when he was carried up to the third heaven. No ; but it is such a light to know a man's own interest in salvation by, as wherewith the apostles wrote Scripture ; not that he that hath it can write Scripture. It is not a revelation of new truths, but to apply those truths to a man's own heart. In 2 Cor. i. 21, 22 ; in the verses before, the Apostle speaks of the truth of his doctrine ; as he was an apostle, he pawneth his apostleship upon it ; I am confident in it, saith he, the gospel I preached is not 'yea and nay.' I am an apostle, and I delivered it unto you as an apostle ; but now coming to those ordinary believers of the Corinthians, saith he, 'He that stablisheth us in Christ with you is God, who hath also sealed us,' &c. He hath given you that light to see your interest in those promises, the same light wherewith we see the truth of the promises, and have preached them unto you.

And so now you have the second observation from hence. The first was, that it is a distinct thing from faith ; the second is, that it is a higher light than the ordinary light of faith.

Obs. 3.—The third is this, for I shall keep to the text. It is called a seal ; now in reason every seal hath an impress upon it. *What is the impress of the immediate seal of the Spirit that it stampeth upon a man's heart ?*

To help you to understand this, I must have recourse to that 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his ;' that is, God knoweth whom he hath loved from everlasting. Here is God's seal. Well, what is the seal of the Spirit ? It is the impress of this seal from everlasting ; he cometh and stampeth upon a man's heart, The Lord knoweth thee to be his. It beareth the image of God's everlasting love, (it is news with a witness,) of God's everlasting love to a man, to him in particular ; that is the motto, the impress about this seal. It hath holiness with it too, as I shall shew, but I say the impress, the motto is this, God knoweth thee to be his. For this seal of the Spirit answereth to the other seal, it is the copy of it, it is engraven from it. God's seal is, The Lord knoweth who are his (that is in general spoken of election ;) the particular seal of the Spirit is, God knoweth thee to be his. As we choose God because he chose us, we answer his election in love, we love God because he loved us first ; so this seal of the Spirit, Know thou that thou art God's, answereth that, God knoweth thee to be his, which was God's seal from everlasting. It is the electing love of God brought home to the soul ; therefore, as election looks not to works nor graces, when God chose you to be his : so when he sealetb you up, the impress of that love of his is without the consideration of works ; a man doth not know that he is God's by marks and signs, but by an immediate impress and light of the Holy Ghost's.—And so now I have fully, as I could, explained to you what this seal of the Spirit is.

II. Let me now in a word but observe *the order*. You see here it is *after believing* ; 'after ye believed you were sealed,' saith he. I will not here enter upon that controversy,—because the text giveth not occasion for it,—whether assurance by signs be first, or assurance by the Spirit immediately be first ? for I must still keep to what the text saith. Only this I raise out of it, and observe further to open the text, that the Spirit is after believing.

Piscator readeth the words, *Per quod etiam quum credidistis*,—When ye believed, at the same time that ye believed. But, my brethren, it is not

πιστεύοντες, *believing*, as you have it, 1 Pet. i. 8, 'Believing, you were filled with joy in the Holy Ghost;' but it is πιστεύσαντες, it is of the time past, when ye *had believed*; having believed ye were sealed. 'After ye believed,' saith our translation rightly.

Take the greatest instance in the world for it, the apostles themselves; they were believers, and they trusted God by faith, before they were assured and had the seal of the Spirit. You know, ver. 12, Paul, speaking of the apostles, saith, 'who first trusted in Christ,' and the word is 'hoped in Christ.' Now do but look into the 14th of John, read but that chapter, and you shall find that the apostles had faith and the Holy Ghost long before they had assurance and the seal of the Spirit. Saith Christ there, 'Ye believe in God;' here they had faith, but it was a very poor faith, for, ver. 5, they said they did not know the way to heaven, so far were they off from this assurance here mentioned. Christ telleth them there also, that they had the Spirit, ver. 17, 'He dwelleth with you,' saith he, he is in your hearts. Well, but see what he saith in the 20th verse. At that day, namely, when I am ascended, ye shall know (I will give you the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, so he calleth him, he dwelleth with you now;) but 'at that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.' Then they should have a full manifestation of their union with Christ, and their union with the Father, and of the union of Christ with the Father. 'Then you shall know,' saith he, 'at that day;' this was after their believing.

I will give you but one scripture more (it openeth that place to me clearly) in the same chapter. Christ promised them that do believe the Comforter. 'I will pray the Father,' saith he, ver. 16, 'and he shall give you the Comforter; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.' I take the meaning of the words thus: I promise you the Holy Ghost as a Comforter, you have him already as a sanctifier; he dwelleth with you, you have him already as one that hath wrought faith in you; but as a Comforter the world cannot receive him as you shall. Why? Because the world hath not known him *as a sanctifier*, but so you have known him already; for till such time as the Holy Ghost hath wrought faith, and put a man into the state of grace, he cannot assure him, he cannot comfort him. For, my brethren, consider well the reason he giveth why the world cannot receive the Spirit is, because they do not know him. I ask this, When thou wert converted, wert not thou one of the world? Thou didst not know the Spirit. If this were the reason why men did not receive the Holy Ghost, no man in the world should receive him; therefore the meaning must needs be this, till men have some experience of the work of the Spirit upon their hearts; till he hath been a sanctifier in them, and caused them to believe, they cannot receive him as Comforter. Why? Because there is not matter wherewithal to comfort them; they must first be in the state of grace before they can be comforted by being in the state of grace. They must therefore receive him as a sanctifier before they can receive him as a Comforter.

I shall name one scripture more, it is Acts xv. 8, 9. You shall see there that the Holy Ghost was poured out in the primitive times after believing. At the 7th verse he speaks of the Gentiles, that they 'heard the word of the gospel, and believed;' and saith he, ver. 8, 'God, which knoweth the hearts,'—knowing they believed,—'bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us.' So that now the giving of the Holy Ghost, as he did to the apostles, as a Comforter, as a sealer to them of salvation, is

when they have believed, when God, who knoweth their hearts, knoweth them to be holy.

And, my brethren, the reason is clear and evident ; for Jesus Christ must first be mine, before I can say he is mine, the thing must be first ; now he is made mine by faith, I then receive him to be mine. They were without Christ in the world, he saith of these Ephesians, till they believed ; when they believed, then Christ is theirs, therefore necessarily an act of faith must go before an act of assurance ; for assurance doth tell you that Christ is yours, and that according to the rule of the Word. Now, according to the rule of the Word, though he may be yours in God's secret purpose, yet you are without Christ before you believe. Things must be, before I believe them to be.

Then it is equal that God should be honoured first by mere trusting, by mere *believing*, before he honoureth your faith with setting to his seal. John iii. 33, he that believeth 'hath set to his seal that God is true.' Well, when a man hath done that, now, saith God, I will set to my seal that he believeth, and that he is my child. But God will have you trust him first with a mere act of trust, as the woman did that trusted the prophet : she had no more meal nor no more oil than would save their lives, one meal more. Well, saith he, I will be trusted ; 'Make me thereof a cake first, and bring it to me that I may eat of it, and after make for thee and for thy son.' God will be trusted first ; and when you have set to your seal that God is true in his Word, God will set to his seal after your believing.