

that three days repentance will satisfy for all my wrong. For I am sure, there are many in hell, who did never get three days to think upon their former ways; therefore O come, come, and embrace Christ presently. Now are ye all persuaded of this truth, that ye shall once see death? Then study a tender walking; for, believe me, here are many of us who shall go through death with many bruised bones, because of untender walking before God. We know it is not the multitude of words can persuade you to embrace Christ, for many of you never minded the thing. But, believe me, death will preach these things to you in a more terrible manner than we can do at this time. Therefore I say to each of you, 'O prepare to meet thy God;' for if death find you in an estranged state from God, I defy the angels in heaven to free you out of that estate: and the day is coming, wherein thou shalt cry out, O sligher of the great salvation that I am, I would give ten thousand worlds for one sermon again that I once heard wherein Christ was freely offered to me: when thou shalt be tormented without hope of remedy; therefore, 'while it is to-day, harden not your hearts,' for your late wishes shall not be granted (when ye are gone) if ye make not haste. O therefore, haste, haste in time, and come out from the land of your captivity, and from the house of your bondage, and take Christ for your Redeemer, the guide of your youth, and old age. Now unto him, who can lead you through all the steps betwixt you and heaven, be eternal praise. *Amen.*

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## GREAT AND PRECIOUS P R O M I S E S.

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### SERMON I.

2 PETER i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

**M**AY we not truly say, that if ever the Christians who live in these days shall be advanced to stand within the holy place, and shall inherit everlasting life, all those who are now before his throne, may lay aside their harps, and give us leave to sing.

Will it not be a mystery, suppose ye, unto heavenly Enoch, who spent so much of his time in communion and fellowship with God, when he shall behold such Christians within that everlasting rest, who have spent so little of their time in corresponding with God? Will it not be a mystery unto believing Abraham, when he shall behold such misbelievers, such disputers of the promises of God, advanced to reign with Christ? Will it not be a mystery unto wrestling Jacob, when he shall behold those Christians crowned with immortal glory, who did so little know what it was as princes to wrestle with God, till they did prevail? Will it not be a wonder to patient Job, when he shall behold such impatient Christians, as we have been, entering into that blessed place of repose? Will it not be a mystery unto holy David, when he shall behold such unmortified Christians entering within that city, into which no unclean thing doth enter? Will it not be a mystery unto tender Josiah, to behold such Christians as we are, who have our hearts dying as a stone within us, entering into heaven? Will it not be a mystery unto upright Nathaniel, to behold such hypocritical Christians, as the most part of us are, entering within the holy place? And to see those, who hath been clothed with hypocrisy and guile, now clothed with the robes of immortal glory? And will it not be a mystery unto self-denied Paul, when he shall behold such proud and selfish Christians enter into heaven? Give me leave to say this, go where we will, we shall be matchless and singular; for if we shall go into eternity of pain, we shall be the greatest debtors unto the infinite justice of God, in regard of the mercies we have received: and if we shall enter into eternity of joy, we shall be the greatest debtors unto the spotless grace of Christ, in regard of the mercies we have abused. There shall be none in heaven like unto us; and if we shall go to hell, there shall be few there that may be compared unto us. And let me but add this further before I come to the words, go where we will, we shall be out of doubt with our condition; within a short time we shall be exalted above the reach of this misbelieving; a hypocrite shall be depressed below the reach of his faith; and one who is gross in nature, shall be abased beyond the reach of his presumption; a Christian ere long shall misbelieve no more: a hypocrite ere long shall believe no more; and one who is gross in nature, shall ere long presume no more; there is no misbelief in heaven, and there is no faith nor presumption of well-being in hell. But to come to that which we intend to speak to, we told you, when we first began our discourse upon that precious and exalted grace of faith, under a twofold notion and consideration; *First*, As it is justifying; and *Secondly*, As it is sanctifying. For the *First*, we

resolve to speak to it in a twofold consideration; *First*, As it closeth with Christ simply as the object upon which it resteth; and of this we have spoken from that place, 1 John iii. 23. *Secondly*, As it closeth with Christ, as is held forth in the promises; and now being to speak of it in this consideration, we have made choice of this place, in which these things concerning the promise shortly; 1. Ye have that fountain and spring, from whence the promises do flow, holden forth in the first words of the verse, *whereby* (or, as the words may be more fitly rendered), *by whom*, relating unto Jesus Christ, who is the original and spring of all the promises.

2. The properties of the promises; and these are, 1. The freedom of the promises, held forth in that word, *given*; Whereby are given; which speaketh this, that the promises are free gifts, flowing only from good pleasure. 2. Their unchangeableness, and that is holden forth in the word, *given*: the gifts and calling of God being without repentance. 3. That they are exceeding great; and the promises are called great, either in respect of the price that was laid down to purchase them; or they are called great, in respect of the great things that are contained in them. 2. That they are *precious*. Now the promises are called precious either in respect of their original, that they come from precious Christ; or else in respect of this, that they are the object (I mean the object *quo*, or by which) of precious faith, as it is called in the first verse of this chapter; or else they are precious, because they are the things which a Christian ought to put an high esteem upon. For the word that is rendered *precious*, may likewise be rendered honourable. 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and *honourable* promises.'

3. We have holden forth in the words, the great advantages of the promises; 'by them we are made partakers of the divine nature.' Now this is not to be understood of any essential conversion of our substance into the substance of God, but of a Christian having the divine virtues of Jesus Christ impressed upon his soul, and expressed in his life and conversation.

And there is this, *Lastly*, concerning the promises in the word, 'even the time when the promises are eminently accomplished;' it is, 'when we have escaped,' or, as the word is, 'when we have fled from the corruptions that are in the world through lust;' that is the time when a Christian meeteth with the accomplishment of the promise.

Now, before we can speak to any of these, we must speak a little unto some things as necessary to be known, in order to the better understanding of all. 1 We shall not dwell long in pointing out unto you what a promise is, we conceive it is a glorious



discovery of the good will of God towards sinners, and withal a purpose and intendment, and (if we may say) an engagement to bestow some spiritual or temporal good upon them, or to withhold some spiritual or temporal evil from them. And certain it is, that in this description of the promise, there is a divine harmony betwixt mercy and truth, betwixt righteousness and peace, they kiss one another. Neither shall we stand long to point out the distinction of the promises. 1. There are some promises that are conditional, and there are some promises that are absolute. Absolute promises are those that have no conditions annexed unto the performance of them; such a promise as is this, 'God will destroy the world no more by water;' that is an absolute promise; such a promise was that of 'God's sending his Son into the world,' that was an absolute promise; and such is that promise of conversion, 'in giving of the hearts of flesh,' it is an absolute promise. As for the conditional promises, they are those that do require some condition to be performed by the Christian before the accomplishment of the promises; such as the promise of salvation, it requireth believing to go before it; 'he that believeth, shall be saved.' And pardon is promised unto a Christian upon repentance; and yet, we confess, that there is not a conditional promise in all the covenant of grace but may be reduced into an absolute promise, in regard that the thing promised (in the conditional promise) is an absolute free gift, and the condition of the promise is another. 2. There are some promises that are temporal, and some that are spiritual; temporal promises are those that promise some temporal thing unto a Christian; and spiritual promises are those that promise the bestowing of some thing that is of everlasting concernment. 3. There are some promises that are not accomplished in this life; such as this, 'that we shall see him as he is, and shall be made like unto him.' But for the promises of faith and justification, these are accomplished in this life. 4. There are some promises that are extraordinary, and there are some promises that are common; extraordinary promises are those that are given to some particular believers as a singular privilege; such was the promise that was given to Abraham, 'in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed;' and that promise which was given to Rebecca, 'that the elder should serve the younger.' As for common promises, they are those that every believer in Christ hath a right to make use of.

Neither shall we stand long to point out, that it is the duty of a Christian to be much in the exercise of faith upon the promises; it is clear from Psalm lxii. 8. 'Trust in him at all times ye people.' And it is clear, from the practice of that precious cloud of witnesses, recorded in Heb. xi. who spent their days in em-



bracing of the promises. But, 7. we would have you consider, that it is more easy for a Christian believer to believe spiritual promises, than to believe temporal promises: it is easier to trust Christ for eternal salvation, than to trust him for our daily food when we are reduced unto straits. And the grounds upon which we assert this, may be these, 1. Because it is hard for a Christian to believe that Christ's death reacheth for the purchasing of temporal promises, which more easily he taketh up in spiritual promises: for a Christian can hardly believe that such a thing was in Christ's intention, as to die for his daily food; which is most certain, if we consider it is a special mercy. 2. In a Christian's believing of spiritual promises, there is often some sense and reason that helpeth him to the exercise of faith, at least they press not the contrary. But believe a temporal promise, when a Christian is reduced unto a strait, and he can see no outgate at present, sense and reason stands upon the top of his faith, and presseth him to despair: as for instance, when a Christian is living upon the top of a mountain, and knoweth not where to sup at night, to believe that there is a promise upon which he may rest, that he shall not want his food, but that the Lord hath service for him, he will provide here; he hath not only reason to dispute against it, but the strong pinching sense of hunger, both crying out, 'how can bread be given in the wilderness?' 3. The temptations that assault a Christian, to misbelieve temporal promises, are more suitable, and co-natural to a Christian, than the temptations that assault him in resting upon the spiritual promises. When a Christian is in straits in the world, the temptations that hinder his exercise of faith are more consonant to flesh and blood. We are ready to yield to misbelief then, because we think it is rational, and speaketh the truth. 4. A Christian is often so affrighted by his daily failings, or some particular more gross out-breakings in his life, that howbeit he may, through grace, be helped to believe that the Lord shall make out these promises which concern his great salvation, and so do him good in his latter end: yet he may be sadly perplexed and distrustful, in making use of any particular temporary promise, for drawing forth any comfort or encouragement therefrom as to this present exigent; because he knoweth, although the Lord doth forgive his peoples iniquities, yet he may take vengeance on their inventions, Psalm xcix. 8. and therefore may punish his present failing with the like calamities as he had done others. 5. There is also much of a natural and carnal self-love to a present life remaining in the best, that we are many times worse to satisfy in our securities for the things of this life, than that which is to come; and can more easily trust the Lord for

our souls, than for our bodies; so that though his naked word will sometimes satisfy us for the one, yet it will not for the other. And the *last* ground of it may be with a Christian's unacquaintedness with that lot of exercising faith upon temporal promises; there being many who think that there is no use for faith, except for salvation, and the things above, which maketh his faith upon these more difficult, than upon promises that are spiritual. And this may appear most clearly, in that we find men more easily bear their spiritual wants (even a Christian who is most exercised) than they bear their temporal wants. And more corruption and impatience doth arise from temporal want, than from spiritual want.

2. Consider, that all a Christian's duties are turned over into promises: there is not a duty that is required of a Christian, but it is converted into a promise. Is not faith a duty? in 1 John iii. 23. 'This is his commandment, that ye should believe.' And is not that turned over into a promise? in Jer. iii. 19. 'Thou shalt call me, my Father;' the word importeth not only an act of necessity, but of violence, 'thou shalt do it.' And in the xiii. of Zech. at the close, 'thou shalt call me, thy Father,' and so in Ezek. xi. 19. Is not mortification a Christian's duty? Col. iii. 'Mortify therefore your members.' And it is turned over into a promise, Jer. xxxii. 28. and Ezek. xxxvi. 20. where he promiseth, that he will purge away all their uncleanness.' And it is most clear from Micah vii. 16. 'I will subdue (saith he) all thine iniquities.' It is not said 'thou must subdue them;' but, 'I will do it.' Is not the knowledge of God a commanded duty? And yet it is turned over into a promise in the covenant of grace, 'they shall know me from the highest unto the lowest, neither shall there be need any more that one should say, know the Lord, for they shall be taught of me.' Is not the commandment of fear your duty? as is clear from Eccles. xii. 13. And yet that is likewise turned over into a promise, 'I will put my fear in their inward part, that they shall not depart away from me.' So tenderness is a Christian's duty, and yet it is turned over into a promise, 'I will take away their heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh.' And that I may say no more of this, look but unto these four places, and there ye will see almost all duties turned over into promises, there is Jer. xxxi. Jer. xxxii. Ezek. xi. and Ezek. xxxvi. Ye will see all the duties of the covenant converted into promises. But may not some say, what advantage is there of this? Much certainly every way, that duties are turned over into promises. It may give a Christian hope, that once he will perform those duties. Will ye not once be tender? Yes, certainly, because your tenderness lieth within a promise. Will ye not be once much in the ex-

ercise of fear? No doubt ye will, and the ground of it is this, because our fear lieth within a promise, and so of the rest. And 2. There is this advantage of it, that all the duties required of a Christian are turned over into promises; because by this means a Christian may go to God, when he cannot perform such a duty, and desire him to fulfil his word, and accomplish his promise; and so may make use, not only of the omnipotency of God, but of the faithfulness of God also. There is this *third* consideration that we would propose, that there are some things of a Christian within a promise, that he doth not believe to be within it, especially these three; 1. The challenges of a Christian are within a promise, when ye are convinced, that is the accomplishment of a promise; this is clear from Isa. xxx. 21. where convictions and challenges are turned over into a promise; 'when thou art turning unto the right hand, or to the left, thine ear shall hear a voice behind thee, crying, this is the way, walk ye in it.' And it may be clear, that our convictions are the accomplishment of promises, because it is the work of the Comforter, as well as to convince, John xvi. 9, as it is for him to make one to rejoice. And if a Christian could believe that his challenges were the accomplishment of a promise, he might embrace challenges, he might see the faithfulness of God in his challenges, and he might see much love in his challenges. 2. A Christian's cross is within a promise; so that when a Christian meets with such afflictions, he may sit down and cry out, that is the accomplishment of a promise; and this is clear from Psalm lxxxix. 31. 32. where, in the midst of the promises of the covenant of grace, that promise, of visiting their iniquities with rods, is put in the bosom of them; and from Psalm cxix. 75. 'In faithfulness hast thou afflicted me.' Why doth David say, *in faithfulness*? It was this, because this cross was the accomplishment of a promise; and it may be clear also from that word, Heb. xii. 7. 'Forget not the exhortation, (speaking of the cross) the word is, 'forget not the consolation that speaketh unto you.' As if the Holy Ghost did say, crosses do yield much consolation, as in verse 11. 'They yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' And if this were believed, that our crosses were the accomplishment of the promises, it would help a Christian unto much humble submission, and there would not be much murmuring under them if once we did believe that they were the accomplishment of a promise. Yea, there is this advantage further, that if we did believe that our crosses were the accomplishment of a promise, we would be much in advancing holiness under our crosses. There is nothing that obstructeth the sweet fruit of righteousness under a cross so much, as impatience. And I would say this to commend the cross, a Christian



never moveth so swiftly to heaven, as when he is under a sanctified cross. A cross, when it is sanctified, will prove a Christian's motion to heaven, more than the enjoyment. For our enjoyments ordinarily do retard our way, as much as further it. And there is this, *3dly*, that is within the promise, 'even our daily food, and the hairs of our head.' The hairs of a Christian's head are all numbered, and within the covenant: so that ye may see what a high respect Christ hath put upon Christians: this is clear from that word, Psalm cxi. 5, 8. 'He hath given meat unto them that fear him. He will ever be mindful of his covenant.'

Our *fourth* consideration shall be, to point out a little those grounds upon which Christ doth delay his accomplishment of the promises. It is certain, that Christians are oftentimes put to this, 'doth his promise fail for evermore?' And cry out, 'why art thou become unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' And the grounds of this delay are these; Christ knoweth that a Christian can often better improve the delay of the accomplishment of the promise, than he can improve the accomplishment itself. We might find this in our experience, it being, for the most part, easier for a Christian to bear his crosses, than to bear his enjoyments. I think David had never so sweet a time, as when he was pursued as a partridge by his son Absalom; then grace did breathe forth most sweetly in his actions; but let David be under prosperity, and then we see he falleth into the sin of adultery. And therefore never repine when ye are under a cross; for certainly, if we had spiritual understanding, we would not judge it so great a hazard to be under a cross, as under prosperity, since we have greater strength to bear the one, than to endure the other. 2. The slothfulness of a Christian, to whom the promises are made, this makes the promises to be delayed in their performance; as was clear in the people of Israel, they were forty years in the wilderness before the promise of entering into Canaan was accomplished. It was a promise that could have been accomplished in a few days, and yet, because of their sin, it was not accomplished for forty years; as ye may see from that word, Numb. xiv. 33, 34. The accomplishment of the promise is delayed, that faith may be more exercised; this is clear from that remarkable word, Psalm cxv. 10. 'Until the time that his word came;' that is, until the word of the Lord was accomplished; 'the word of the Lord tried him;' that is, it was the matter of his exercise, an exercise especially unto faith. For indeed it is much for a Christian to believe upon a word, when it is delayed in its accomplishment. The *fourth* ground of delay is, that the exercise of prayer may be more; and it is certain, that the best improvement of delay is, to be much in prayer. The promises

they occasion prayer; as is clear from Exod. iv. ult. 'They believed, and bowed down their heads and worshipped. And from 2 Sam. vii. 27. where the great promises being made to David, he crieth out, 'Therefore have I found in my heart to pray this prayer unto God.' And it is clear from Psalm cxix. 49. 'Perform thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' It is a bad improvement of delays, when we turn impatient; and it is a bad improvement of delays, when we quit our confidence. Know, that promises are accomplished after delays, and they have a lustre upon them, that may compensate for all the delays. 5. There is this other ground of the delays of the accomplishment of the promises, even that the thing which is promised may be sweet unto a Christian when it cometh. This is clear from that word of Solomon, Prov. xiii. 12. 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire doth come, it is as a tree of life. O! but a mercy that cometh unto a Christian through a promise is sweet; yea, a drink of cold water taken up as the accomplishment of a promise, is more sweet 'than a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the less well refined' To take up your bread and your drink as the accomplishment of your promises, would make them refreshful to you. 6. The Lord delays his promises, that a Christian may be more in the exercise of dependence and may be always kept about the throne. A Christian goeth to God from a threefold principle; he goeth to God from a principle of faith, from a principle of necessity, and from a principle of love. But would you know that which putteth a Christian oftentimes to God? It is a principle of necessity. And believe it, that if necessity did not drive a Christian unto the foot of the throne, he would seldom go from a principle of love, or from a principle of faith. And there is this *last* ground of the delay of the accomplishment of the promises, that the glory of the wisdom of God may appear, and the glory of his power in the accomplishment of the promise. When the promise is long beneath ground, then the wisdom and power of God doth more appear in the accomplishment of the promise. And from this I would only say to Christians, who are under this exercise, complaining of the want of the performance of the promises, these few things. 1. Believe that the promise shall once be accomplished, that 'though the vision tarry, yet at last it shall speak. 2. Believe that every hour's delay of the accomplishment of the promises hath a sweet design of love; there is not one moment of delay, but it is for the advantage of a Christian; as is clear from that word, Rom. viii. 27. And 3. That promise, which cometh after long delays, hath these three sweet and soul-refreshing attendants; 1. It is performed most seasonably. A Christian, if he



will observe, will see infinite wisdom shining in timing the accomplishing of the promise to such a particular day; a Christian will be constrained to cry of it, if the promise had been fulfilled before, there had not been such art of wisdom appearing in the performance of it. 2. That the promise, when it is accomplished, will engage a Christian more in the exercise of love, than for promises accomplished at a short and smaller time. There is nothing that will so inflame the soul with love, as to have a promise accomplished after delays. And 3. The promises accomplished after delays, have much sense waiting upon the performance thereof. I hardly think a Christian ever met with the accomplishment of a promise after long delay, but his 'soul was made as a watered garden, and as springs of water, whose waters fail not.' This promise falleth, and cometh to a Christian perfumed with love.

Now we shall shut up our discourse at this time, and shall only speak to these six defects of a Christian's faith in believing of the promises. 1. That our faith is impatient, we cannot stay upon the promises if they be delayed. Hence ye will see, that in scripture, patience is often annexed to faith; which speaketh this, that it is impossible for a Christian to believe as he ought, who wanteth the exercise of patience. So Heb. vi. 13. 'Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' And that word in Rev. 'This is the faith and patience of the saints.' 2. Our faith, in closing with the promises is most unconstant. A Christian, when first a promise is borne in upon his spirit, will then believe the promise, and join with it: but after six or seven days go about, he will change his faith; this is remarkably clear from Exod. iv. 31. compared with Exod. vi. 9. When first the promise cometh to the people of Israel, that they shall go out of Egypt, it is said of them in the fourth chapter at the close, 'they believed the promises, and worshipped:' but look to them in Exod. vi. 9. and there ye will see them not believing, because of 'bitterness and anxiety of heart.' And I will tell you the grounds why our faith is unconstant, 1. Sometimes the reading of a promise to a Christian will be as savoury meat: sometimes, when a Christian will read one time in the covenant, it will be perfumed with love, and his soul shall be transported with joy after it; and at another time, when he shall read that promise again, it will be 'tasteless as the white of an egg, and as his sorrowful meat.' 2. That we are not much in studying the exercise of the things that are promised, which certainly would cut short many of our debates. There is this *third* defect of our faith, that we are not diligent. A diligent faith we call this, that after a Christian hath believed, he would be much in the exercise



of prayer, for the accomplishment of the promise; he would be much in the exercise of meditation, to make that promise sweet and lively unto him. And a *fourth* defect is this, we build our faith more upon dispensations, than upon the word: when dispensations say that which the promise saith, then we will believe; but when dispensations speak the contrary language unto the promise, then we will reject our confidence and hope. I will tell you great mysteries of believing. It is hard for a Christian to believe when the commentary seemeth to destroy the text; that is, when the commentary seemeth to declare that the promise shall never be accomplished. In some it is this, it is hard to believe, when dispensations will say, the word of the Lord will fail, and when promises bids you believe. 2. It is hard for a Christian to take impossibilities in the one hand, and the word of promise in the other, and say, O precious Christ, reconcile these two together, that impossibilities do not destroy the promise, but that the promise may be accomplished notwithstanding of this. 5. We have these defects of faith amongst us, that we build our faith more upon sense than upon the word of promise. When a Christian is in a good frame, he will believe; but when Christ hideth his face, he will then give up his hope. And, *lastly*, There is this, that our faith upon the promises is general: we believe the truth of the promises, but we study not to make a particular application of them. I shall not stand long to make any use of what we have spoken, only I would have the Christians of this age, and those that are here, to go home with this conviction, the damnable neglect of believing the promises. A Christian neglecteth these three duties of religion most, the duty of self-examining, the duty of believing the promises, and that noble soul-exalting duty of meditation; these three duties a Christian doth so constantly neglect, that he is almost above the reach of conviction that he doth neglect them. But I would say a word unto those who are destitute of the faith of the promises, and are strangers unto those blessed things that are recorded in the covenant: and it is this, doubtless ye must believe your senses, if ye will not believe his word. It is a question indeed, which of all the senses shall be most satisfied in heaven, whether that of seeing, 'when we shall behold the King in his beauty, and see him as he is?' Or that of hearing, when he shall hear those melodious hallelujahs of that innumerable company, which are about the throne, without any jarring amongst them all? Or that of smelling, when we shall find the sweet perfume of his garments, which are perfumed 'with all the powders of the merchant?' Or that of touching, when we find Mary's inhibition taken off, 'touch me not,' and be admitted to embrace him, who now is 'ascended to the Fa-

ther?" Or that of tasting, when we shall drink of those 'rivers of consolation that shall never run dry?' This, I say, is indeed a question: and give me leave to tell you, O atheists, enemies of God! it is also a question, which of all the five senses of a reprobate shall be most tormented in hell, and what would ye answer to it now? Whether think ye the sense of sight, when ye shall behold the darkness of wrath, the devil and his angels, and your fellow-prisoners in that dungeon? Or whether shall your sense of hearing be most tormented in hell, when ye shall hear those screekings and howlings that shall eternally ascend up before God, from the souls that are in prison? Oh! but the greatest enemy would have compassion on his enemy to hear their cries. Or whether will ye say the sense of tasting shall be most tormented, when ye shall drink of those 'rivers of brimstone?' Or will the sense of touching, when ye shall be eternally scorched with those flames, of eternal indignation? Or the sense of smelling, when they shall eternally be, as it were, suffocated with the smoke of that sulphureous furnace that shall never be quenched? O think you, if Cain would come from hell, and preach that doctrine that we should not persecute the saints, would we listen unto him? If Absalom should come from hell, and should preach against the evil of ambition, would we listen unto him? And if Ahithophel should rise from the dead, and preach that doctrine unto you, 'let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,' would ye stop your ears? Or if Judas would come from hell, and preach to you the evil of hypocrisy, in betraying the Son of man with a kiss, would you believe him? Or if Dives, that is recorded in the gospel, should come from hell, and choose that text to preach upon, James v. 1. 'Go to ye rich men and howl, and weep for your miseries that shall come upon you?' And if Demas would come and second him with that word, 'love not the world, nor the things that are in the world?' I fear ye would cry out, 'we will embrace that doctrine at another time.' We desire not to insist much upon these. But O! to believe that there is an eternity of pain, and that there is an eternity of joy. I will give you a description of the atheist, and let him think upon it, it is easier to convince hundreds of you that ye want the fear of God, than that ye want the faith and love of God. Oh! an imaginary faith, and a conceit of love! will ye never quit these two idols? I confess, once ye shall have a faith that no man shall ever rob you of, and that is, the faith of that truth, that when once ye enter into eternity of pain, there is no redemption out of that place. Awake, awake, for behold the Judge cometh, and he shall render vengeance unto those that know him not. To his blessed and precious name, we desire to give praise.



## SERMON II.

2 PETER i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

THOUGH justice and judgment be the habitation of his throne, yet mercy and truth did go before it, as two divine ushers to convey us home unto God. There are two things that we would have Christians principally to study. 1. That ye would be much in the study of those wrongs and injuries that ye have done to Christ. And 2. That ye would be much in the study of those infinite acts of precious condescendency that Christ hath manifested towards you, that the one may provoke you unto sorrow and humility, and the other may provoke you unto a sweet astonishment and admiration. And I would ask you this, if Christ should present that challenge unto you, which Absalom presented unto Hushai, ‘is this thy kindness unto thy friend? O beloved! what could you answer, when you were thus reprov-ed? I think, if Christ has not forgetfulness for that blessed end, to forget the wrongs and injuries of his own, I know not unto what use Christ should have forgetfulness; for he knoweth not what it is to forget our good works; but he hath a blessed art of forgetting our wrongs; though we may say, on the contrary, that we have a cursed art of forgetting them ourselves. There are these three things that a Christian doth forget. 1. They much forget Christ, that he is the great Author of the promises; so that he may charge them with this, ‘why have ye forgotten me?’ 2. They forget their mercies, and those divine receipts of love that Christ hath given unto them. 3. They forget even their iniquity; yea, sometimes they forget them before Christ doth forget them, and pass an act of pardon upon them. I shall not stand long to plead with you for undervaluing of that blessed and noble Plant of Renown? I think, if there were no more to evidence that low esteem which we have of Christ, but only this, that we are so much in slighting the promises, it were more than sufficient: but besides, is there not this to testify, how much you undervalue that holy and just one:’ that ye study more to have an outward conformity to him, than an inward? We may call the Christians of the time Naphtali, they are ‘as a hind let loose,’ and they give goodly words, but they do not give Christ goodly practices. And there is this also, that testifieth our undervaluing of Christ, that we slight so much secret and retired correspon-



dence and communion with him. I suppose there are some here, whose consciences beareth them record, that they do not exercise themselves unto godliness. And I shall only say that word, which Gideon spoke in another case, 'if God be with us, how then is all this come upon us?' Such a spirit of formality, such a spirit of laziness, such a spirit of hardness, and such a spirit of undervaluing of Christ? I suppose, that if there was a chronicle written of all the lives of the saints who have been since Adam's days, and the Christians of this time were to read over that chronicle, when they had read the life of Adam, they might put this to the close of it, 'my life is not like his;' and when they had read the life of Abel, they might put this to the close of it, 'my life is not like his;' and when they had read the life of Enoch, they might put this to the close of it, 'my life is not his.' Oh! to which of the saints can we go? And if we should call, is there any that would answer you, 'thy life is like mine?'

But to come to the words; we told you, at the last occasion that we spake upon them, that there were these things concerning the promises held forth in them. 1. The rise of the promises is held forth in these words, *whereby*; or, as we cleared, the word may be thus rendered, *by whom*, which relateth unto Jesus Christ.

The *Second* thing, concerning the promises held forth in the verse is, the property of the promises, and they are these four; 1. That the promises are free, held forth in the words, 'whereby are given unto us;' all the promises of the everlasting covenant are free, and not debt. There is that *second* property of the promises, that they are unchangeable, held forth in the word, *given*: the gifts and calling of God 'being without repentance.' And the *third* property of the promises was, that they were exceeding *great*. And the *fourth* property of the promises are, that they are exceeding *precious*.

The *third* thing concerning the promises, held forth in the words is, the advantage that floweth to a Christian by the promises, 'that by them they might be made partakers of the divine nature.'

And the *last* thing concerning them was, the time when the promises were especially accomplished, it was when 'we had escaped the pollution of the world through lust.'

Now as for the *First* thing, viz. the fountain, original, and rise of the promises, which is Jesus Christ, *by whom*. In speaking unto this, we shall speak a little unto these two. 2. In what respects Christ may be said to be the fountain and original of the promises. And we conceive he may be said to be so; 1st, Because

he purchased the promises unto us by his own precious blood. There is not a promise in all the everlasting covenant, but it is the price of the blood of the Son of God. This is clear in Eph. ii. 12, 15. where speaking of the Gentiles, that they were strangers unto the covenants of promise, he setteth down, in the 13th verse, the way by which they were brought near unto the covenant, and had a right unto it, it was 'through the blood of his cross;' and it is clear in Eph. iii. 6. that the promises of the gospel 'were given unto us in him;' that is, through the purchase of him, and his merits. And 1 Pet i. 19. where we are said 'to be bought by his blood,' or the promise of redemption was the price of blood. 2dly, Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises in this respect, that he is the person unto whom the promises of the covenant were first made, and through him are made over unto us: this is clear in Gal. iii. 16. 'The promises were given unto Abraham; not unto many seeds, but as unto one; that is, Christ: and it is clear from 2 Tim. i. 9. where the promises of grace and salvation are said 'to be given unto us in him before the world was made.' It is true, that the promises are not given to Christ considered only as the Son of God (for he had no other relation to us than the Father, or the Holy Ghost), but yet they are first made to him as the Mediator and 'head of the church, and as that blessed days-man, 'King of saints,' and the great Lord keeper of all the rights of the young heirs of glory; 'and we all receive of his fulness, and grace for grace. 3dly, There is this respect in which Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises, that it is by him we have a right unto all of them. This is clear, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13. where these two are conjoined, 'ye are Christ's; and then, 'all things are yours.' If once a soul close with Christ in the covenant of promise, there is not one promise in scripture but he may write this superscription above it, 'this is mine, this is mine. 4thly, Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises, in regard that he is the person who applieth the promises, and maketh us to rest upon them, and to believe them. This David did acknowledge, Psalm cxix. 46. 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' As if David had said, 'I had never believed a promise, except thou hadst caused me. And it is clear, Eph. ii. 8. where faith is called 'the gift of God:' even faith to believe the promises is the royal donation and gift of Christ. 5thly, He may be said to be the fountain of the promises, in that he qualifyeth us for the accomplishment of them. Christ giveth us strength to obey the condition that is annexed to the promises; and Christ infuseth habitual grace in us, by which we may be helped to exercise faith upon them; so that, grant all the scrip-



ture were promises, yet if Christ doth not help us, we would never believe them, and there would never a promise be accomplished unto us. *6thly*, The *last* respect, in which Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises, is that all the promises of the everlasting covenant have their accomplishment through him; according to that word, 2 Cor. i. 20. 'All the promises of God are in him, yea, and in him, Amen.' So that ye are to bless Christ, not only for the giving of the promises, but for the accomplishment of them also.

That which, *Secondly*, we shall speak to from this, that Christ is the fountain of the promises, shall be to press upon Christians these three excellent and soul-concerning duties. The *first* duty is, that they would not have a light account of the promises, since they are the rivulets and streams that flow from that blessed ocean. O! but if a Christian did believe, that the promise which he hath for his daily bread was bought with the blood of the second Person of the blessed Trinity, would he not have an high account of that promise? And let me tell you, it is impossible for the promises to be in an high account with you, till once ye reduce them unto their rise, and to their fountain. But once know, that all the promises are sweet streams of love, that have run through the heart of precious Christ, and from whence they have flowed unto you; and then, when this is believed, how shall ye sit down and comfort yourselves in the promises, and rejoice exceedingly in them.

The *second* duty which we shall press upon you from this is, that since Christ is the fountain and original of the promises, be much in the application of them. And here I shall speak a little upon these three things. 1. A little unto the evidences and marks of those who have a right to apply the promises, and shall only name unto you these few. The *First* is, to be a person under convictions of sensible need and necessity of such a promise; have ye convictions of such a necessity? Then from that ye may infer, I have a right to the promises; and are not these glad tidings? I know there are some who are under such convictions of their sins, that they think it boldness to apply the promises. But I would say this unto you, that if ye were under sensible convictions of your lost estate, ye would give a world for an hair of a promise whereby to hang. Believe it, the exercise of misbelief is never at its height, till ye would be content to dig through the earth to get a promise; and till we were at that, that our souls would pursue after them from the one end of the world to the other. And for the ground of this assertion, that sensible necessity giveth a right to the promises; if ye will look to those great promises of the everlasting covenant, are they not



given to that Christian who is under a need? Isa. lv. 13. and Matth. xi. 28. where the great promises of the gospel are given out, and the invitation of Jesus Christ is unto those who 'are weary and heavy laden.' Christ would account it an excellent courtesy, that ye should not dispute, but believe; and that ye would look upon your necessities, as his call to believe the promises. 2. A person, who hath an high account of the promises, hath a right to apply them. Let once your soul close with Christ by faith and love, and then you may with boldness close with the promises. I confess, if you were more in believing the promises, ye would have a higher and more full esteem of them. Would you know the reason why Christ is not accounted matchless? It is because of this, our necessities of the promises are not always within our sight, and our exercising of faith upon them is not our daily work. 3. This looketh like a right to the promises, that which is borne in upon a Christian's spirit, when he is near God in prayer, and is under some sensible exercise of his own infirmity, he hath readily a right to apply the promises: as, for instance, when a Christian is debarring himself out of Christ, which is but an unpleasant exercise to meet with a promise borne in upon their spirit, that giveth them some ground of hope, that they may apply and rest upon Christ; or when a Christian is fainting under affliction, and is like to give over to meet with a word of promise borne in upon his spirit, that doth uphold him in the day of his trial, he may probably conclude he hath a right to believe that promise. 4. There is this evidence, persons who have an high account of the promises, have a right to apply them; it is an excellent and most concerning work for a Christian to believe the excellency of the promises, when he cannot have the actual application of them; for when once a Christian cometh to this, that the great things of the everlasting covenant are matchless in his eyes, then that is the valley of Achor, and a door of hope, that ere long Christ will apply them. 5. When a Christian hath great delight in the promises, when they are sweet to his taste, and are the refreshing and rejoicing of his heart, that is an undeniable sign that he hath a right to make use of such promises. Were your souls never refreshed by reading of the boundless covenant of love, and the sweet promises that are in it? I would have Christians to mark those promises that have upheld them in their straits: I would have them to mark the promises that have been lively to their souls, and say, this once was my goodly meat, and made me to rejoice in the 'house of my affliction.' And I would have a Christian to mark the time of the accomplishment of the promises, in which he will see infinite wisdom shining, in ordering the accomplishment of them

at such a time. And I would have a Christian to mark the frame of his own spirit when the promises are accomplished (as ye will often find in scripture), and by all this, you will often find such a reviving and profitable delight in the promises, as shall give a very full evidence of your right unto them. 6. *Lastly*, When a Christian under straits can receive consolation from no other thing, but all prove physicians of no value, and miserable comforters. When a Christian is convinced, that there is no joy to be had under such a cross but in the faith of the promises, that is an evidence that this person hath a right to the promises. I would only say, O beloved in the Lord! is not this your guilt, your undervaluing of the promises, and your little exercise of faith? I would pose you with this, When last studied ye to apply any promise of the covenant of grace? When last did ye exercise faith upon any of them? Shall I tell you, what is the practice of the most part of us? We study perhaps to apply one promise, but for the rest of the promises we lay them aside and do totally neglect them. We study to apply the promises of salvation, and of having redemption through Christ, but for the promises of sanctification, for the promises to help us to perform duties; for the promises to support us under the cross, for the promises to comfort us in our way to heaven, for promises in reference to all ordinary things, we are not much in application to these. O! but if a Christian were believing the promises, he might sit down, even while he is here, and sing one of the songs of Zion, though yet 'but in a strange land.'

The *second* thing that I shall speak unto upon the application of the promises, shall be to propose unto you some rules, that you would make use of in the application of them, and I shall name unto you these.

*First*, Study these four things, one is the faithfulness and truth of the promises, that such a thing is the saying of him who is the 'faithful witness, and Amen.' This was the practice of Paul, 1 Tim. i. 10. The way how he was brought to make application of the promises was, 1. By laying down that conclusion, 'this is a faithful saying.' Rev. xxi, from the beginning to the 6 verse, where there are great promises made, and much spoken to the commendation of heaven, this is subjoined to the 6 verse, 'These are faithful and true sayings of God.' As if John had said, all that I have spoken concerning heaven will be to no purpose, except ye believe the truth of the promises. And this was the practice of David, 2 Sam. vi. 28. 'Thy words are true, O Lord:' he subjoineth this unto the actual application of the promises. 2. Study the sweetness and excellency of the promises. This was the practice of Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. 'This is a faithful saying;' and



then he subjoineth, 'and worthy of all acceptation.' And this was the practice of David, Psalm cxix. 72. 'I have esteemed the law of thy mouth better than thousands of gold and silver.' O such an opinion, to esteem the promises higher than thousands of gold! It is heterodox against the most part of you, that prefer the world before the promises of the covenant. And it was his practice, verse 103, and 162. 'I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.' He had a higher account of the promises, than to divide the spoil after war. 3. Let the Christian study the necessity that he hath of the promises, that there is no way of winning above that necessity, but by closing with the promise, and laying hold upon it. 4. *Lastly*, A Christian should study the suitableness that is in the promises, to answer their necessities, that if they be under need, there is a precious way of remedy manifested unto them by these.

The *second* rule that we would prescribe in the application of the promises is, that ye do not expect sensible comforts immediately after ye have believed them. A Christian may apply the promises, and yet want the joy and sweetness that is in them; this is clear, Psalm cxix. 85. 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust.' There he is under much anxiety, and much sorrow; and yet he is a believer of the promises in the mean time, as the words following do clear, 'quicken me according to thy word;' he layeth claim to the promise; and this is clear in the 81 verse of that Psalm. 'My soul doth faint within me;' there is much exercise of sorrow, and yet he is a believer of the promise; 'but I hope in thy word.' A Christian, after he hath believed the promise, would put a blank in Christ's hand concerning the sweetness of the promise, to be made out in its own time. What is sense? It is the precious indulgence of Christ, that he giveth to his own. I would press this upon you, prophesy nothing before your believing of the promise; but having believed, ye may surely prophesy, that the promise shall be accomplished in its own time, and the word that he hath spoken, shall certainly come to pass. But as for sense, as for quickening, as for comforting, as for receiving, ye must put a blank in the hand of Christ, to dispense these things to you as he seeth fit.

The *third* rule in the application of the promise is, that ye do not build your faith upon this, that the promises shall be accomplished, because probability and reason seem to say the thing. I would say this to a Christian, that ye may oftentimes suspect the promise not near to be accomplished, when reason saith, behold the word of the Lord cometh; and that oftentimes the Lord is nearer, when we begin to pass a conclusion, the word is not at hand, and the time of the accomplishment of the pro-



mises is not near. Certainly, many times before Christ accomplish the promises, he will learn us to be living above sense and reason; and he will have reason to submit to faith, he will have probabilities to contradict the accomplishment of the promises, and when probabilities are furthest away, that is his time to work; this is clear in these two signal deliverances of the people of Israel from Egypt and Babylon, Exod. iii. 4, 5. and Ezek. xxxvii. at the beginning. And therefore, as a Christian would not quit his hold of the promises, because dispensations seem to contradict the accomplishment of the promise, and sometimes crieth out, 'why art thou become unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' So, on the other hand, ye are to build your faith upon the promises, and not upon dispensations, even when favourable, seeing that we know the way that Christ taketh many times to accomplish the promises is by contrary means to our apprehension, 'his paths are in the whirlwind, and his footsteps are not known.' And may we not cry out, 'who can take up the way of God, whose ways are more subtile than the way of an eagle in the air, or the way of a serpent upon a rock, or the way of a ship upon the sea?' &c.

The *fourth* rule that we would prescribe unto you in the application of the promise is, that ye would close absolutely with the promises; I mean, without limiting the holy One. There is limited closing with the promise, which is the frequent exercise of our hearts; we will close with the promise, but with this restraint laid upon Christ, that whensoever we begin to believe the promises, all things might go as we desire; and this is the great occasion that we do so frequently reject our confidence, and do refuse our hope, when God doth not answer our peremptory expectations.

5. We give you this rule, that ye would eye Christ much in the application of the promises. There is a threefold sight of Christ that a Christian should have when he applieth the promises: 1. A Christian should have a sight of the boundless and condescending love of Christ, that so he may be constrained to hope, and may be constrained to love. 2. A Christian should eye the faithfulness and unchangeableness of Christ, that what his blessed lips have spoken, 'he will also do, and what he hath said, he will likewise bring to pass.' And 3. In the application of the promises, he must eye the omnipotency of Christ, that what he hath said he is able to bring to pass. And O! when shall we have occasion to sing that song, 'What hath God wrought for us?' Which was the song that Balaam sung, who yet was but a profane wretch.

6. There is this rule that we would prescribe unto you in the

application of the promises, that a Christian, after he hath applied them, would be much in the exercise of prayer for the accomplishment of these promises. This was the practice of David, 2 Sam. ii. 27. when God is passing many precious promises, David doth subjoin that word, 'Therefore have I found in my heart to pray this prayer. And we see in Ezek. xxxvi. 37. along that chapter, God is passing most excellent promises: and yet in verse 27. this is subjoined, 'For all those things, I will be inquired of by the house of Israel.' And in Jer. xxix. 10. 12. where the time is coming, when God would accomplish 'his good word,' (as he speaketh) that is subjoined in verse 12. 'Then shall ye call upon me, and seek after me.' And Dan. ix. 2, 3. when Daniel knew that the promise was near the time of its accomplishment, then 'he set himself to prayer and supplication, to seek the face of God.' I would say these three words to a Christian; 1. The smallest mercy that a Christian meeteth with, if he can call it Samuel; that is, 'the son of prayer,' and if he can call it Isaac; that is, 'the child of promise;' he may then, and doth ordinarily receive much consolation in that mercy. O! but a mercy flowing to a Christian through a promise, if it were but a drink of cold water, and a piece of brown bread, it will be more excellent cheer than all the dainties of the kings of the earth. O! but to eat and drink, taking these things as the accomplishment of the promises, this would make us eat our bread 'with singleness of heart, and much cheerfulness.' And there is this, 2dly, I would say unto you, when a promise is accomplished, and a Christian is not much in the exercise of prayer, in the accomplishment of it, one to a hundred if he lose not the sanctified use of the accomplishment of that promise. Ah! know ye not, that a promise, when it is accomplished, may be a curse to a Christian? That word is most terrible, Mal. ii. 2. 'I will curse your blessings.' And the last word that I would say to this is, that a Christian, who believeth the promise, notwithstanding that dispensations seem to contradict it, that promise shall be made most refreshful unto his spirit when it is accomplished. O! but a Christian that never had much jealousy, nor much staggering about the accomplishment of the promise, when it cometh, it will be most refreshful unto him. And believe it, there is not an hour's entertainment, of jealousy about the accomplishment of the promise, but it will impair the sweetness of the promise, when it is accomplished, except so far that the transcendent and free love of Christ is seen in the accomplishment of them, notwithstanding of our misbelief.

The *last* rule that I shall offer a Christian in his application of the promises is, when ye meet with objections that ye cannot

answer, but they do silence you; I will tell you what ye should do with them, misken these obstructions, and lay them by. This was the practice of believing Abraham, Rom. iv. 9. 'He considered not his own body, being weak, and the deadness of Sarah's womb.' The weakness of his own body, and the deadness of Sarah's womb, were so strong objections in the way of the accomplishment of the promises, that he could not answer them; and the way he took to refute them was, 'he did not consider them;' he forgot, as it were, those objections, and went about his duty.

The *third* thing that we shall speak to in relation to the application of the promises, shall be somewhat for helping a Christian who is standing at too great a distance to get the promises applied.

*First*, A Christian should be much in the study of those experiences of the faithfulness of God, and what others hath met with. When ye begin to apply a promise, ye may be helped in the faith of applying them, by beholding those great records of the faithfulness of God that are extant. This was the way the angel took with Mary, Luke i. 36. where, helping her to believe that promise, 'that of her should be born the Messiah:' this is the way that he strengthened her, 'thy cousin Elizabeth is now with child, and hath gone six months, even she that was called barren.' And I shall only name these two places in scripture, which may help you exceedingly, and strengthen you to believe the promises upon this account, 1. There is that word in Exod. xii. 41. and 51. It is a most remarkable saying, 'At the end of four hundred and thirty years, on that very same day,' (there was not one day missed after the time that was set, but accomplished) 'in that very same day they came out.' And this is marked in verse 51. again. And 2. There is that word, 1 Kings viii. 56, where Solomon, when he is singing most sweetly to God, taketh observation of this, 'Lo, (saith he) there hath not failed one word that God hath spoken to you by his servant Moses.'

*Secondly*, Ye should be much in the consideration of your own experiences that you have in the accomplishment of the promises formerly. This was the way that David took to strengthen himself to believe the promises, "he that hath delivered me from the rage of the lion, and the paw of the bear, he will deliver me from this uncircumcised Philistine," 1 Sam. xvii. 35. and 37. 46. And this was the practice of the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. 'God hath delivered me from the cruel lion:' and from thence he subjoineth, 'and the Lord will deliver me from every evil work.' And this was his practice, 2 Cor. i. 10. where these three are sweetly knit together, "God hath delivered me, he doth deliver



me, and he shall deliver me.' There is one experience of this kind that preacheth this unto you, O believe the promises, and do not call in question his faithfulness.

*Thirdly*, There is this help, that ye study much the excellency of the promises, which is the most noble and excellent way to move you to apply the promises, according to that word, Psalm cxix. 111. 'I have made thy testimonies my heritage for ever;' and the ground often is this, 'because they are the rejoicing of my heart.' The sweetness of the promises should engage our hearts to apply them. And there is this *fourth* help, a Christian should study the omnipotency of God, that he may be helped to believe and apply the promises. This is clear in Zech. xii. 1. where God, going to many excellent promises, ushers in that discourse with high and majestic descriptions of his power, that he 'stretcheth forth the heaven, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.' And this was the practice of Abraham, Rom. iv. 21. the way how he came to believe the promise, 'he counteth him able that made it,' that he might perform it. *5thly*, For your help in applying of the promises, study much the unchangeableness of Christ, and his faithfulness, know that he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. This was the way that Sarah came to the faith of the promises, Heb. xi. 11. 'She believed;' and the ground of it is, that she judged him faithful that had promised.' There is not an act of misbelief that a Christian falleth into, but it saith, that God is not faithful, and that he is not true.

Now the last dury which we would press from this point, that Christ is the fountain of the promises, is, that we may have an high esteem of the promises, even of 'Jesus Christ, in whom they are yea, and Amen.' And I shall close at this time with this, Are there not many here that have no respect unto him, who is that 'faithfulness, and the Amen;' who hath promised 'us himself and all things?' And if ye will not take with the challenge, let your hearts but answer these two or three things, 1. Hath not the loss of, things in the world affected your hearts more than ever absence from Christ did? hath it not? And can such a soul say, I have an high account of the Promiser? Is it possible, that those who will mourn more under the absence of their idols, than for the want of Jesus Christ, that they can have an high account of him? I am persuaded of this, there are some merchants that the loss of their goods at sea hath diverted them from their night's rest, and yet absence from Christ never diverted them from their sleep one hour. O when did love to find out Jesus Christ, and to enjoy his fellowship, make you rise up in the silent watches of the night, and to pursue after him? 2. Have not your

souls delighted more in the enjoyment of the things of this world than ever they did in the enjoyment of Christ? Is not this true, that the increase of wine and oil, and of silver and gold, hath affected your hearts more with joy, than ever Christ did? And have you an high esteem of the Promiser? 3. Are you taking delight to entertain fellowship and communion with the Promiser? Is this true? When went you to your prayers, but ye wearied ere ye went away? And have you an high esteem of the Promiser? Is not this the language of your hearts, 'O when shall the sabbath be over? And when shall the new moon be gone, that I may pursue after my idols?' I would pose you with this, if there were no eye to take notice of you, would you not slight secret prayer? Would you not slight family prayer? We love not to serve Jesus Christ. I know there are atheists here, who would love to go to heaven without faith, love, prayer, and repentance; they would love to go to heaven by a way never one went before them. And now I shall say but this one word to you that are the heirs of the promise, and have the blessed expectation of heaven, whatever the world do esteem of him, O remember and comfort yourselves in the thoughts of the blessed day, when Christ (after he hath past the sentence of condemnation upon the wicked) shall go in upon the head of the troops of the first-born, they shall walk before as through the ports of the New Jerusalem, having crowns of immortal glory upon their heads, and then shall follow after him his angels, and then shall follow after him the blessed company of the first-born, every one having the harps of God in their hands, and they shall be singing as they enter in through the ports of the city, 'Hallelujah unto him that was dead, and is alive, and now liveth for evermore.' Oh! to believe that day, when first we shall enter in through the streets of the New Jerusalem, when we shall be clothed in white robes, having crowns upon our heads. O such a day! if it were believed, might make us often shake our glass, and 'stretch out our necks,' (as the word is, Rom. xviii. 19.) till once we saw that blessed day approaching us. There is no wearying in heaven, the promises are now accomplished unto them, and they are inheriting the promises. When shall that word be accomplished, or when shall we have occasion to say it, Mark i. 36. 'Behold, all men seek after thee?' O the word that these disciples spake to Christ? O study to love him? study to believe on him; for be persuaded, he is upon his way: and I shall say no more but this, that all the promises which are within the bonds of this everlasting covenant, are *Yea*, and *Amen*, in an embraced Christ, and laid hold on by faith: so, I say, all the curses that are in Deut. xxv. 26, 28. and all the curses that are within the volume of the

book of this covenant, shall be *Yea*, and *Amen*, in a despised Christ, and not be laid hold upon by faith.

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### SERMON III.

2 PETER i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

SOMETIMES the soul of a Christian doth move in the paths of God, and in the way towards Zion, 'as the chariots of Amminadab,' when they are under the soul-enlivening and quickening influences of heaven; and sometimes the soul of a Christian doth move in these blessed paths, as Pharaoh's chariots, 'they drive most heavily,' when there is a cloud between the precious face of Christ and them. And we conceive, that sound and spiritual exercise of faith upon the promises, would make a Christian's motion more swift towards heaven. We grant that Christ hath three different ways of guiding sons and daughters unto glory: 1. There are some whom Christ carrieth to heaven in a chariot paved with love, who all their life have lived within sight of that promised land, and were taken up with the refreshing of heavenly joys; such an one was Enoch, who spent his days in walking with God. 2. There are some whom Christ guideth to heaven in a chariot drawn with speckled horses; they have mixed dispensations of sorrow and joy attending them in their walk, and they have a winter and a summer; a night and a day; and such an one was Job. 3. There are some whom Christ carrieth to heaven in a fiery chariot, who all their life were under distracting terror of the Most High, and were living perpetually, in their own apprehensions, upon the borders of hell; and such an one was Heman, whom Christ thus guided to heaven. However, if we shall go there, we need not much dispute the way how he came, 'for he doth all things well.' And, upon the other part, Satan hath three different ways of guiding souls unto everlasting torment; there are some Satan carrieth to hell in a chariot of delusion, making them believe they are still going to heaven; and such are the hypocrites in Zion. And I shall say, I think that chariot was never so filled as it is in these days. O fear that dreadful disappointment which many of you (it is like) will meet with? An hypocrite hath strong hopes, strong idols, and strong delusions, these are his three attendants. And there are some whom Satan



carrieth to hell in a chariot of profanity, and ignorance of God, 'whose judgment goeth before hand,' and it is known that they are going there.' And there are some that Satan carrieth to hell in a chariot of civility, whose religion stands in this, 'concerning the letter of the law to be blameless.' And certainly believing of the promises, and studying to exercise faith upon them, is that which might prevent many of these damnable self-destroying and murdering delusions that are within some of our breasts. There are three things in scripture that are called precious. Christ is called precious, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Faith is called precious, 2 Pet. i. 1. 'To you that are partakers of the like precious faith with us.' And the promises are called precious, in the words that we have read. And faith, as it were, hath two blessed eyes, by one it beholdeth Christ, and by the other it beholdeth the promises, and fixeth itself upon them. O Christians and expectants of heaven! would ye know what is the cause of all the sad things that have befallen you in these days? It is this, in short, ye believe not the promises. O Christian what is the reason that ye carry not your crosses with patience? It is, because ye believe not the promises, by which your souls must be upheld in the day of your affliction. O Christians! what is the cause of your little mortification? Is it not, because ye believe not the promises? For by them ye should 'be made partakers of the divine nature.' O Christians, what is the ground that you pray so little, and that you pray with so little success? Is it not because ye believe not the promises? A Christian, when he goeth to pray, should take these two things along with him: 1. The sensible convictions of his necessities; and, 2. the precious promise that is given to answer that necessity: the one would provoke fervency, and the other faith. Are there not some here, who know not what it is to pray upon a promise, and that maketh you to pray to so little purpose? O Christian, what is the reason of your so much sorrow, and of your so little spiritual comfort? It is, that ye believe not the promises. It is no wonder that your name is called *Marah*, because ye exercise not faith upon the precious promises of God. I think, without wronging you, or any that are here, I doubt much if ever Christians had such hearts as the most part of us have, O what a heart is it that can neither 'pray nor praise?' Both are like mysteries unto them. What a heart is that, O Christian, that can neither believe promises, believe threatenings, nor obey commands? What a heart is that, that can neither sorrow for sin, nor rejoice in God? And what a heart is that, that neither loves Christ when he is present, nor longs for him when he is absent? And what a heart is that,

O Christians, that can neither love heaven, nor fear hell? and is there not such hearts with us, even with us who are here this day?

At the last occasion we spake upon these words, we spake a little to the *first* thing in them, which was the rise and the original of the promises, held forth in that word, *whereby*, or *by whom*. The *second* thing in the words was, the properties of the promises; and we told you, that there were these four held forth in the words. The *first* property of the promises is, that they are free, which is imported in that word, *are given*. All the promises of the everlasting covenant, being the precious and free gifts of God. Hence you will see, that oft-times the tenor of the covenant of grace runs upon that strain, *I will give you*; as is clear, Jer. xxxii. 39. 'I will give you one heart;' and Ezek. xxxiv. 26. 'I will give you a new heart', and Ezek. xi. 19. 'I will give you an heart of flesh.' It is the strain of the language of the covenant of grace, to *give*.

Now in speaking upon this *first* property of the promises, *to wit*, their freedom, I shall speak a little unto these two; the *first* thing shall be, to point out unto you the way how a Christian may win to the distinct uptaking of the freedom of the promises, and then I shall from thence press some duties.

And, in short, as to the *first*, we conceive that a Christian may win to the distinct uptaking of the freedom of the promises, by these considerations: 1. Let a Christian cast his eyes upon the sweet rise and spring, or fountain of the promises, and there ye will see their freedom shining most clear: for what is the fountain of the promises? Is it not the boundless and everlasting love of Christ? This is clear, Deut. vii. 8. where God giving a reason of all the great things that he hath performed for them, he setteth down the rise of it, '*because I loved you*', saith he. And again the ground of this is, '*because I loved you*'. There being no reason of love, but love; and it is clear, 2 Sam. vii. 2. where David, having perceived many precious promises, setteth down the rise of all these in that verse, '*For thy word's sake*' (saith he), and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these things, to make them known unto thy servant.'

And it is clear, Ezek. xvii. 18. where God calleth the time of entering into covenant with them, *a time of love*. That love was eminently shining in that day, when God condescended to covenant with them. And hence ye see in scripture, that the promises are called by the name of mercy, Micah vii. 20. '*To perform the mercy to Abraham*,' which is the promises; and they are so called, because mercy and boundless love is the sole fountain and spring of all these promises. 2dly, Consider the per-

sons who have a right to make use of the promises. Must not the promises be free, when the proclamation is upon these terms, Rev. xxi. 12. 'Whosoever will let him come?' There is nothing to give you a right to the promises, but only a willingness to embrace them; if ye will ye may take them. And 3dly, Ye may read the freedom of the promises in this, that any condition which is annexed to the promise, Christ giveth to the believer strength to perform that condition. It is known, that faith is the condition of the promises; and it is certain, that Christ giveth a believer that condition, as well as he giveth him the promise. Philip. i. 29. 'To you it is given to believe.' And Eph. ii. 8. 'It is the gift of God.' It is impossible for a Christian to perform the condition, except Christ, who is surety for him, did perform it. 4thly, Ye may read the freedom of the promises, if ye consider the time when they are accomplished, it is often at such a time, when the Christian hath been, and is under no very spiritual frame. Hence ye will see in Ezek. xvi. 60, 61. that when the promises are accomplished, God requireth 'confusion and blushing of face, because of their former ways, and Ezek. xxxvi. when the promises are accomplished, then that is the time when the Lord calleth them to 'Remember their own evil ways, and their doings that were not good.' Yea, he will have them and all the world to know, it is not for their sakes that he doth this: therefore he commanded them to be 'ashamed and confounded for their own ways, or the posture they were in when he accomplished his promises. And if there were no other thing to speak the freedom of the promises, but the trusting of the accomplishment of them with such a frame, it were more than sufficient. But besides this, see David's practice, 2 Sam. vii. 8. he readeth the freedom of the promises from his own imperfections, 'What am I,' saith he, 'and what is my father's house, that thou shouldest have brought me hitherto?' And even in the same text, there is an emphasis in that word, *to us*, 'whereby are given to us.' As if the Apostle did say, to prove that the promises are gifts, I can bring no argument so strong as this, *they are given to us*.

5thly, Ye may read the freedom of the promises, if ye will consider and take up the infinite fulness and all-sufficiency of the Promiser, that there is nothing without himself that can persuade him to give such promises. Hence you will see, Gen. xvii. 1. when he is making the covenant with Abraham, he putteth it still in the frontispiece of the covenant, 'I am God all-sufficient; as it were to cut off all thoughts of merit that Abraham might have; and that Abraham might be persuaded of this, that there was an imaginable perfection in himself that could be the ground and rise of such promises. And there is that, *lastly*, from which



ye may read the freedom of the promises, if ye consider the greatness of these promises; if they were of a lower nature, then were it less to be wondered, if merit should come in and plead for itself; but when a Christian shall compare himself, and the greatness of the promises together, he cannot but then sing that blessed song, 'These are the gifts and donations of God, and what am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?'

Now the *second* thing that we proposed to speak to is, to press some duties upon you from this, that the promises are free; and we shall lay before you these three; The *first* is, that since the promises of God are free, then as you would not destroy your own souls, be much in making use and application of the promises? Are not the promises your life? Did not all the saints that went to heaven before us, go to heaven living upon the promises? There was not a step of Abraham's life, but he walked with a promise in it; there was not an affliction that Abraham met with, but he took comfort to himself from the promises. And I shall remove these two mistakes that are incident to Christians in the application of the promises, even from these grounds, that they are free.

The *first* is this, There are some Christians that will not apply the promises, because they are under the convictions of their own infirmities, and of their own baseness; so that when we press you to believe them, ye reject this counsel, because ye consult with your own infirmities. This was the practice of David, Psalm xxii. 4. "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted and were delivered:" but he durst not, in the 6 verse, "But I am a worm, and not a man, I am a reproach among the people." And it is the same divinity that is in these days, when we press you to believe the promises, because of the great cloud of witnesses that hath gone before you, that believe the promises. O! say ye, if I were like David and Abraham, I would believe the promises, but truly David said the same, who lived before you, if I were like my fathers, I would believe the promises, but I am not like my fathers. And therefore I would say to you these two words.

1. Are you inferior or short unto David in holiness, or necessities? We do not question but all of you will answer, we are not inferior to David in necessities, but in holiness; then, say we, if ye be not inferior to David in necessities, but in holiness, then make use of the promises; for as we cleared the last day, necessity giveth a right in making use of the promises.

2. I would say, I am certainly persuaded, that sensible necessity would cut short many of our formal debates in closing with

the promises; necessity (as ye use to speak) hath no law, and necessity hath no manner. Let me say this to you, who will not close with the promises, that if ye were under sensible necessity, if Christ should forbid you to close with such a promise, ye would close with it, though he forbade you, as the woman of Canaan did; there is nothing but sensible necessity will overcome it: necessity never disputes its right, for it goeth over the belly of such a dispute, it presently makes use of that which its need calleth for.

*Secondly*, There is that other mistake amongst Christians in believing the promises, that they want the qualifications annexed to them, and therefore they dare not believe the promises, especially that promise of closing with Christ, they think they are not under such a deep measure of humiliation, of sorrow for sin, nor under such a lively apprehension of the excellency of Christ. And I shall say but these six things unto those that will not close with Christ, because they want qualifications, or at least have not these qualifications after such a way. *First*, Let me tell thee, O Christian that thus disputes, go between the first step of a Christian's way to heaven, and the last, and see if ye can behold a grave upon which this is written, "Behold, here lieth a man or woman who came to Christ to embrace him, and he would not receive them." Did ye ever behold such a grave as this? And why then do ye so much dispute? Will ye take a trial of Christ, whether he will refuse you if ye come? And if he refuse you, sure am I, he will do that which he never did to any before you. The *Second* thing I would say to such is, that the want of such degrees of such things, ought not to be a ground of your not closing with Christ; for if ye had the qualifications that ye require, ye would maintain the same disputes that ye do now: for when we desire you to close with Christ, ye answer, that your sorrow is not come to such a height as it ought, nor is your humiliation come to such a height as you pitch for yourself to come. O Christian! if ye come to ten times more, and yet ten times more, ye would have the same dispute then which ye have now; and the ground of it is this, the more that a Christian hath real sorrow, he will oftentimes be the more in the apprehension that he hath no sorrow. *Thirdly*, If ye want the qualifications that are required in those that should close with Christ in the covenant of promise, then come to Christ to get these qualifications. I would only ask at you, think ye to spin sorrow for sin out of your own hearts? Think ye to spin humiliation for sin out of these wretched breasts of yours? Ye must come to Christ for sorrow, as well as ye must come for life.

*Fourthly*, All those qualifications that are annexed unto that



promise of closing with Christ and coming to him, point out rather the qualification of them that will come, than the qualification of those who ought to come. Ye read such a command as that, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.' O, say ye, I am not weary, and I am not under the burden of sin, therefore I cannot come. I will tell you what is the real meaning of that command, Christ inviteth those who have the greatest unwillingness, to come and get willingness: But withal, it sheweth this, none will come to get rest from Christ, but those who are first weary; and this is the Lord's method of working, first to make weary, and then to ease; but no such matter in his word, that first we must have a weariness of our own making, or else he will not receive us. Now, but when ye come, ye will be weary, and he will receive you.

*Fifthly*, Let me say to you who thus dispute, make your want of qualifications the very ground of your closing with Christ. I shall but in three places let you see this strange arguing of faith in closing with the promises: there is that, Psalm xl. 11, 12. 'Let thy truth continually preserve me;' that is, let thy promises be accomplished, and made lively unto me, which are my preservation. And would ye know the ground and reason that he annexeth unto this: 'For (saith he) innumerable evils compass me about, they have taken such hold of me, that I am not able to look up.' He maketh his very want of qualifications the ground of his closing with the promise, and seeking the accomplishment of it. And there is this second expression, which is most wonderful, Psalm xxv. 11. David prayeth for the accomplishment of that promise, 'pardon my sin,' upon that very same account, 'because it is very great.' And I shall give you a third place, in which the arguing by faith is most mysterious, Exod. xxxiii. compared with Exod. xxxiv. 9. In the first place, God denieth the accomplishment of the promise, 'of going up amongst the people.' And the ground he giveth for it is, 'Because (saith he) ye are a stiff-necked people.' And, chapter xxiv. 9. when Moses is praying for the accomplishment of the promise, 'That God would go amongst them,' he taketh the same argument out of the mouth of God, 'Go up amongst us; for (saith he) we are a stiff-necked people;' God said, 'He would not go up, because they are a stiff-necked people;' and Moses desireth him to go, because of this. And there is this, *lastly*, that we would say unto you who so much dispute, if ye would have those qualifications that ye want, ye would study to close with Christ by faith. Would ye have sorrow for sin? then believe. Would ye have high thoughts of Christ? then believe. Would ye have humiliation? then believe: for believing is a mother-grace unto all these.

The *second* duty that we would press upon you from this consideration, that the promises are free, is, that when the promises are given to you, and are accomplished, ye would study to be denied to any merit in yourselves, which we may suppose to be the rise of the giving or accomplishing of the promises. There is nothing that a Christian receiveth, but it is a fruit of infinite love. There is not a conviction that trysteth a Christian, but it is the fruit of infinite love. There is not one real sigh for sin, but it is the fruit of infinite love. There is not one blink of the precious countenance of Christ, but it is a fruit of infinite love. There is not the least degree of hatred against sin, but it is the fruit of infinite love. There is not the least promise that is accomplished unto you but it is the fruit of infinite love. So that upon your receipts from God, there is reason to sing that song, 'Not unto us, but unto thee doth belong the glory.' And therefore I would press this upon you, O Christian! reduce all your mercies unto the fountain, and there sit down and pen songs of everlasting praise unto him. Will ye but take a view of this, there is not one bit of bread that ye eat that is within a promise, but it is a mercy, that cometh running to you through the bowels and tender heart of Christ: his heart is the fountain of all our mercies, and they sweetly stream out of that precious fountain: so that, if ye had no other thing to commend your mercies from, but that it is a gift of the heart of Christ, ye may take it in your arms upon this account, and solace yourselves with it.

The *last* duty that we would press upon you from this consideration, that the promises are free, is this, ye should be studying to close with Jesus Christ, who is promised, and freely held out to you in the gospel. O sinner of eighty years old! O sinner of sixty years old! O atheist of forty years old! and O sinner of twenty years old and downward! I do here invite you, as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, to embrace Christ, freely offered to you in the promises; yea, I do invite you by all the virtues of that noble Plant of renown, by that everlasting love that dwelleth in his precious heart, by all the sufferings and wounds that he received, by his eternal glory, and by all the blessings and joys of heaven, and by that love which ye owe to your own precious and immortal souls, that ye would come and embrace him freely offered unto you in the gospel. And for the further pressing of this, and for clearing of the way of your closing with him. I shall, *First*, propose some gospel mysteries, and sweetly agreeing contradictions, (if so we may speak) held forth in scripture, 1. 'Come and buy Christ, and yet buy him without money;' that is, come and receive Christ, and ye shall have as unquestionable a



right to him, as if ye had bought him; that is, to 'buy him without money.' Ye have nothing to commend you to Christ but necessities: and necessities bid you go, and Christ biddeth you come, why then will ye sit that call? 2. What a gospel-mystery is that, 'Ye are to buy Christ, and he is above price!' there is nothing that we can give to buy that 'pearl of great price,' and yet we must buy him: then the meaning is, come, and buy Christ by faith, and by forsaking of your idols, this is all the price that he doth require for himself; and so he requireth nothing of you, but what he himself doth give, or what is both your duty and advantage to forsake, and which is no gain for him to receive. Christ is not enriched by your hearts, and by giving of your consent to him. 3. This is a gospel mystery, that we are to buy without money, and without price, and yet to buy with a price! according to that word, Prov. xvii. 17. 'There is a price put in the hand of fools to buy wisdom.' And what is the meaning of that, 'to buy with price, and to buy without price?' It is in short this, though Christ be offered to you in the gospel freely, ye must not sit down, but be active in closing with him. What is the price that Christ requireth of you? It is even this, that ye would forsake your soul-destroying idols, and that ye would forsake your former evil ways, and take hold of the present opportunity for embracing him. And O cursed shall the heart be that will not embrace Christ! O but to have him one hour in our arms, it were well worth ten thousand eternities of the enjoyments of all things that are here below! ye would never open your arms again to another lover, if once ye had him between your breasts. O but a sight of him, who now is the eternal ravishment of all that are above, would transport your hearts with joy, with delight, and admiration above all expression. 4. There is this gospel-mystery, by which we would press you to embrace Christ, a Christian must buy Christ, and yet he must have him freely. Is there not an inconsistency, do you suppose, between buying and having freely? But I would say this to clear it, Christ is both the seller, he is the ware, and he is the buyer. Christ presenteth himself unto your hearts, and he desireth to sell himself, and he persuadeth, and freely enableth you to buy him. I will tell you what Christ doth, he standeth without our hearts, and within our hearts; he standeth without, and knocketh by the word, and he standeth within and openeth by his Spirit. Christ, he both commandeth and he obeyeth, both within doors and without doors, and all this he doth freely.

The *Second* thing I shall say to persuade your heart to take Christ, freely promised and offered unto you, shall be this, will ye consider that there is willingness in the heart of Christ to take

you. I shall give you these seven things that speak out Christ's willingness to receive you. *1st*, Doth he not command you to come and receive him? And if you could multiply objections throughout eternity, why ye should not close with Christ, ye may cut them all asunder with this knife, 'This is his commandment.' And doth he not command you, Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour?' And Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters?' *2dly*. He doth regret and deeply resent it, that they will not come. I think Christ never wept so bitterly, as that day when he wept over Jerusalem, that ye will not embrace him, Luke xix. 42. If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace. And John ix. 40. 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.' O what think ye can be the rise of this, that Christ should sorrow, because ye will not give up your hearts unto him! Doth he increase his gain when ye give him your hearts? No certainly; but he cannot endure the madness in you, that ye should forsake your only gain. *3dly*, Would you do Christ a joyful turn, and make his heart glad? Embrace him. 'This is clear, Luke xv. 5. that when he findeth the sheep that has gone astray, 'he returneth rejoicing. *4thly*, Would ye make all the persons of the blessed Trinity to rejoice? Would ye make all the angels of heaven to sing? Would ye make all the saints that are round about the throne to exult for joy? Then give your hearts up to Christ, and close with him in the covenant of promise; according to that word, Cant. vi. last verse, 'Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return, that we may look upon thee.' Four times that command is repeated, *return*: and the great argument with which he backeth it is, that all the persons of the Trinity may rejoice; 'that we may look upon thee.' *5thly*, Consider how he hath condescended to give himself at a very low rate. What will ye give for Christ? - O sinner, what will ye give for him? Would ye give the world for Christ? I will tell you what ye will get Christ for; ye will get him for a very look, Isa. xlv. 22. 'O Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth.' And think ye not that is a matchless mercy, that the thirty-three years sufferings of Christ, all the pains and tortures of his heart, his being under the insupportable wrath of an offended God, the fruit of all that should be yours for a look? Will ye deny that to Christ? O do you ever think to find a more down-coming market? Yea, *6thly*, Doth not this speak an admirable willingness to have you? He is to give you that look. It is impossible for these cursed eyes of ours ever to give precious Christ a look; and therefore he hath promised to give that to us, that we may give to him, Zech. xiii. 18. 'They shall look



to me.' That very look ye are to get from Christ, and ye see it is within the compass of a promise. *Lastly*, This speaketh Christ's willingness to receive and take you, that he doth not take the first refusal. O Christians that are now in Christ! if Christ had taken a hundred refusals from you, ye should never have been in heaven; but he waiteth for an answer, and doth not take us at our first word; according to that word, Song v. 2. 'I am wet (saith he) with the drops of the morning, and my locks with the dew of the night.' He was long knocking at her heart, and staid a long time there, patiently suffering all the injuries he could meet with. And I would only pose you. Think ye, that if one of the richest of you were suiting a very poor woman, and she refused you so many times, would your proud heart submit to take her; and yet how oftentimes hath the precious heart of Christ submitted to many affronts and refusals from us? I think, if it were possible, Christians should wink when first they behold Christ upon the day of their espousals: For I suppose there will be a great dispute between shame and love, desire and confusion: shame will make you close your eyes, because you have oft-times undervalued that prince; and yet love will not let you close them. Desire will put you to look, though reflecting upon your former ways will make you blush and be ashamed.

*Thirdly*, To persuade you to receive Christ in the offer of his free promises, I shall but say these three words, and close. 1. Look to those excellent gifts that Christ bringeth with him, he bringeth justification with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth sanctification with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth joy of the Holy Ghost with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth the love of God with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth patience under sufferings with him, and is not that an excellent gift? But why should I name what he bringeth? he bringeth himself, and all things; and what would you have more. O but for one saving blink of his face! it would make your hearts lay down that enmity which you have maintained so long. 2. O Christian, that ye may close with Christ, do but remember the happiness that ye will have in embracing him. I told you not long since, and now I put you in mind again, that there is a sixfold crown which shall be put upon your head. Would ye have long life? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have a crown of everlasting life. Would ye have glory? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have a crown of glory. Would ye have knowledge of the mysteries of God? Then come to Christ, and he shall crown you with knowledge. Would you have eternal felicity, and an uninterrupted happiness? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have an immortal

crown. Would ye have holiness and sanctification? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have a crown of righteousness; yea, he shall put a royal crown upon your head, a crown of pure gold; and then that word shall be accomplished to the full, Ezek. ix. 16. 'Then shall they be as the stones of a crown lifted up, and as an ensign upon the land.' O what a day think ye it will be, when Christ shall hold your crowns upon his hand, and shall put them upon those heads, never to be removed again? Here we are often put to sigh out that lamentation. 'The crown has fallen from our heads, woe unto us, for we have sinned;' but there shall be no more sin to make our crown to totter. 1. I must tell you, there is a four-fold suit of apparel that ye shall be clothed with ere long; ye are now clothed with *heaviness*, but then ye shall be clothed with the garments of *praises*. And did ye ever know such a robe as that? Is it not a more excellent robe, than the robes of kings and emperors on the earth, to be clothed with *praises*. Many of them are, and shall be for ever clothed with infamy and shame. 2. Ye shall be clothed with change of raiment, and shall be brought unto the king 'in raiment of needle work.' O poor lass, and poor lad, that sitteth upon the dunghill, that knows not what it is to have change of apparel, ye shall have it in that day when Christ shall solemnize the marriage with you, you shall misken yourself. O Christian, if ye knew yourself never so well, you will be forced to cry out, O! is this I? Is this I that am now made perfect through his comeliness? 3. Ye shall be clothed with the garments of 'immortal glory,' ye that have 'your foundation in the dust, and dwell in houses of clay, ye shall then be clothed with these excellent robes of immortality, and clothed upon with your house from heaven.' And *lastly*, Ye shall be clothed with the garments of the spotless righteousness of Christ. O! such a majestic walk as ye will have when ye shall have a sceptre in one hand, and a palm in the other; those robes put upon your back, and those crowns upon your heads, and then shall ye walk through those streets that are paved with gold. 4. I shall give you this word to think upon, that there are five things which shall be your exercise in heaven: 1. Ye shall be constantly taken up in wondering. If it be not presumption for us to think a little, what is the exercise of Christ, and the saints that are above; we conceive it is this, 'Christ is wondering at their beauty, and they are wondering at his beauty; Christ is looking upon them, and they upon him.' And is it not true, that if Christ be now ravished with one of our eyes, Song iv. 9. much more shall he be ravished when both our eyes shall be given unto him, and shall eternally behold him, without going a whoring after other lovers? 2. Ye shall be con-



tinually in the exercise of praise; joy and delight shall be going out eternally; ye shall then sweetly warble upon harps of God, and shall cry, 'Hallelujah to him that sitteth upon the throne.' There shall be no discord there, there is a sweet and beautiful harmony amongst all those spiritual and heavenly musicians. O! but to hear them, it were a heaven, though we had not the blessed lot to sing with them. 3. Ye shall be continually taken up in the exercise of love; faith is your predominant grace while ye are here, but love shall be your predominant grace when ye are there. O! is it not a mystery to take up those sweet emanations of love and delight that shall pass between Christ and you? Ye shall be infolding Christ, and Christ shall be infolding you. 4. Ye shall be continually beholding him. I think it is hardly possible for the wife to remember her husband in heaven, though she loved him as her own heart: they will all be taken up in beholding him who sitteth upon the throne; they will be thinking it too low an object to be taken up with looking upon one another in these relations; all will be ravished in beholding him, and one another in him, and for him. O the blessed exercise of those who are now entered within that city, and within those gates, whose name is *praise*. 5. Ye shall be continually taken up in beholding, ye shall be always knowing, and yet never able to comprehend the endless mysteries and perfection of Jesus Christ. O such a study, is it not pleasant always to be studying Christ? And will not these things persuade you.

And now but a word more to those who will not have this free offer; if ye will not embrace Christ and take him, let me tell you, I would not be in your stead for ten thousand worlds. If ye will not embrace Christ, and take him for your portion, the stones of the wall of this house will bear witness against you, and they shall have a tongue to speak against you, that ye have been invited to take him, and would not. Ere long that day is approaching, and drawing near, when the atheists, and refusers of Christ shall change their faith, and they shall change their fear, and they shall change their joy, and they shall change their mind. Ye shall change your faith, ye that are refusers of Christ: for I know there are many that think they have closed with Christ, who never did close with him; that faith shall flee away and ye shall believe the contrary. Ye shall change your love, or at least your opinion of your love. Ye think ye love Christ, but ye do not embrace him. I will tell you what will be your exercise, and I can tell you nothing so terrible, Christ shall eternally hate you, and ye shall eternally hate Christ: there shall be a mutual hatred betwixt you two for evermore. O that dreadful word, Zech. xi. 8. it shall then be accomplished to the



uttermost, ‘My soul loatheth them, and their soul also abhorreth me.’ And ye shall change your fear; for now, though ye fear not God, nor reverence man, yet the horror of God shall make you shake as a leaf: and ye shall change your light, and your judgment. Ye do now undervalue Christ, and think him of no worth; when Christ is presented unto you, ‘there is no beauty why ye should desire him!’ But oh! think on that day, when Christ shall sit down in the clouds, and ye shall see his beautiful face, every ray of which shall be able to captivate your hearts, if they were then capable to be ravished with the sight. O, what will be your thoughts of him? And if the blessings of a crucified Saviour come not upon you, then the eternal and unsupportable vengeance of Christ shall light upon you who will not condescend to take him. Ye shall be cursed in your life, ye shall be cursed in your death, and ye shall be cursed after death. What say ye to it? Are ye content to take him? Ye might bless the day that ever ye were born, if ye could once come to close with Christ. Now to him that hath the keys of the house of David, who can open your hearts to give him entry, we desire to give praise.

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#### SERMON IV.

2. PETER, i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

THERE are three most glorious and excellent gifts that God hath bestowed upon man, there is that comprehensive gift of heaven, Jesus Christ, who is so called, John iv. 10. And sure such a gift as that, ought, in some sense, to blind our eyes, and make us to look upon all things that are below him as nothing. The *second* royal gift that the Lord hath given is the precious promises of the everlasting covenant, which are given to us through him. A Christian, who is united unto him by the bond of faith, may write this above the head of every promise of the everlasting covenant, ‘this is mine, and this is mine.’ His *third* precious gift is, the gift of faith, which is the grace that maketh use of the former two. And we conceive, that our making so little use of these three excellent gifts, is the great occasion and cause why these four lamentable evils hath befallen us.

1. The evil of a silent conscience, that though ‘we be prone to

commit iniquity,' and do 'love a reward under every green tree,' yet our consciences do not speak nor reprove us; and if at any time they do speak, yet there are some who are so possessed with a dumb and deaf spirit, that they can neither hear what God doth speak, nor can they hear their conscience. 2. The evil of a fierce rod. We know not the voice of the rod, 'and who is he that hath appointed it?' God doth not now 'open our ears to discipline, nor seal up our instruction.' 3. There is that evil of silent mercies, the mercies that we receive of God, we understand not the language of them. Are not our mercies, barbarians unto us, speaking to us in an unknown tongue? And yet we may say, there is not a rod, nor a mercy that a Christian meets with, but it hath a voice if we did understand it. And *lastly*, There is that evil which hath befallen us, and alas! this is the cap-stone of all, a silent God, who doth not hearken unto the voice of our cries, but turneth about the face of his throne, 'covering himself with a cloud in his anger,' so 'that our prayers cannot pass through. Alas! may not each Christian of this time cry out, 'Call me no more Naomi, but call me Mara, because the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me.' In short, I think there are these two things that may be our lamentation upon the high places of Israël: 1. That we live without sight of God. And 2. That we live without sight of ourselves; and all this is, because we live without sight of these precious gifts, Christ and his promises.

But now to come to the words, we told you, that in them there were these four things held forth concerning the promises:

1. The origin and fountain of the promises, in that word, *whereby*, or, *by whom*. 2. The properties of the promises, which we told you were these four. The *First* was, That the promises were free, held forth in that word, *they are given*; all the promises of the everlasting covenant being the noble gifts of God. The *Second* (of which we are to speak at this time) is this, That the promises of the covenant are unchangeable, which is imported also in that word, *they are given*; the gifts of God being indeed without repentance. And as to this, 1. We shall prove the truth of the point, and for this end consider that place, Numb. xxiii. 19. which was a part of Balaam's song, 'Hath he spoken it, and will he not also do it? Hath he said it, and shall it not also come to pass?' And Psalm lxxxix. 34. 'I will not break my covenant, nor alter the word that hath gone out of my mouth.' And the point is clear also from the name that the promises get in scripture, (are they not called 'the sure mercies of David,' Isa. lv. 3.) And are they not sometimes in scripture called *truth*? as we may see from Micah vii. 20. *Thirdly*, The na-

ture of the covenant proveth it, in that it is called 'an everlasting covenant;' and sometimes 'a covenant of salt,' because that covenant is above the reach of alteration or putrefaction. And *Fourthly*, It may be likewise shown from the constant experience that the saints have had of the unchangeableness of the promises. This Joshua taketh notice of, chap. xxiii. 13. where, when he was dying, 'There hath not failed (saith he) one thing of all these good things that God hath spoken:' and he is so confident of this, that he is forced to repeat that word over again in that verse; and he taketh notice of it, Joshua xxi. 45. where he hath the same expression again, 'There hath not failed (saith he) one thing of all the good things that God hath spoken unto us by Moses.' And, indeed there is near six thousand years experience that preacheth this truth; the promises are unchangeable; so that we may now say, 'The word of the Lord is tried as silver, it is purified in a furnace of earth hot seven times.' If there had been any falsehood in the precious promises of the everlasting covenant, six thousand years trial should have brought it to light: but doth not every one of the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, leave this testimony upon record, 'Faithful is he that hath promised, who will also do it; his promise is with the night, and with the day?' It cannot be altered, the ordinances of heaven continue to this day, much less can this covenant of love be broken or altered; only we would have you to take this caution by the way, that there are some conditional promises that God passeth unto his people, which, in the depths of his spotless wisdom, he doth not accomplish unto those who never fulfil the condition; such was the promise that he gave to the Israelites in the land of Egypt, of their possessing the land of Canaan, who yet died in the wilderness. And hence is that strange word, Num. xiv. 34. "Ye shall know my breach of promise, saith the Lord:" which is a word spoken after the manner of men, not importing any change of purpose in God, but only showing, that because they did not believe, and so fulfil the condition of the promise, therefore it was not to be fulfilled personally to them.

The *Second* thing that we shall speak to upon this, that the promises are unchangeable, shall be to propose these six golden pillars, and excellent foundations upon which the unchangeableness of the promises are built: and the *First* of them is, 'The omnipotency of God: that there is nothing that he hath promised, but he is able to effectuate and bring to pass: therefore, 2 Cor. vi. 18. when God had been passing many excellent promises, he strengtheneth their faith with this, 'Thus saith the Lord God Almighty.' And, no doubt, where the word of this King is, there is



power, and who can say unto him, 'what dost thou?' O misbeliever of the precious promises of the covenant! be ashamed to cast up your eyes to heaven above, or to the earth beneath. We think the stars, the sun, the moon, and all the works of God, may speak out this to you, 'Do not misbelieve God, but trust in him, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. The *Second* golden pillar is, 'The wisdom and infinite counsel of God. He hath not only complete ability to accomplish the promises that he hath given, but he hath the depths and treasures of knowledge, by which he hath contrived the way of the accomplishment of them. Hence is that word, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. that the covenant is 'well ordered;' which speaketh out the wisdom of God; and then that word is subjoined, the covenant is *sure*. Yea, the covenant of grace is such a thing, and there is so much of the art of heaven, so much of the infinite wisdom shining in it, that it is called the 'counsel of God,' Heb. vi. 17. 'That ye might know the immutability of his counsel.' The *third* golden pillar is, 'The infinite love of God;' that though there be nothing in us that can make him accomplish the promises, yet he will take an argument from his own love, to make out such a promise to us; that there is sometimes (if not always) nothing in us, but that which may speak forth delays of the accomplishment of the promises; but when God can bring no argument from us, he can bring an argument from his own love, as Deut. vii. 8. where giving a reason of the accomplishment of promises, and of his love to them, 'I loved you (saith he), because I loved you;' there being no reason that can be given for love, but love. The *fourth* golden pillar is, 'The unchangeableness of the promises;' he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, and without all alteration and shadow of change. Hence ye may see, Exod. iii. 14. when God is repeating many precious promises unto Moses, he (as it were) strengtheneth Moses's faith with this, 'I am, (saith he) that I am;' which we conceive to point forth the unchangeableness of God, that what he hath said, he will certainly accomplish in its own time; and though 'the vision do tarry, yet at last it shall speak. The *Fifth* golden pillar is, 'The faithfulness of God;' and that he is one who cannot lie, but certainly will make out what he hath spoken. Love maketh the promises the faithfulness and power of God accomplisheth the promises, and the infinite wisdom of God chooseth the most fit time for performing them. Hence it is said, Psalm cxix. 89, 91. 'Thy word, O Lord, is for ever settled in heaven;' and the ground of it is in the following verse, 'For thy faithfulness is unto all generations.' Hence you may see, that oftentimes, when God is making pro-

mises to his own, he putteth to that word, 'I that speak in righteousness,' Isa. xlv. and Isa. lxiii.

1. O! must not the promises be unchangeable that are made by the Father, who is the God of truth? Must not the promises be unchangeable, that are received and merited by the Son, who is truth itself and the 'faithful Witness, and Amen?' Must not the promises be unchangeable, that are applied by the Holy Ghost, who is 'the Spirit of truth?' And must not the promises be unchangeable, that are made known unto us by the gospel, that is 'the word of truth?' Was there ever any who could leave that upon record of God, that he was unfaithful in the accomplishment of his promises? O! what a clear sight of the faithfulness of God shall a Christian get, when he shall be standing upon the utmost line, between time and eternity? Then he will see God faithful in accomplishing all his promises unto him, from first to last.

The *last* golden pillar is, 'The justice of God.' His justice now putteth him to accomplish his promise; mercy and righteousness hath now kissed each other; hence is that word, 1 John i. 9. 'He is just and faithful to forgive;' so that now the accomplishment of the promises is not only an act of love, but it is an act of justice also. We confess, indeed, that love and mercy maketh the promises, but justice and truth putteth God to the accomplishment of them. Hence is that word, Micah vii. 10. 'To perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham.' Why is it mercy to Abraham, and why is it truth to Jacob? It is in short this, because mercy made the promises to Abraham, but truth accomplished them to Jacob.

The *third* thing that we shall speak to from this, That the promises are unchangeable, shall be to press these six duties upon you from this point.

O Christians and expectants of heaven! who have 'Christ in you, the hope of glory,' rejoice and be exceeding glad that the promises are unchangeable. 1. This is a duty that is pressed from that ground Heb. vi. 8. 'That by two immutable things we might have strong consolation.' There is exceeding much joy that may come to a Christian from this, that the promises shall be accomplished in their own time. We conceive that the word unchangeable is engraven upon the head of many a Christian's mercies. Is not unchangeable written above the head of your promises? Is not unchangeable written upon the head of your blessedness? Is not unchangeable written above the head of your enjoyments of God? That day is coming, when ye shall have unchangeable love, unchangeable enjoyment of God, and all things unchangeable. And we conceive, that if these two were believed, the truth

of the promises, and their unchangeableness, a Christian might walk through the valley of tears with joy, and comfort himself in hope.

The *Second* duty that we would press, is this, that ye would surcease and give over your disputings and carnal reasonings about the accomplishment of the promises. Since the promises of God are unchangeable, ought not we with this to silence misbelief, and all that blind human reason can say? This is pressed, Heb. vi. 16 'An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife.' God's confirming of his covenant by an oath ought to cut short the disputings of misbelief. And here give me leave to point out a little those grounds, upon which it is that Christians do so much dispute the accomplishment of the promises; and so let you see how all these things may be answered, from those six pillars that are given of their unchangeableness

The *First* is, when dispensations do seem to contradict the truth of the promises; the promise speaketh one thing, and dispensations seem to speak another. And this is the occasion that oftentimes a Christian cries out, 'doth his promise fail for evermore?' This is clear from the practice of David, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. When dispensations were upon the top of the accomplishment, and the truth of the promises, then misbelief ariseth as a champion mighty to war, and crieth out, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." And we conceive, that dispensations, contradicting the truth of the promises, were the occasion of his speaking that word, Psalm cxvi. 11. "I said in my haste, all men are liars." And I would only say to you who dispute the truth of the promises upon this account, that dispensations contradict them, do but consider this, God in his ways is not like unto you. Would ye know the time when the promises are nearest their accomplishment? It is then when we can least see that they are to be accomplished. The promises are never nearer their performance, than when we think they are farthest off from it; and therefore let the faith of the omnipotency of God uphold your spirit under such a debate; then let dispensations speak what they will, ye may answer all with this, 'there is nothing too hard for him;' there is nothing too hard for the Lord. I grant, this may try the strength of the strongest faith; yea, we find it hath made the best to stagger, when they had no probabilities to tell them that the promises shall be accomplished. This was the ground of Sarah's misbelief, Gen. xviii. 12. that when she heard she should bear a son in her old age, she laughed within herself, and did, as it were, mock at such a promise. And this was the ground of Moses' misbelief, Numb. xi. 21. 22. he did not see a probability that such a multitude should be fed with



flesh; and therefore he did call in question the truth of that promise. This was the ground of the misbelief of that lord, that is made mention of, 2 Kings vii. 2. And this was the ground of Zechariah's misbelief, Luke i. 20. But I would say to you, who do so much consult with probability in the exercise of your faith, these two things.

1. There is nothing too hard for God. This was the very argument that God took to convince Sarah, in the 14 verse of that xviii. chap. 'Is there any thing too hard for God?' And 2. Faith is never in its native and spiritual exercise, till once probability contradict the truth of the promise; then faith is put upon the stage, then it doth act: but as long as faith and probabilities think one thing, then the day of the trial of the strength of faith is not yet come.

The *second* ground upon which Christians dispute the accomplishment of the promises is, their much disputing of their interest in God. Sometimes a Christian will believe a promise, and before the accomplishment of the promise come, their hope will be darkened, their interest in Christ will be obscured, and then they do quit their faith in adhering to the truth of that promise. These two were conjoined together, want of the faith of our interest, and want of the faith of the accomplishment of the promise; as is clear from that word, Psalm lxxvii. 8. 'Is his mercy clean gone?' There is disputing of his interest, and presently this is subjoined, 'doth his promise fail for evermore?' Except a Christian can read his name in the ancient records of heaven, and can seal this conclusion, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' it will be a hard and difficult task for him, if not impossible, to believe the promises.

The *fourth* ground of a Christian's disputing the truth of the promise is, their mistaking the way how the promises are to be accomplished. There are some who suppose, that whenever they close with a promise by faith, there is no more but to enter into the possession of such a promise: but do not mistake it, between your believing the promise, and the accomplishment of it, there may be sad and dark days intervening, according to that word, in Mark x. 30. where Christ, passing great promises to his disciples, he, as it were, doth add, do not mistake me, that ye shall have these promises without trouble and affliction, 'Ye shall receive, saith he, an hundred fold in this life, with persecutions.' A Christian, when he believeth the promises, must resolve to have a winter before the spring time come, wherein the promise shall bud and flourish.

The *Fifth* ground of a Christian's disputing the truth of the promise is, when the promises are long in their accomplishing.

A Christian, when first he meeteth with a promise, will cry out, 'O believe;' but when time is taken for the accomplishment of it, then his faith beginneth to faint, and his hope beginneth to languish and give over. Yet sometimes Christians fall into the fault, when they believe a promise, they fix a day for the accomplishment of it; which if God do not keep, but go over, then they immediately cry out, 'What is my strength, that I should wait? and what is my confidence, that I should prolong my days?' This is clear in the practice of Abraham, where the promise of having a numerous seed being given to him, Gen. xii. 2. the long time before that promise was accomplished in part to him, was the occasion of the misbelief that he vented, Gen. xv. 3. 'O Lord, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' But ye must know that before the vision shall speak, there is an appointed time that ye must wait, according to 1 Pet. v. 9, 10. 'After ye have suffered a while,' then the promises shall be accomplished, and ye shall be made perfect.

The *sixth* ground upon which Christians call in question the accomplishment of the promises is, the consideration of the greatness of the thing that is promised. When they compare it with their own worth and deserving, then they begin to dispute, O, shall such a thing be? Shall unworthy I? Shall sinful I? Shall self-destroying I? Shall I who am less than the least of his mercies, receive the accomplishment of such a mercy? This, we suppose, was one ground of Abraham's misbelief, Gen. xvii. 17. when he cried out, at the very time when the Lord was giving him the excellent promise of Isaac, 'O that Ishmael might live?' He thought an Isaac such an excellent mercy, that he could not, without presumption, expect the accomplishment of that promise. And in Zech. viii. 6. this was the ground of their misbelief, which God doth sweetly obviate, 'If it be wonderful in the eyes of the remnant of his people in these days, should it not also be wonderful in mine?'

The *last* ground upon which a Christian disputes the accomplishment of the promises is, when in the time between their believing, and the accomplishment of the promise, they fall into some gross iniquity. This maketh them exceedingly debate, whether the promise shall be accomplished unto them; for since they have transgressed the covenant of God, and have broken their purposes and resolutions, they cannot suppose God will abide faithful to them, and accomplish his promise to them. And the only way to answer this dispute is, to look to the faithfulness of God, and use that word, 2 Tim. ii. 13, 'Though we believe not, yet God doth abide faithful, he cannot deny himself.'

And now to shut up the *Second* duty that we press from the

unchangeableness of the promises, I shall only say these two words unto you: 1. Assure yourselves of this, that those accomplishments of the promises that come not through the lively exercise of faith, doth lose much of their sweetness, much of their lustre, and of their advantage. Sometimes a promise will be accomplished unto a Christian when he hath not been much in the constant and lively exercise of faith in believing such a promise: but then the disadvantages that attend such a one are not easily expressed. How often may he cry out, 'The Lord was in this place, and I was not aware?' How little of God doth he see in it? How short is he in praises, and rendering unto the Lord according to the good he hath received? How negligent in improving or keeping the mercy, and how loath to lay it out for God, when he seeth 'the Lord hath need of it?' And many things more of this kind, which may press us to be stedfast in believing. And 2. O dispute less, and believe more. What profit shall you have of your disputings! And if ye would produce all your strong arguments, why ye should not believe the promises, ye may drown them in this immense depth, God is *unchangeable*. Let me say but this further, there are three most remarkable changes in a Christian's making use of the promises. *First*, Sometimes he will believe the promises, and make application of them, and ere many hours go about, he will misbelieve that promise, which presently he believed. Will not sometimes a Christian in the morning cry out, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.' And ere twelve hours come, they will change their note, and cry out, my hope and my strength is perished from the Lord. Sometimes a Christian in the morning will cry out, 'my mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved;' and ere many hours go about, he will change his note, and cry out, 'thou hast hid thy face from me, and I was troubled.' *Secondly*, Sometimes a promise will be to a Christian sweeter than the honey-comb; sometimes a Christian will die and live upon the promise; sometimes the believing of a promise will be to a Christian as the valley of Achor, a door of hope, that will make him to sing: and yet, ere many days go about, he may come to that very same promise, and it will prove tasteless to him, as the white of an egg, so that he may cry out, O that it were with me as in the months past, and in the ancient times? And (!) where is the sweetness that I found in such a promise? O, it is gone, it is gone, and I am left desolate. *Thirdly*, Sometimes, when a Christian will be believing such a promise, and resting upon it, he will (through the Spirit of the Lord) see much light and clearness in that promise: he will take up the deep things of God that shine therein; and, at another time, he may come to that same promise, and it may be dark to him; so



that his light hath vanished. And sometimes the joy of a Christian in the promise will be gone when his light that he had in it may remain with him. A Christian may come to the promise, and find his ancient light, yet not his ancient joy, nor his ancient delight. Therefore if ye would have the promises always sweet upon you, pray over them, pray that God may breathe upon such a promise, and make it lively unto you.

The *third* thing that we would press upon you from the unchangeableness of the promise, is that which ye may gather from this, that the threatenings of God are unchangeable. These two are conjoined: yea, Joshua seemeth to infer the unchangeableness of the threatenings from the unchangeableness of the promises, chap. xxiii. 14 compared with ver. 15. And these two are conjoined, Zech. viii. 14, 15. 'That as I thought to punish you, and it hath come to pass; so I have thought to build you up, and it shall come to pass.' And I would, from this, desire you to stand in awe, lest you come under the lash of the unchangeable threatenings of God: for know, that as God is unchangeable in the promises, and there is not one word in all the everlasting covenant which shall not be accomplished, so likewise know, there is not a curse in all the book of the covenant, but shall be accomplished in its time. And know this likewise, that the day is coming, when that sad word in Hosea vii. 12. shall be accomplished, 'I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.' And O! ye who live in this place, if all the threatenings that your congregation hath heard shall be accomplished in their time, ye may take up the last words of Balaam's song, alas! 'Who shall live, when God shall do all those things?' And therefore, since the threatenings of God are unchangeable, as well as the promises; life and death is set before you, and either ye shall be the object of the unchangeable threatenings of God; or ye must be the object of the unchangeable promises of God; and therefore I would from this charge you, that as you would not be helpful to the destruction of your own immortal souls, you would not undervalue the threatenings that ye hear in your congregations, since there is a declaration past, that the threatenings in your congregations shall be accomplished.

Now there is that *fourth* duty that we would press upon you from this, that the promises are unchangeable; have an unchangeable love to the Promiser; let this commend the Promiser, let this constrain your hearts to delight in him. O what a blessed dispensation of love is this, that an unchangeable God should make unchangeable promises unto changeable creatures? If the promises of the covenant of grace were as changeable in their nature, as we are changeable, there should not one of us

go to heaven. But know, it is the blessed design of love, and it hath been a blessed practice of the infinite wisdom of God, that when he hath to do with changeable creatures, he will give them unchangeable promises. And I would once invite you again, that you would come near and embrace this unchangeable Promiser. I shall speak these five words that may persuade you; 1. Christ is easily to be gotten, if ye will but take him; ye will get Christ, if you will but hear; yea, for one listening of your ear to his voice, ye shall get him; according to that word, Isa. lv. 3. *Hear, And what of that? and your souls shall live.* Is not this to get Christ at an easy rate? And as we spake before, ye will get Christ for a *look*, and is not that an easy rate? Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved.' Have ye a desire to take Christ? Ye shall get him for that desire; according to that word, Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come; and he that will, let him come.' Will ye but consent to take him, ye shall have him; and what can ye have at a lower rate than this? Shall never your cursed hands take the pen, and put your name to the blessed contract of marriage? Shall never these cursed hearts of yours cry forth, even so I take him? And do promise to live to him, and to die to him? O strange! will ye not do it? Upon what terms would the world have Christ? Is it possible to have him without a consent to take him? Oh! if ye would but open to him, he would condescend to come in unto you, and sup too with you, and ye with him. Do ye but stir to open, Christ hath the keys in his own hand, and he will help you to open. Oh! what if Christ, the precious gift of heaven, the eternal admiration of angels, that branch of righteousness, shall be despised, being offered upon so easy terms? Then cursed eternally shall be the person who thus undervalueth Christ, it had been better for him that he had never been born; cursed shall ye be in your birth, and in your life, and in your death: all the curses of the persons of the Trinity will light upon you; yea, believe it, O wife that hath a believing husband, in the day that the great sentence of eternal excommunication from the presence of the Lord shall be past against the undervaluers of Christ, a believing husband will say amen to that sentence, even to his wife who did thus undervalue that noble Plant of Renown; and the wife, upon the other part, will say, with hearty consent, amen to that sentence against the unbelieving husband; and the father to the son, and the son to the father.

Now, there is this *Fifth* duty that we would press upon you from this, that the promises are unchangeable, that ye would be persuaded to make the promises your portion, and your inheritance; what can ye want that will choose the promise for your

portion? I know your cursed eyes doth not love to make invisible promises, and that invisible crown, and an invisible God, your portion? We love to walk by sight, not by faith. But O! if you knew once what it was but to claim a relation to Christ, did you once know what it was to have but Christ a moment between your breasts, ye would cry forth, O! who would not love him, who is the King of saints? O! who would not be content to quit all things, that they might get Christ, that noble pearl of price?

And there is this *last* duty that we would press upon you from this, that the promises are unchangeable; read a lecture from this, O Christians! even your misbelief. God hath confirmed this everlasting covenant with an oath, with the blood of his Son, by the two great broad seals of heaven, the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper. And what doth all these confirmations speak, but a dreadful misbelief? And that we may know what it is to be resting on a naked word of promise, I shall say no more, but desire you to consider, and take notice of these three. *First*, Ye have been solemnly and often invited by the ambassadors of Christ to close with him, and to take him for your husband and your lord; and will you consider presently, that all the angels in heaven, and all that are about the throne, and the three most glorious, most blessed Persons of the Trinity, are witnesses, and shall be to your dissent. And are there not many here, whose hearts could never be brought to give a hearty consent to close with Christ, who is the great Promiser, and who hath laid all the bonds that heaven or earth could contrive to gain sinners hearts unto himself? O precious Christ! what could he do to persuade us to love him, which he hath not done? And yet that may be your name, which is in Eph. ii 2. 'Children of disobedience;' or, as the word is, 'Children of impersuasion; we cannot be persuaded.'

*Secondly*, I fear, if Christ himself would come from heaven and invite you, and say, here am I, embrace me, there are some here who would close not only their eyes, but their ears; they would close their eyes, lest the beauty of Christ should allure them; they would close their cursed ears, lest they should be gained and captivated by the sweet enchanting voice of that blessed Charmer, when he should charm so wisely. And *lastly*, Wilt thou tell me, O Christian, and expectant of heaven, what a day shall it be when all the unchangeable promises of God shall be accomplished? What a day shall it be when that promise shall be accomplished, 'ye shall see him as he is?' What a day shall it be when that promiseshall be accomplished, 'ye shall be made like unto him?' What a day shall it be when that promise shall be ac-



complished. 'ye shall know as ye are known? O! are ye not longing for the day of the full accomplishment of the precious promises of God, when ye shall sit down and comfort yourselves in the eternal and unspeakable fruition of them? O! let us long and wait till the day shall be when the voice shall be heard in heaven, that the 'mysteries of God are finished;' till the day when that voice shall be heard in heaven, 'behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him;' O! how unwilling are ye to leave this world? And how badly would we take up our rest on this side of Jordan? I think, if this was the night that that blessed voice was to be heard in heaven, 'behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him,' some, if not many of the Christians (that are so indeed) in this time, would cry forth, 'O! spare a little, that we may recover strength, before we go hence, and shall be no more.' Are ye not longing to bring the King over Jordan, and to bring him home to yourself, and to have your heart brought home to him? O blessed, blessed, are those that are above! 'Is not the voice of those that shout for victory, heard amongst them? Is not the voice of those that sing for joy, heard amongst them?' Job doth not now complain, 'Why dost thou make me to possess the iniquities of my youth, and settest a print upon my heels? David doth now no more complain, Why doth thy promises fail for evermore?' But rather doth sweetly sing, how is thy promises fulfilled for evermore? Heman doth now no more complain, 'While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted;' but rather crieth out; while I feel thy comforts, I am ravished. The voice of mourning is now sweetly gone away; and the voice of hallelujah, and of eternal praising of him who sitteth upon the throne, is now heard in the place of it. O such a day, that shall never admit of a following night! Now, to him that is upon his way, that will come, and shall come, and shall not tarry, we desire to give praise.

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### SERMON V.

2 PETER, i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

THERE are three cardinal and excellent graces that are exercised and taken up with the precious promises; there is this excellent grace of faith, that believeth the truth and good-

ness of the promise: there is the precious grace of hope, that with patience waiteth for the accomplishment of the promise, and doth stay until the vision speak: and that noble grace of love, that loveth the things that are promised, and taketh exceeding much delight in the Promiser. If we may be allowed to speak so, we think these strange revolutions and times we live in, are another Ecclesiastes, which doth fully preach forth the vanity and emptiness of all things that are below God: and we do indeed conceive, that it is the great design of God, in the darkening of our pleasant things; and in making 'every gourd to wither,' under the shadow of which we use to repose ourselves, and in famishing all the goods of the earth, to bring his own to delight themselves in this visible treasure, the promises of the everlasting covenant, and in him, who is the substance of them: and that since all things else are declared to be vanity, we might choose these as our portion for ever.

At the last occasion that we spake upon these words, we were speaking unto the properties of the promises, and we told you, that there were four of them held forth; 1. The freedom of the promises. 2. The unchangeableness of the promises; of which two we have spoken unto you. And now there remain other two to bespoken unto, viz. That the promises are exceeding great, and that they are exceeding precious; a sweet and excellent, though a rare conjunction, greatness and goodness here kissing one another, preciousness and highness linked together by the bond of union. And we shall speak unto these two properties together, and shall clear a little this thing, in what respects the promises of the covenant may be called *exceeding great* and *precious*. And we conceive, in short, they may be called in these eight respects. 1. They are *exceeding great*, in respect of the great price that was laid down to purchase them; there not being a promise of the everlasting covenant, above the head of which this may not be engraven in great letters, 'Here is the price and purchase of blood.' And, no doubt, this ought highly to commend the promises, that are bought at so infinite a rate. Must they not be great and precious things, that so wise a merchant did lay down so infinite a treasure for the purchasing of them? 2. They may be called exceeding great and precious, in respect of those great and precious things that are promised in them. Is not godliness a great thing? And this is within the bosom of a promise. Is not heaven and eternal enjoyment of God a great and precious thing? And yet this is within the bosom of a promise. Is not the knowing of God as he is, our perfect conformity with God, our victory over idols, great and excellent things? And yet all these are treasured up in the promises. 3.

They may be called exceeding great and precious, in respect of the great advantage that redounds unto a Christian through the enjoyment of them. The promises of the everlasting covenant (if we may so speak) are the pencils that draw the draughts and lineaments of the image of Christ upon the soul; it is the promise of the everlasting covenant, by which 'we are changed from glory to glory, as it were by the Spirit of the Lord; and as Peter doth here speak, the promises are such things, 'whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature.' 4. They may be called exceeding precious, in respect of the near relation that they have unto Jesus Christ. What are all the promises of the covenant of grace? Are they not streams and rivulets that flow from Jesus Christ? Christ is the fountain out of which all these promises do spring. And can this fountain, that is sweet in itself, send forth any bitter waters? must they not be precious things, that have such a noble descent? As the streams of love flowing out from the Father to the Son, and from him unto us, as the pouring out of ointment upon the head of Aaron, which ran down the head unto the skirts of his garments. 5. They may be called exceeding precious promises, in respect that they, or rather Christ in them, are the object of precious faith. What is the meat upon which faith doth feed? Is it not upon the promises of the covenant, and Christ the kernal of them? What are those things that faith taketh so much delight in, and is supported by? Is it not the promises of the covenant? 6. They may be called exceeding precious, in that they are the things that guide and lead us to precious Christ. There is not a promise within the book of the covenant, but, as it were, crieth forth with a loud voice, O! come to Christ. The promises are indeed the star that leadeth us unto the house where Christ doth lye, and there is no access unto Jesus Christ, but by a promise. Christ is to be found there, for he dwells within the bonds of the everlasting covenant, and there he will tryst with his people and be found of them. And 7, they may be called exceeding precious, in respect that the saints have found such sweetness, and such unspeakable delight in the promises. Did not David find great sweetness in the promises, when he cried forth, 'the words of thy mouth are better unto me than thousands of gold and silver?' Did he not find much sweetness in the promises, when he was constrained to cry out, 'thy law is sweeter unto me than the honey, and the honeycomb?' David (in a manner) was put to a *non plus* to find out a suitable similitude, and significant resemblance, to point out the sweetness of the promises. Though we may see the Christians of this time in a spiritual fever, they have lost their spiritual taste; so that we may say, if we may allude unto that word, 2



Sam. xix. 25. 'I am this day fourscore years old, and cannot discern between good and evil, can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink?' They know not what it is to be overcome with the sweetness that is to be found in these excellent streams of divine consolation. *Lastly*, The promises may be called exceeding precious, in that the saints have a high and matchless account of them: hence that word, here rendered *precious*, may likewise be rendered *honourable*, which speaketh forth that there is nothing which hath so much of the esteem of a Christian as the promises! Would ye put wisdom, or riches, or honour, or what ye will, in the balance with the promises? they would cry forth, 'what should I profit to gain all these, if I lose the promises?' We shall say no more of this, but that the promises are indeed that apple, the eating of which would make us, in some respect, (and in humility be it spoken), 'as God, knowing good and evil.' The promises are these things that do elevate the soul unto a divine conformity with God. And O that this might be the fruit of them? the promises are as cords let down to souls sinking 'in miry clay, and in the horrible pit:' do but lay hold upon them, and ye shall undoubtedly be drawn up, and ye shall set your feet upon a rock, and order all your goings.

Now we come to speak of the *third* thing in the words, which is the advantage and unspeakable gain that floweth to a Christian through the promise, held forth in these words, 'that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature;' which words do not hold forth, that there is any substantial change of our natures into the essence of God; but only holds forth this, that the souls that are taken up in believing the promises, they arise unto a likeness and conformity to him in holiness, wisdom, and righteousness. And as these advantages come to a Christian through the promises, 1. We must lay this for a ground, that the fruit of all cometh to him through the believing of the promises, and in making application of them.

And the *first* is, that they do exceedingly help and promote that excellent necessary work of mortification. This is clear from the words of the text, as likewise from 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.' And the influences that the promises have upon sanctification, may be shown unto you in these three; *first*, They lay upon a Christian a divine bond and obligation to study holiness, that since Christ hath signified and testified his respect unto us in so ample and large a way, as to give us such precious promises, we ought to endeavour to study holiness, which is that great reward of love that he seeketh from us, for all things that

he hath bestowed, and we receive; and this is the meaning of that, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Secondly*, The strength and furniture of a Christian, for fulfilling and accomplishing the work of sanctification, lieth within the promises. Are not the promises of God unto a Christian, as Samson's locks, in which their great strength doth lye? And if once they cut themselves off from the promises through misbelief, their strength doth decay, and they become as other men. Where must the children go for strength? Is it not to the promises? Is it not to the name of the Lord? Yea, this is the strength of a Christian, unto which he must resort continually. And *thirdly*, The promises of God hold forth that unspeakable reward which attendeth the Christian who shall study holiness: There are several promises of the everlasting covenant, that cry forth to the Christian, to him that overcometh will this promise be accomplished; to him that overcometh will this truth be fulfilled. And this doth exceedingly provoke a Christian to wrestle with all the discouragements he meeteth with in his way; he burieth all his anxieties within the circle of his immortal crown, which he hopeth for, and seeth in the promise; and his hope maketh him dispense with his wants, his expectation maketh him overcome his fears, and his looked for joy maketh him to dispense with his sorrows.

The *second* advantage is, that the faith of the promises do help a Christian to a spiritual and heavenly performance of the duty of prayer, and withal maketh him delight in the performance of it; this is clear from 2 Sam. vii. 27. where David believing the promises, it is subjoined 'he found in his heart to pray that prayer unto God;' and if any will look unto the words of that prayer, they will see them running in a heavenly and spiritual strain, speaking of him as one much acquainted with God, and under most high and majestic apprehensions of his glory; and is clear also, Psalm cxix. 147, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:' as if David had said, would ye know what made me thus fervent, thus diligent in prayer? It was this; 'I hoped in his word.' And hence it is, that he hath so many prayers in that Psalm. All were occasioned through the faith of the promises. As, for instance, when he cried forth, 'quicken me according to thy word, be merciful unto me according to thy word.'

We conceive, the faith of the promises helpeth a Christian in his prayer to these four divine ingredients of that duty. 1. It maketh him to pray with faith; when once he buildeth his prayer upon the promises, then he ventureth his prayer with much confidence of hope; according to that word, Psalm lxxv. 3. where ye may see a man believing, and praying when he is believing and expressing his confidence most strangely in these words, as



for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away;’ it is not said, *thou wilt purge them away*, but, *thou shalt*; which speaketh forth both the confidence and boldness of faith. A Christian who believeth the promises can take the promise in his hand and present it unto God, and say, fulfil this promise since thou wilt not deny thy name, but art faithful. 2. It maketh a Christian pray with much humility; for when he understandeth that there is nothing which he hath but is the fruit and accomplishment of a promise, he doth not boast as those who have received, but walketh humbly under his enjoyments. This is clear from Gen. xxi. 10. where we see Jacob speaking to God with much humility; and in the ninth verse, he is speaking to God in much faith. And 3. It maketh a Christian pray with much love. Would ye know the great ground that we are so remiss in the exercise of love in prayer? It is, because we build not our prayers upon the promises. And 4. It helpeth a Christian to pray with much fervency. When was it that David cried to God? Was it not when he was believing the promise which was given to him of old? We would not plead with God with such remissness, if we believed the promises that are within the covenant.

The *third* advantage is, that the faith of the promises doth sometimes uphold a Christian under his spiritual desertions and temptations. Is it not certain, that sometimes he hath been ready to draw this conclusion, ‘I am cast out of his sight, and shall no more behold him in the land of the living?’ when a promise, that hath been borne in upon his spirit, hath supported him, and made him to change his song, and to invert this conclusion. This is clear from Psalm xciv. 18. when he said, ‘my foot slippeth;’ there is the conclusion of misbelief and despair; ‘yet thy mercy, O Lord, did hold me up;’ there is the gate at which faith doth bring in consolation: not from by-gone experience only, but certainly from that which he found in some precious promises that was borne in upon his spirit. Many excellent cords of love hath Christ let down unto souls, when they have been going down into the depths, and the weeds have been wrapt about their heads. This is clear from Psalm cxix. 81. ‘My soul fainteth for thy salvation:’ as if David had said, I am in hazard to give over my hope, and to break my confidence: and would ye know what it was that supported me under such an estate? I hoped in thy word. Hath not this oftentimes been the song of a Christian in his darkest night, ‘In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts do delight my soul?’ Faith will see a morning approaching in the time of the greatest trouble; and, no doubt, the promise that upholdeth Christians in their doubting, and most misbelie-



ving condition, the lively impression of that promise will remain a long time; and when first it is borne in upon their spirits, they will see no small love shining forth, in carving out such a promise to suit with such a providence as they are (it may be) meeting with for the time.

The *fourth* advantage in believing the promises is, that thereby we have an excellent help to patience and divine submission under our saddest outward afflictions. This is clear from Psalm xxxvii. 13. 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' And from Psalm cxix. 49, 50. where David, telling his exercise in the 49th verse, 'I hope (saith he) in thy word,' immediately he subjoineth, 'this is my comfort in my affliction:' as if he had said, if I had not had the promises to be my comforters, I had sat alone, and kept silent, and should have remained without comfort in the day of my adversity: and verse 92. 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction.' And we conceive, in short, the influences which faith upon the promises hath upon the patient bearing of the cross, may be shown unto you in these two particulars: *First*, Faith is an excellent prophet, that always prophesieth unto us good things. Would you enquire at faith, at the mid-night of affliction, what is its opinion of God, and of your own estate? Faith would sweetly resolve you thus, 'wait on God, for I shall yet praise him, for the health of his countenance.' Faith knoweth not what it is to have a wrong construction of God; and therefore it is the noble interpreter of a Christian's cross. If sense, reason, and misbelief interpret your cross, they will make you cry unto God, 'why art thou become unto me as an enemy, or as a liar, or as waters that fail?' But if faith, that noble interpreter, do interpret your crosses, it will make you cry out, 'I know the thoughts of his heart, that they are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give me an expected end.' Faith letteth a Christian see a blessed outgate and issue of all the sad dispensations that he meeteth with. Faith, that is its divinity, 'I sow in tears, but I reap in joy: weeping it may be at the evening (saith faith), but joy shall come in the morning.' *Secondly*, It affordeth unto a Christian such soul-refreshing consolation in the midst of their afflictions, that (in a manner) they forget their sorrows, as waters that pass away. This David doth divinely assert in Psalm cxix. 50. 'This is my comfort in my affliction.' The faith of the promises is indeed that tree, which being cast into our waters of Marah, they will make them immediately become sweet.

The 5th advantage is, that the faith of the promises doth help a Christian to a greater distance from the world, and to live

as a pilgrim; as is clear from Heb. xi. 13. where these two are sweetly linked together. there is the embracing of the promises by faith, and confessing 'that they were strangers, and pilgrims on the earth.' And we shall show the influence that faith hath upon this, in these three, 1. It maketh a Christian see the end of all perfection here, and that there is nothing in the world 'that is not vanity and vexation of spirit.' Faith is that prospect, through which a Christian hath more clear discoveries of the vanity of all things; and this doth exceedingly help him to live as a pilgrim. 2. It letteth a Christian see the endless perfections of heaven, and bringeth it within sight of the immense and everlasting hope; and this maketh him to live as a pilgrim, and to declare plainly that he *seeketh a country*. And 3. It doth help him exceedingly forward in that blessed work of weaning his affections from all things that are here. Would ye know where a believer's heart is? it is in heaven. Would ye know where his thoughts are? they are in heaven. Would ye know where his conversation is? it is in heaven. Would ye know where his hope is? it is in heaven. His treasure is in heaven, and therefore his heart and conversation is there; and Christ in him is the hope of glory. And indeed more faith of the promises, would constrain us all to subscribe that confession of faith that is in Heb. xi. 13.

The *sixth* advantage that attendeth the believing of the promises is, that it is the mother of much spiritual joy and divine consolation, and maketh a Christian to be much in the exercise of Praise. This is clear from Psalm lxxi. 14. 'But I will hope continually;' and then immediately is subjoined, 'and will yet praise him more and more.' As likewise from Rom. xv. 13. and from 1 Pet. 1. 8. If a man would have his way to heaven made pleasant, and while they are sitting by the rivers of Babel, would be admitted to sing one of the songs of Zion, then ought they to believe the promises, and 'choose them as their heritage for ever;' and then he may sing in hope, and praise in expectation, though he has but little in hand for the present. Indeed, when he looketh to his possession, there will not be much matter of rejoicing; but when he looketh upon his hopes and expectations, he may be constrained to cry forth, 'Awake up, O my glory, I myself will awake early.'

The *seventh* advantage is, that the faith of the promises is a notable mean to attain unto spiritual life. This is clear from Isa. xxxviii. 16. 'By all these things (saith Hezekiah) do men live, (speaking of the promises) and in all these things is the life of my spirit.' As likewise from Psalm cxix. 50. 'Thy word (saith David) hath quickened me.' O! what spiritual and



divine life doth attend that Christian who is much in the exercise of faith upon the promises? And what is the great occasion that our hearts are oftentimes dying within us, and we are like unto those that are among the dead? Is it not because we do not make use of the promises?

*Eightly*, There is this advantage, that faith in the promises maketh a Christian have an high esteem of the thing that is promised. What is the reason that we write this above the head of the great things of the everlasting covenant, 'This is a Zoar, a little one?' Is it not, because we do not believe? Great things sometimes to us have no beauty, and there appeareth no comeliness in them why they should be desired; but if we had faith as 'a grain of mustard-seed,' we would cry out, how excellent are those things that are purchased for the saints? and how happy are they that have a right to the everlasting covenant, that is well ordered in all things and sure?

And, *ninthly*, The faith of the promises is the door at which the accomplishment of the promises doth enter in, according to the word, Luke i. 45. 'Blessed are they that believe, for there shall be a performance of those things that are spoken of the Lord unto them.' If we were more in waiting for the accomplishment of the promises, the vision would speak, and would not tarry: and, no doubt, a mercy coming to us as the fruit and performance of a promise, will make it an exceeding refreshful thing, when a Christian getteth leave to sing that song, which is in Isa. lix. 9. 'Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will come and save us.' And when a mercy is the fruit and accomplishment of the promise, there is a beautiful lustre and dye upon that mercy, which no art could set on, but only the finger of the love of God. The smallest mercy then becometh a matchless mystery of love, and the most matchless mysteries of love, without the exercise of faith, become as things that are contemptible in our eyes, and we do not value nor prize them. Faith maketh our thoughts to ascend, and misbelief maketh our thoughts to descend. in relation to the mercies of heaven.

*Lastly*, Besides all these advantages, we have these two mentioned in the text, 1. 'That by them we are made partakers of the divine nature,' and are brought up to that blessed conformity with God, which we had lost in the fall. 2. 'That by them we escape the corruption in the world through lust.' I intend not particularly to open up the nature of these things at this time, because I am only to speak of the exercise of faith in the promises. But O! what excellent mercies are these, to get on the beauty of the image of God, and get off these ugly defilements



which were the image of Satan upon our souls? O! how should this commend the promises unto us? That by faith in them, we all behold, with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now that which, *secondly*, we shall speak to, shall be the advantages that result to a Christian from a spiritual observation of the Lord's accomplishing his promises. For here ye see in the text, the apostle maketh an observation of those excellent things that are the fruit of these precious promises, when they are accomplished. And the *First* advantage is, that it stampeth the soul of a believer with most divine impressions of love. This is clear from Isa. xxxviii. 15. where Hezekiah crieth out, 'what shall I say, he hath spoken it himself, and hath done it?' Being, (as it were) astonished and overcome with the apprehensions of the condescendency of God, he is put to a *non-plus*, and to 'what shall I say?' Psalm xli. 8. 'As we have heard (saith David) so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts;' that is, according to his promise, we have had suitable performance: and he subjoineth, ver. 9. that which was both their exercise and their advantage, 'we have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple;' as it were, the observation of the performance of the promise, made their thoughts wholly to be taken up with the love of God; and, no doubt, there is such love in performing one promise, that eternity would be insufficient to make a commentary upon. It is one wonder of condescendency, that he should oblige and bind himself to us by promises; and another depth of wonderful love, that he should perform these bonds, and answer his word with performance.

The *second* advantage is, that the observing the accomplishment of the promises, doth bring into the soul new discoveries of God. This is clear from Exod. vi. 3. where God thus speaketh to Moses, 'I was known (saith he) unto Abraham, and unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them,' that is, by the name of giving an accomplishment unto my promises, that name was not discovered unto them, but should be made known unto their posterity, in the day when his promises shall pass into performance. And hence it is, that when the Lord is speaking of the accomplishment of great promises, he doth so often in scripture subjoin that word, 'ye shall know that I am Jehovah, or the Lord,' Isa. xlix. 23. lii. and lx. lxi. And indeed we daily find it so; for is not every accomplishment of a promise, a new discovery of the wisdom of God, that shineth in the suitable timing of the accomplishment thereof? Is not every accomplishment of a

promise, a new discovery of the faithfulness of God, that he will not alter that which hath gone out of his mouth? And is not every performance of the promise, a new discovery of the love of God, that he desireth to magnify his mercies above all his works? And a new discovery of the power and omnipotency of God, that can bring forth the performance of his promise, notwithstanding of all the things that are in the way; yea, 'maketh things that are not, to be, and bringeth to nought things that are?'

The *third* advantage is, that it helpeth a Christian to have high apprehensions, and majestic uptakings of God. This is clear from 1 Tim. i. 15. compared with verse 17. where Paul, closing with that promise, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and beholding the accomplishment of it in himself, his heart, as it were, is elevated within him, and he crieth out, 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever Amen.' There is an emphasis on the word, *now*; as if Paul had said, I could never praise and extol him till now, and I am so much bound to Christ, that I will not delay this exercise one moment, now I will bless him. And it is clear from Micah vii. 8. where the accomplishment of the promises that are there, makes the church cry out, 'who is like unto thee?' He became matchless unto them through the performance of the promises. And so we conceive, that those who are much in spiritual observation of the performance of the promises, will see precious draughts of the majesty of God engraven upon them, so that they will be constrained to cry out, that he above is mighty, that his name is Jehovah, and in him is everlasting strength, upon which we ought to rely in our greatest straits.

The *fourth* advantage is, the observation of the accomplishment of the promises, will help a Christian when he is reduced into new straits, to be much in the exercise of faith upon God. His former experience will produce hope in his soul; for there is not one discovery of the faithfulness of God, but hath a voice, and crieth out, O believe him, who is able to give a clear being unto his word. This is clear from Psalm lvi. at the close, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death,' saith David; and then he subjoineth, 'wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling?' that is, I am certainly persuaded, thou wilt likewise perform that word unto me: and from Psalm lvii. 2, 3. where he giveth this title unto God, that he performeth all things for him; and then he subjoineth, 'he shall send from heaven and save me.' And (by the way) the soul that can give God the title and style, that he performeth all things for it, that soul must of necessity be in



a choice and excellent state. And the point is likewise clear from 2 Cor. i. 10. where Paul saith, 'God hath delivered me, and he doth deliver me;' and from hence he draweth this conclusion of faith, 'and he will yet deliver me.' We confess, sometimes our former experiences of the faithfulness of God, doth not support our faith when we are reduced into new difficulties, which is either occasioned through the greatness of the straits that we are now put to, (in our apprehensions) above that which we were put to before; so that though God did deliver us when we were 'running with footmen,' yet we have no faith to believe that he shall deliver us when we are about to 'contend with horses,' or else it is through the unfaithfulness of our walk, in not answering the precious dispensations of Christ in the accomplishment of his promises; for this maketh us that we cannot with boldness make use of his word, when we are brought into a new strait. A guilty conscience is the mother of misbelief.

The *Fifth* advantage is, the accomplishment of the promises doth occasion much spiritual joy and rejoicing unto his own. We told you, the giving of the promises occasioneth joy, and when the promises travaileth in birth, and bringeth forth, that occasioneth much more spiritual joy. This is clear from Psalm xxviii. 7. 'The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusteth in him, and I was helped.' And he draweth this excellent conclusion from it, 'therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my soul will I praise him.' And we conceive, that sometimes God trusteth the accomplishment of the promises with some precious manifestation of himself to the soul, 'which maketh them to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: but, however, this is a matter of a spiritual song, 'That mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace are kissing one another.' Is it not a pleasant matter of song, to behold *love* making *promises*, and *faithfulness* accomplishing them?

And the *last* is, that the observation of the accomplishment of the promises, doth strengthen a Christian's faith in his interest in God: so that now many disputings are silenced, and many questions now are out of the way. This is clear from Psalm xxxi. 21, 22. David confesseth his quarrelling before, but when once the Lord had showed him his marvellous loving kindness in a strong city, then all his quarrel was against himself, because he had quarrelled, and did say in his haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.

And now we shall only speak a little unto some duties that we would press upon you from that which we have spoken; and the *first* duty is, that Christians should be much in waiting for the accomplishment of the promises, and standing upon their



watch-tower, until the visions shall speak. And we shall only give you these to enforce it. It is commanded that you should do so. This is clear from Psalm xxvii. at the close, where David presseth this duty very much, 'Wait on the Lord,' saith he; and as if this was not enough, he repeats the command again in the same verse, 'wait, I say, on the Lord.' And truly, the doubting of it speaketh not only the advantage that is in it; but our difficulty to obey it, and the great necessity that we have to go about it: and the same word is repeated by David, Psalm xxxi. 24. 'Be of good courage;' which is the same as to wait upon the Lord.

2. Those who wait patiently for the accomplishment of the promises, God will strengthen them to wait. This is clear from Psalm xxvii. at the close, 'Wait on the Lord;' and when we are Hagar-like, casting away the child of hope, he will open our eyes, and give us refreshment, by which we may be supported under our disquietment, 'and he shall strengthen thine heart.' And there is this, *thirdly*, There shall be a speedy accomplishment of the promises. It is not long before all the mercies that ever the Lord hath promised, and thou hast believed, shall be told down to you, as it were, in one sum, principal and interest; as is clear from Heb. ii. 3. where he positively asserteth, 'that the vision shall come, and will not tarry.' There is indeed a pleasant seeming contradiction in that verse, he had said before, 'that the vision would tarry,' and yet here he saith, 'that the vision will not tarry, but will surely come;' in which we may see the divinity both of sense and faith, and that noble contradiction that is between their assertions. Sense asserteth, that the promise doth tarry too long; and faith crieth out, it will surely come, it will not tarry; which is set down, 2 Pet. iii. 8. 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise.' 4. Promises that come unto us through the most strong and lively exercise of faith, and that are expected and longed for by us before they come, are most relishing and sweet, and those mercies come unto us with a binding tie of love. This is somewhat pointed at in Isa. xxv. 9. where the church crieth out, 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.' Their waiting and expecting the promise to be accomplished in its time, is there the fountain of their song, and of their spiritual joy. I think sometimes Christians are like that misbelieving lord, 2. Kings vii. 2. that though they meet with the accomplishment of a promise, yet they do not taste of the sweetness that is in it, because they did not believe the word the Lord.

The *second* duty that we would press from what we have spoken is, that Christians should close with the promises for their everlasting inheritance; since the promises of the covenant are ex-

ceeding great and precious, and the advantage that lieth in them is unspeakable. O! should not these things proclaim aloud unto us, close with the promises as your portion for ever? I think, one that hath a right unto the promises, and hath entered himself heir to the vast inheritance, may sometimes rejoice in the threefold mystery of the gospel, that to a natural man can appear no other than a contradiction: 1. He may say sometimes, I have nothing, and yet I possess all things: for when he looketh to his being in the world, he is a poor Lazarus, having no place whereon to lay his head: but when he casteth his eyes upon his spiritual inheritance, then he beholdeth his treasure, and is constrained to cry out, I possess all things. 2. Sometimes he may cry out, I am rich, and yet I am exceeding poor: he may be rich in hopes, and yet poor in his possessions. Much of a Christian's treasure lieth in hope, it maketh him cheerfully give up every thing in comparison of it. This is the motto of a Christian, *spero meliora*, which he holdeth up in his flag, even in the greatest storm, and at length he findeth it true, that 'hope maketh not ashamed.' 3. Sometimes the Christian will cry out, I am always sorrowing, and yet, always rejoicing: when he casteth his eye upon himself, he will sit down and water his couch with tears: but when he reflecteth upon Jesus Christ, 'he will rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' A Christian can both weep and rejoice at one time, and again he can rejoice and weep. No doubt, the reflecting upon the glorious hope, and the everlasting crown that awaiteth him, will make a Christian rejoice under all his disquietments and anxieties in the world; he can look to the back of time, and behold a glorious inheritance. Christians have the eye of an eagle, that can behold and discern things afar off.

The *Third* duty that we would press upon you is, to long for the day when all the promises of the covenant of grace shall receive their complete accomplishment, and when ye shall enter into the everlasting fruition of all the things wherein your blessedness lieth. There is a threefold *come* that Christ speaketh to the soul that is united unto him, all which they cheerfully obey. There is that first *come*, which is in Matth xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden.' And there is that second *come*, Isa. xxvi. 20. 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers;' which is to entertain that exalted correspondence with him in troublesome times. And there is that third matchless *come* when Christ shall say to his own in that day when they shall stand before his tribunal, 'Come, O blessed of my Father.' Shall we say it, that if we had 'faith as a grain of mustard-seed,' we would cry forth, 'why is his chariots so long



in coming.' And did we relish, or put a high account on the matchless promises of the boundless covenant, we would cry forth, 'O that our time would flee away as the ships of desire!' I shall say no more but this, Christ is gone up with a shout unto heaven, and shall come again with the sound of a trumpet: 'sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our God, sing praises.'

The *last* thing that we would press upon you, is, that ye would mark the time of the accomplishment of the promises. And as to this, I shall say but these, 1. That ordinarily the time of the accomplishment of the promises is, in the time when sense, reason, and probability doth most contradict them. This is clear from Ezek. xxxvii. in fulfilling the promises that were past to Judah in their captivity: was it not when they were as a 'valley of dead bones,' and their hopes were (in a manner) cut off for their part? from the 11th verse of that chapter, compared with the 12. And 2. That the time of the accomplishment of the promises, ordinarily is from Daniel ix. 2, 3. and from Jer. xxix. 12. compared, a praying time: this is also clear with the 10. and the 12. 'Thus saith the Lord,' the time when he shall visit them, and perform his good word unto them, in causing them to return, it shall be a time 'when they shall call upon me, and shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto them.' And 3. The time of the accomplishment of his promise, is a time when our thoughts of them are high and large. When once we begin to value our mercies, it is a sign that our mercy is near, and bringeth forth. However, it is our duty to wait on him, who can give a being unto his word, and sweetly perform his promises. We ought not to limit infinite wisdom, nor say to him who is infinite in strength, how can such a thing be? But we may answer all objections of misbelief with this, "God hath spoken it, and he will also do it;" and draw all objections of misbelief in that glorious and mysterious name of his, *I am that I am*. To him be praise.