

THE
MYSTERY
OF
F A I T H
OPENED UP.

SERMON I.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c.*

THIS everlasting gospel (in which there are drawn so many precious draughts and divine lineaments of the transcendent beauty of a crucified Saviour, and of the riches of his unsearchable grace) is a most precious and excellent thing, not only because it doth contain most absolute and sublime precepts and commands, in the exercise and obedience of which we do not only attain unto the highest pitch in holiness, but likewise, because it containeth most rich and precious promises, in the possession and fruition of which we are advanced to the highest pinnacle of eternal blessedness. This is clear in the grace of faith; for what doth more purify the heart, and stamp it with the image of the invisible God, than this grace of faith? And what richer promises are annexed to any duty, than to this duty, of believing, to wit, everlasting life, and fruition of God. So that if we dwelt forty days at the foot of mount Sinai, and had been under the greatest discovering and condemning power of the law, we may yet come with boldness to mount Sion, and there embrace Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to such as believe. Upon which mount he standeth, holding forth the golden sceptre of his peace, desiring us to embrace him, and his crying out that word in Isaiah, lxi. i. 'Behold me, behold me'. O! may we not summon angels, and these twenty-four elders about the throne, to help us to wonder that ever

such a command as this came forth, that we should believe on the name of the Son of God, after that we had broken that first and primitive command, 'That we should not eat of the forbidden tree'. Was not this indeed to make mercy rejoice over judgment? And, O! may we not wonder at the precious oath of the everlasting covenant, whereby he hath sworn, 'That he delighted not in the death of sinners?' What (suppose ye) were poor Adam's thoughts, when at the first doctrine of free grace, and of a crucified Christ Jesus a Saviour, was preached unto him in paradise? What a divine surprisal was this, that heaven should have preached peace to earth, after that earth had proclaimed war against heaven? Was not this a low step of condescendency, to behold an offended God preaching peace and good-will to a guilty sinner? What could self-destroying Adam think of these morning and first discoveries of this everlasting covenant? Christ, as it were, in the morning of time, giving vent to that infinite love, which was resting in his bosom and precious heart, before the foundation of the world was laid. We know not whether the infiniteness of his love, the eternity of his love, or the freedom of it, maketh up the greatest wonder; but sure these three, joined together, make up a matchless and everlasting wonder. Would any of you ask the question, what is Christ worth? We could give no answer so suitable as this, it is above all the arithmetic of all the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth, to calculate his worth; all men here must be put to a divine nonplus. This was Job's divinity, Job xxviii. 13. 'Man knoweth not the price of wisdom'. And must not Jesus Christ, who is the precious object of faith, and wisdom of the Father, be a supereminent and excellent One, who hath that name, of 'King of kings, and Lord of lords', not only engraven on his vesture (which pointeth out the conspicuousness of his majesty), but even also upon his thigh; to point out, that in all his goings and motions, he proveth himself to be higher than the kings of the earth? And howbeit the naked proposing of the object doth not convert; yet if once our souls are admitted to behold such a sight as Christ in his beauty and majesty, and to be satisfied with the divine rays of his transcendent glory, then certainly we should find a blessed necessity laid upon us of closing with him: for Christ has a sword proceeding out of his precious mouth, by which he doth subject and subjugate his own to himself, as well as he hath a sword girded upon his thigh, by which he judgeth and maketh war with his enemies. We confess it is not only hard, but simply impossible, to commit a hyperbole in commending of him; his worth being always so far above our expressions, and our expressions always far beneath his worth; therefore we

may be put to propose that desire unto him, 'Exalt thyself, O Lord, above the heavens'

But now to our purpose, being at this time to begin our discourse upon that radical and precious grace of faith, we intend to speak of it under this twofold notion and consideration; *First*, We shall speak of it as it is justifying, or, as it doth lay hold upon the righteousness of a crucified Saviour, making application of the precious promises in the covenant of free grace, which we call justifying faith. And, in the *Second* place, we shall speak a little unto faith, as it doth lay hold on Christ's strength for the advancing the work of mortification; and doth discover the personal excellencies of Jesus Christ, by which we advance in the work of holiness, and divine conformity with God, which we call sanctifying faith. However, it is not to be supposed, that these are different habits of faith, but different acts flowing from the same saving habit, laying hold and exercising themselves upon Christ in different respects, and for divers ends. Now to speak upon the first, we have made choice of these words. The apostle John, in the former verse, hath been pointing out the precious advantages of the grace of obedience, and of keeping his commands, that such a one hath, as it were, an arbitrary power with God, and doth receive many precious returns of prayer. As likewise, that one who is exercised in the grace of repentance, is God's delight: which is included in this, that he doth these things which are well-pleasing in his sight. And now in these words he doth, as it were, answer an objection that might be proposed, about the impossibility of attaining these precious advantages, seeing his commands were so large, and that hardly they could be remembered. This he doth sweetly answer, by setting down in this one verse a short compend or breviary both of law and gospel, *viz.* that we should love one another, which is the compend of the law: and that we should believe on the name of his Son; which is the compend of the gospel. And by this he sheweth the Christian, that there are not many things required of him for attaining these excellent advantages; but if he exercise himself in the obedience of these two comprehensive commandments, he shall find favour both with God and man. And as concerning this precious grace of faith, we have, 1. The advantages of it implied in the words, and clear also from the scope, as, no doubt, all the commands have infinite advantages infolded in their bosom, which redounds to a believer by his practising of them. And, 2. The excellency of it holden forth in the words, in that it is called his command, as if he had no other command but this (and the Greek particle is here prefixed, which hath a great emphasis and force in it, *kai autē esin autē autou*). But,

3. There is this also, the absolute necessity of this grace, holden forth here in this word, 'His commandment;' as if he would have said, by proposing this command, 'I do set life and death before you.' And that ye would not conceive that it is an arbitrary and indifferent thing to you to believe, or not: but be persuaded of this, that as an infinite advantage may persuade you to the obedience of it; so absolute necessity must persuade you to act that which is of your everlasting concernment. And, lastly, Ye have the precious object upon which faith (which is justifying) doth exercise itself, and that is upon the name of the Son of God. And, no doubt, faith is that excellent grace, which doth elevate the soul into a sweet and inseparable union with Christ: and is that golden and precious knot that doth eternally knit the hearts of these precious friends together. Faith is that grace that draweth the first draughts of Christ's precious image on our hearts, and by love accomplish and perfect them. Now faith doth take hold, not only on the faithfulness of God, that he is a God of truth, and that in him there is no lie; but likewise it taketh hold on the omnipotency of God, that he is one to whom nothing is too hard; and on the infinite mercy and love of God, that he is one who doth delight to magnify this attribute above all his works; and these are the three great pillars of justifying faith. From the *First*, it answereth all these objections of sense, which do ordinarily cry forth, doth his promise fail for evermore? And that with this one word, if he hath once proposed it, he will also do it, and if he hath once spoken it, he will also make it come to pass. From the *Second*, it answereth all these objections that may arise from carnal reason and probability, which tend to the weakness of his confidence. And these do oftentimes cry out, How can these things be; but faith layeth hold on the omnipotency of God, it staggereth not at the promises, but is strong in the faith, giving glory to God. And it is the noble and divine exercise of this heroic grace of faith, that these objections of reason and probability, which it cannot answer, it will lay them aside, and yet close with the promise; which was the practice of believing Abraham, who considered not his own body being weak, nor the barrenness of Sarah's womb. As likewise it was the commendable practice of that woman, Matth. xv. who not being able to answer the second trial of her faith from reason, yet, notwithstanding, faith made her cry out, 'Have mercy upon me, O Son of David.' And from the last, a Christian doth answer all the arguments of misbelief, which do arise from the convictions of our unworthiness and sinfulness, which makes us oftentimes embrace that divinity of Peter's, Luke v. 8. 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' But faith, taking hold on the infinite

mercy and love of Christ, it answereth all with this, He walks not with us according to that rule of merit, but according to that precious and golden rule of love and boundless compassion.

But before we shall speak any thing unto you of these things, we would a little point out some few things, to be known as previous to these, we shall not dwell long in pointing out the nature of justifying faith: it is that grace, whereby a Christian, being convinced of his lost estate, and of an utter impossibility to save himself, he doth flee to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and unto him who is that precious city of refuge, and there doth abide till our high-priest shall die, which shall not be for ever; or, if ye will, it is a sweet travelling of the immortal soul, betwixt infinite misery, and infinite mercy; betwixt an utter impossibility to save ourselves, and a complete ability in him to save to the uttermost; betwixt abounding sin, and superabounding mercy. Hence faith is often holden forth to us in scripture, under that notion of coming, Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' Rev. xxii. 17. 'Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely.' Heb. vii. 25. 'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him.' And we may say, by the way, that if once a sinner could be brought to this, to count all his own righteousness but filthy rags, and to believe that a man is as really justified before God by imputed righteousness, as if it were by inherent holiness; surely such an one were not far from the kingdom of God. Neither shall we stand long to point out this unto you, that it is your duty to believe; for it is clear from this place, and likewise from Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' John xiv. 1. 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, buy, without money, and without price.' But O! it is a great misery of many (and that which may be a subject of perpetual lamentation) that we can neither be subject to the law, as commanded to obey it, or as threatening to believe it: nor to the gospel, as promising to embrace it, and sweetly to receive it. O! but that primitive temptation and delusion, whereby Satan did deceive our first father, is that whereby he yet seeks to catch and delude many souls, viz. that though we eat of the forbidden fruit, and walk in the vain imaginations of our own hearts, yet he doth suggest this to us, That we shall not die, but shall once be as God; this is Satan's great and deluding divinity. And therefore, to enforce this great and precious command a little further, we shall propose these considerations.

First, That the gospel hath laid no obstructions in our way of closing with Christ, and partaking of the effects of the gospel; but, on the contrary, sheweth that the great impediment is our want of willingness which we lay in our own way; as is clear from John v. 40. 'Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life;' as likewise from Rev. xxii. 17. where the gates of the gospel are cast open, and 'whosoever will' are commanded to enter in: so that, although you may father your misbelief upon your inability, or that your spot is not the spot of his people, yet know, that the rise and original of it, is want of willingness. But to make this more clear, we would have you all know this, that all the qualifications annexed to this commandment of faith, as that in Matth. xi 28. speaketh out the qualifications rather of these that will come, than all those that ought to come; or he inviteth these, that through the spirit of discouragement and misbelief have the greatest reluctancy to come; and may not that cardinal and soul-refreshing promise, John vi. 37 stop the mouth of misbelief, so that it should have nothing to say? 'He that cometh unto me, I will in no ways cast out;' ye may reduce your misbelief rather to the sinfulness of your will, than to the sinfulness of your walk, and if once ye would come the length of willingness to embrace Jesus Christ, all other objections and knots should be sweetly loosed and dissolved.

Secondly, Consider, that though we should pray the one half of our time, and weep the other, yet if we want this noble grace of faith, the wrath of God shall abide on us. What are all the works of these hypocrites, and these glistening acts of law sanctification, but a plunging ourselves in the ditch, until our own clothes abhor us? Therefore it is, that after the prophet Zechariah hath made mention, in the 12th chapter of his prophesy, of making bitter lamentation 'for him whom we have pierced, as for an only son;' yet in the beginning of the 13th chapter, he maketh mention of 'a fountain opened to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness;' which may intimate unto us, that although we have washed ourselves with our own tears, yet there is use of the blood of Christ, and that we must be washed in that fountain, even for our own righteousness, which are but as filthy rags.

Thirdly, Consider that great and monstrous sinfulness that is in this sin of unbelief; we must strain at a gnat, but we will easily swallow down this camel; we will tithe mint and anise, and fast twice in the week, but neglect faith, and love, and judgment, which are the weightier things of the law. And indeed there are these things which speak out the sinfulness of unbelief:

1. That when the Holy Ghost is sent to convince the world of

sin, John xvi. 9 he pitched upon this sin, as although there were no other sin of which the world had need to be convinced, 'He will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on the Son of God;' and no doubt there is more sinfulness in that sin, than in any branch of the moral law, it being a sin against a matchless love, and against that which is the remedy of sin. 2. That it is called, by way of eminency, disobedience; as is clear from Hebrews iv. 11. 'Lest any of you fall after the same example of unbelief;' or as the word may be rendered, lest any of you fall after that example of disobedience Eph. ii. 3. That amongst all these that shall be eternally excommunicated from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, those that are guilty of this sin of unbelief, they are put in the first place. Rev. xxi. 8. And, 4. That unbelief doth contradict and deny these three precious and cardinal attributes of God; 1. Doth not unbelief contradict his faithfulness, and make him a liar? 1 John v. 10 Doth it not contradict the infiniteness of his power And, 3d The infiniteness of his love, and supposeth that there is something too hard for him, which his power cannot reach, nor his infinite love overcome? We may reduce many of our questions and disputings of his good will to this original, viz. to the disputings of his power. No doubt, if we belong to him, we shall once sing that note of lamentation over our unbelief, That is our infirmity, for changes are from the right hand of the Most High.

And, *Lastly*, To enforce this precious command of faith, consider that it is his command which speaketh forth this, that we must not take an indulgence or dispensation to ourselves to believe or not to believe at our pleasure; and is it not a strange thing, that Christians are less convinced of the breaches of the commandments of faith, than of other commands? They think misbelief to be but a Zoar, a little sin; and it proceedeth either from this, that the conviction of other sins (as the neglect of prayer, or the sin of swearing, or committing adultery) do arise from a natural conscience; for there is something of nature's light to make us abominate and hate them: when yet the light of nature will not lead us to the conviction of the sinfulness of misbelief, it being a gospel and more spiritual sin. Or it proceedeth from this, that unbelief doth ordinarily pass valid under the vizard of some refined virtue, as humility and tenderness, though that rather it may be said, that it is pride and ignorance, clothed with the garments of humility. And, no doubt, Christ doth account obedience to this commandment of faith the greatest act of humility; as is clear from Rom. x. 3. where it is called submission; 'They submitted not to the righteousness of God.'

Or else it proceedeth from this, that we conceive that the commandment of faith is not of so large extent as other commands, and so doth not bind us to the obedience of it; but know this, that it will be the condemnation of the world, that they have not believed on the name of the Son of God; and no doubt but it is Satan's great design and cardinal project, to keep us back from obedience to the commandment of faith, and that we should not listen to the precious promises of his everlasting gospel, but should reject the counsel of God against ourselves, and refuse his precious and divine call.

The *Second* precious consideration that we would give, shall be to show you what are the causes that there is so much disputing of our interest, and so little believing; that we are so unstable as water, marring our own excellency, spending so much of our time in walking under a cloud, and are so seldom admitted to read our names in these precious and eternal records of heaven? No doubt these things have influence upon it, viz. 1. That we are more judging of God by his dispensations, than by his word, supposing ever the change of his dispensations to speak forth the change of our state; this is misbelief's divinity, that when sense cannot read love in his face, but he appeareth to frown, and to cast a cloud over it, then it is presumption (saith sense) to read love in his heart, or in his word; but know it was a self-denying practice of believing Job to cry out, 'Though he should kill me, yet will I believe in him;' therefore make not dispensations your Bible; otherwise ye will stumble at noon-tide of the day, and shall halt in your way; knew ye never what such a thing as this meaneth, to ascend overcoming thoughts of his love, notwithstanding any thing that his dispensations might preach? We conceive, that if the eyes of our faith were opened, we might see infinite love engraven on the darkest acts, and most dismal like dispensations of his to us; though it be oftentimes written in dark and dim characters of sense.

2. There is this likewise, which hath influence upon our so much disputing and misbelieving, viz. a guilty conscience, and the entertainment of some predominant lust, which oftentimes occasioneth our walking in darkness, and having no light. This is clear from 1 Tim. ii. 19. where that precious jewel of faith can be holden in no other place, but in a pure conscience, that is that royal place wherein it must dwell; and no doubt, if once we make shipwreck of a good conscience, we will err concerning our faith. A bosom idol, when it is entertained, doth exceedingly mar the vigorous exercises of these graces, which are evidences of our faith, and certainly grace rather in its degrees, than in its sincerity or simple being only, is that which giveth

the clear evidence of faith. Therefore, when we find not love in its height and eminent actings, we hardly win to make it any way clearly concluding demonstration of our faith.

3. As likewise a bosom idol, when it is entertained, maketh us to lose much of our high esteem and reputation of Jesus Christ, which doth exceedingly interrupt the sweet and precious actings of faith. For it is certain, that if once the immortal soul be united to Jesus Christ by the bond of love and respect, then our faith will increase with the increase of God. Our entertainment to a bosom-idol is ordinarily punished with the want of the sensible intimations of his grace, and of our interest in him; so that sometimes his own are constrained to cry out, 'God hath departed from me, and he answereth me not, neither by dreams nor visions.'

4. There is that likewise, that hath influence upon it, our not closing absolutely with Jesus Christ, but upon conditions and suppositions. We make not an absolute and blank resignation of ourselves over unto Christ, to hold fast the covenant, notwithstanding he would dispense both bitter and sad things to us; but we conceive that Christ's covenant with believers is like that covenant that God made with Noah, that there should be summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, night and day, unto a Christian. A Christian must have his night as well as his day; he must once sow in tears, before he reap in joy: he must once go forth bearing his precious seed, before he can return bearing his sheaves in his bosom: and that this hath influence upon our instability, may be seen from this, that often a Christian, after his first closing with Christ, he meeteth with desertion in point of tenderness, in point of joy, and in point of strength; so that his corruption seems now to be awakened more than formerly, that he wants those seeming enjoyments of him which formerly he had, and that much of his softness of heart hath now evanished, which is clear somewhat from Heb. x. 32. 'And after they were enlightened, they endured a great fight of afflictions;' for the word there rendered afflictions, signifieth inward troubles through the motions of sin, as well as outward afflictions, Gal. v. 24. And God useth to dispense this way to his own, not only to make trial of the sincerity of our closing with him, but to make our faith more stedfast and sure. And no doubt, if we close not absolutely with Christ (when under these temptations and trials), we must reject our confidence as a delusion, and suppose it to be as a morning dream: therefore it were a noble and divine practice of a Christian, to close with Christ without reservation, seeing he doth dispense nothing but that which might tend to our advantage. And we

would say to such as are under these temptations, that if ye endeavour to resist them, it is the most compendious and excellent way to make your hearts, which now are dying as a stone, to be as 'a watered garden, and as springs of water, whose waters fail not, and to make you strong as a lion, so that no temptation can rouse you up; but ye shall be enabled to tread upon the high places of the earth, and to sing songs of triumph over your idols

5. There is this likewise that hath influence on it, our building of our faith more upon sense, than upon Christ or his word; and therefore it is that faith is so inconstant and changeable as the moon, we not knowing what such a thing meaneth to hope against hope: and to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. And we would only say unto you, that erect your confidence upon so sandy a foundation, that when the wind and storm of temptation shall blow, that house shall fall to the ground. As likewise building of your faith upon sense, doth abate much of your joy, and much of your precious esteem of Jesus Christ; it being faith exercising itself upon an invisible object, that maketh the Christian 'to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' 1 Peter i. 8.

6. There is this last that hath influence upon it, even our slothfulness in the exercise of our spiritual duties, by which faith should be entertained. Faith is a tender grace, and a plant that must not be ruffled, but nourished through the sap of other precious graces; but we grow remiss in our spiritual duties, and do turn ourselves upon the bed of security, as the door upon the hinges; and doth not our drowsiness clothe us with rags, and make us fall into a deep sleep; while as if we were diligent, our soul should be made fat and rich? Yea, slothfulness doth not only impede assurance in this, that it hindereth the divine communication of his love and respect by which assurance may be kept in life, Cant. v. 2. 'But also it maketh our poverty come on us as an armed man, and our want as one that travel-eth;' and withal, it letteth loose the chain by which our corruptions are tied, and maketh them to lift up their heads, for which our assurance is much darkened and impaired, and our hope is much converted into diffidence and despair. And we would only say this, it is the diligent Christian that is the believing Christian, and is the diligent Christian; there being such a sweet reciprocation betwixt these two precious graces, that they die and live together.

Now, *Thirdly*, We shall shut up our discourse with this, in pointing out a little, what are those things that do obstruct a Christian's closing with Christ, and believing in his precious name.

I. We conceive that this woful evil doth spring and rise from that fundamental ignorance of this truth, that there is a God; as is clear from Heb xi. 6. where that is required as a qualification of a comer, that he should believe that God is: and assuredly till once this precious truth be imprinted upon our souls as with a pen of iron, and a point of a diamond, we will look upon the gospel as an Utopian fancy, and a deluding notion, to teach unstable souls, who know not the way to attain unto real blessedness; and truly it is a fault in many, that they begin to dispute their being in Christ, before they know there is a Christ, as to dispute their interest in him before his being, and that there is such an one as is called Christ.

II. Our coming unto Christ is obstructed from the want of the real and spiritual convictions of our desperate and lost estate without Jesus Christ, and that our unspeakable misery is the want of him; which is clear from Jer. ii. 31. 'We are lords, we will come no more to thee.' And it is evident from Rev. iii. 16, 18. that such a delusion as this doth overtake many. that they can reign as kings without Jesus Christ; and that they can build their happiness, and establish their eternal felicity, upon another foundation. But, O! that we could once win to this, to believe what we are without Christ, and to believe what we shall be in the enjoyment of him, with the one eye to discern and look upon these deep draughts that the mystery of iniquity hath imprinted upon our immortal souls; and withal to reflect upon the wages of sin, which is death, and be constrained to cry, 'Wo is me, for I am undone;' and with the other eye, to ascend and look to that help that is laid upon 'one that is mighty,' and to make use of the righteousness of a crucified Saviour, that so what we want in ourselves, we may get it abundantly made up in him.

III. There is this likewise that obstructeth our closing with Christ, our too much addictedness to the pleasures and carnal delights of a passing world, which is clear from Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, Matth. xxii. 5, 6. where those that are invited to come to the feast of this gospel, they do make their apology, and with one consent do refuse it, some pretending an impossibility to come, and some pretending an unavoidable inconvenience in coming. And, O! what a ridiculous thing is that poor compliment, that these deluded sinners used to Christ, 'I pray you have us excused?' And is not the world the great plea and argument that they make use of, when they will come and make use of Christ?

IV. There is this, lastly, which doth obstruct one's coming to Christ, their unwillingness to be denied to their own right-

ousness; which is clear from Rom. x. 23. And we conceive, if once these two were believed (which are the great topics out of which all these arguments may be brought to persuade you to embrace Christ) to wit, the infinite excellency of his person on whom we are to believe, and the infinite loss that those do sustain who shall be eternally rejected of him. We might be persuaded to entertain a divine abstractness, and holy retirement from all things that are here below, and to pitch our desires alone upon him, 'Who is the everlasting wonder of angels, and the glory of the higher house.' O! did we once suppose the unspeakable happiness of those, whose faith is now advanced unto everlasting felicity and fruition, and hath entered into that eternal possession of the promises, might we not be constrained to cry out, 'It is good for us once to be there?' Christ weepeth to us in the law, but we do not lament; and he pipeth to us in the gospel, but we do not dance: he is willing to draw us 'with the cords of men, and with the bonds of love, and yet we will not have him to reign over us.' May not angels laugh at our folly, that we should so undervalue this Prince of love, and should contemn him who is holden in so high esteem and reverence in these two great assemblies that are above, of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect? Christ hath now given us the first and second summons, the day is approaching when the sad and woful summons shall be sent against us, of departing from him into these everlasting flames, out of which there is no redemption: and this shall be the cap-stone of our misery, that we had once life in offer, but did refuse it; and though there were four gates standing open towards the north, by which we might have entered into that everlasting rest, yet we choose rather 'to walk in the paths that lead down to death, and take hold of the chambers of hell.' O but there are many that think the gospel cunningly devised fables and foolishness (they being unwilling to believe that which sense cannot comprehend, nor reason reach), and this is the reason why the gospel is not embraced, but is rejected as an human invention, and as a morning dream, &c.

SERMON II.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that you should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c*

THERE are three great and cardinal mysteries, in the unfolding of which all a Christian's time ought to be spent; *First,*

There is that precious and everlasting mystery of Christ's love and condescendency, which these intellectual spirits, the angels, are not able fully to comprehend. *Secondly*, There is that woful mystery of the desperate deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart, which no man was ever yet able to fathom and comprehend. And, *Thirdly*, There is that precious mystery of that eternal felicity and blessedness that is purchased unto the saints, that once they shall reign with Christ, not a thousand years only, but throughout all the ages of everlasting and endless eternity: so that there is this difference betwixt this garden of everlasting delight that Christ hath purchased to the saints, and that first paradise, and Eden wherein man was placed. There was a secret gate in the first, through which a man that had once entered in, might go out again. But in the second and precious Eden, there is no access for going out: and all that is to be known of these three mysteries is much comprehended in this, to know that they cannot fully be known. Paul was a blessed proficient in the study of the first mystery, and had almost attained to the highest class of knowledge, and yet he is constrained to profess himself to be ignorant of this. Hence is that word, Eph. iii. 19. 'That ye may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge'. And is it not a mysterious command, to desire people to know that which cannot be known? The meaning whereof we conceive to be this in part, that Paul pressed this upon them, that they should study to know that this mystery of Christ's love could not be known. Jeremiah was a blessed proficient in the knowledge and study of the second mystery; he had some morning and twilight discoveries of that, and though in some measure he had fathomed that deep, yet he is constrained to cry out, chap. xvii. ver. 9. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?' And indeed that which Solomon saith of kings, Prov. xxv. 3. may well be said of all men in this respect, 'The heavens for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of man is unsearchable.' The apostle Paul also was a blessed proficient in the study of the third mystery, having some morning and twilight discoveries of the promised rest, and was once caught up to the third heaven; and yet when he is beginning to speak of it, 1 Cor. ii. 9 he declared all men to be ignorant of the knowledge of this profound mystery of the mans blessedness, and cried out, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him:' and if there be any thing further to be known of these mysteries, the grace of faith is found worthy, amongst all the graces of the Spirit, to open the seven seals of these great depths of God. Is

not the grace of faith that whereby a Christian doth take up the invisible excellency and virtue of a dying Christ? Is not faith that precious grace, by which a Christian must take the spots and blemishes that are within himself? And is not the grace of faith that precious grace that placeth a Christian upon the top of mount Pisgah, and there letteth him see a sight of the promised land, and doth open a door in heaven through which a Christian is admitted to see Christ sitting upon his throne? And faith hath not only a kind of omnipotency, as is clear, 'that all things are possible to him that believeth,' but it hath a kind of omniscieny, and all knowledge, that it can take up, and comprehend all the great mysteries of heaven, according to that word, Prov. xxviii. 5. 'He that seeketh the Lord, shall understand all things;' as if he had said, there is nothing dark to a believing Christian, as there is nothing impossible to a believing Christian. As likewise, faith is that grace that must take aside the vail that is spread over the face of a crucified Christ: and faith is that precious spy, that goeth forth and taketh up these wonderful exercises that are in him. The grace of love, as it were, is born blind; and it hath nothing wherewith to solace itself, but that which is presented unto it by this noble and excellent grace of faith.

Now, before we shall speak any thing to these things, that we did propose to speak of at the last occasion, we shall yet speak a little unto some things, which are necessary to be known for the distinct uptaking of the nature of justifying faith, which is the great commandment of this everlasting gospel; and that which we would first speak to, shall be this, what is the reason and ground, that the gospel-conveyance of righteousness and life (and of the excellent things of this everlasting covenant) should be through the exercise of the grace of faith? For it is not said in the scripture, that repentance justifieth, that love justifieth, or that mortification justifieth; but it is faith only that justifieth, and it is faith by which a Christian inheriteth the promises; so that it is clear, that faith is that conduit-pipe, thro' which are conveyed to us the great blessings of this everlasting covenant.

I. And the first ground of it is this, it is through faith that all our blessings may be known to be by love, and by free and unsearchable grace; as is clear, Rom. iv. 16. while the apostle is giving a reason, why the inheritance is conveyed to a Christian through faith; 'It is of faith' (saith he) 'that it might be by grace;' for if the inheritance were conveyed to a Christian through a covenant of works, then these spotless draughts of infinite love and unsearchable grace, should not be written on our inheri-

tance; as is clear, Rom. iv. 25. And it is that great design of Christ, to make his grace conspicuous, in conveying salvation to us through faith.

II. There is this second ground likewise of it, that all the promises and blessings of this everlasting covenant might be sure and stedfast to us, therefore they are conveyed to us through the exercise of the grace of faith; as is clear, Rom. iv. 16. 'They are of faith' (saith he) 'that they may be sure:' or, as the word is, that they might be settled, when the promises of life and eternal salvation were conveyed to us through man's obedience, were they not then most uncertain and unstable: but is not heaven your everlasting crown now stedfast unto you, seeing you have that golden pillar of Christ's everlasting righteousness to be the foundation of your faith, and the strength of your confidence in the day of need?

III. There is the third ground why the promises, and excellent things of this gospel, are conveyed to a Christian through the exercise of faith, that all boasting and glorying might be excluded, according to that word, Rom. iii. 27. 'By what law is boasting excluded? Not by the law of works, but by the law of faith.' And certainly, seeing Christians have all the great things of heaven conveyed to them through the exercise of faith: think ye not, that this shall be your first song when ye shall be within the gates of the new Jerusalem? 'Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thee doth belong the glory of our salvation.' O! what a precious dignity were it, but for one half hour to be admitted to hear these spotless songs that are sung by these thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy angels, that are round about his throne? Doth not David, that sweet singer of Israel, now sing more sweetly than he did when he was here below? Doth not deserted Heman now chant forth the praises and everlasting songs of him that sitteth upon the throne? And doth not afflicted Job now sing sweetly after his captivity reduced, and he entered within that land, where the voice of joy and gladness is continually heard: would you have a description of heaven! I could not give it any term so suitable as this, heaven is a rest without a rest, for though there remains a rest for the righteous, yet Rev iv. 8. 'These four beasts that stand before the throne, they rest not day nor night, crying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty:' yet there is much divine quietness in that holy quietness that is above.

IV. There is this last ground, why the blessings of the gospel, and life, and righteousness are conveyed to us through the exercise of faith, that the way to attain these things might be pleasant and easy. We are certainly persuaded, that the way of

winning to heaven by a covenant of works, was much more unpleasant and difficult; but is it not an easy way of entering into the holy of holies, to win into it through the exercise of faith? Are not all wisdom's ways pleasantness? Are not all her paths peace? Was not that just self-denial in one that said, he would not take up a crown though it were lying at his foot? But, oh! that cursed self-denial doth possess the breasts of many, so that, though that crown of immortal glory and eternal blessedness be lying at our feet, yet we will not embrace it, nor take it up? Is not the hatred of many to Christ covered with deceit. And therefore your iniquities shall be declared before the congregation.

Now that what we have spoken unto this, might be more clear, and that the nature of justifying faith be not mistaken, we would have you taking notice of these things.

I. That the grace of faith doth not justify a Christian, as it is a work; or because of any inherent excellency and dignity that is in this grace above any other graces of the Spirit; but faith doth alone justify a Christian instrumentally, and objectively; that is, it is that by which a Christian is just, by laying hold on the precious object of it, the righteousness of Christ. And to clear this, we would only have you knowing this, that faith doth justify as it closeth with Christ, but not because it closeth with Christ, which some vainly are bold to assert, because there is not any dignity or worth in the act of faith in closing with Christ that can be the foundation of our justification, else it were to confound that precious degree of free grace.

II. There is this, that we would have you all knowing, that faith is not the instrument of justification (as sanctification is taken in an active sense) though it is the instrument of justification, as it is taken in a passive sense; and the ground of this conclusion is this, because it is impossible, that any action in man, can be an instrument in any action in God; and therefore that phrase that yon have so ordinarily spoken of, That faith justifieth, it is thus to be resolved, That we are justified by faith.

III. There is this that we would have you knowing, that betwixt a Christians closing by faith with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the justification of a sinner, I say there is no natural and indispensable connection of divine appointment and of free grace, though we conceive there is a natural aptitude in the grace of faith, to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ, more than there is in any other grace of the Spirit; as ye may see, there is a more natural aptitude and fitness in the hand to receive, than in any other organ of the body.

IV. There is this also that we would have you knowing, that

is, a Christian in his first closing with Christ (considered as crucified) is the immediate object of his faith, and not Christ considered in his personal excellencies. Hence it is often in scripture, that Christ, as crucified, is holden forth as the immediate object of justifying faith; as is clear, Rom. iii. 5, 24, 26. And the ground of this assertion is this, because that is the formal object of justifying faith, which doth formally justify the sinner, and on which faith doth immediately lay hold as a ransom to satisfy justice, and as a righteousness, in which the soul dare venture to be found, when it shall stand before the judgment-seat of God: and certainly this is Christ, as obedient to the death of the cross. And it is likewise clear, that the thing which doth engage the soul to Christ, is not only because he is good in himself, but because he is good to us.

V. And there is this, lastly, That we would have you knowing, that though faith doth alone justify, yet faith doth not justify, being alone: hence is that which we have so often in schools, *fides justificat solum, licet non solitarie*. That faith justifieth alone, though not being alone: as James doth speak, 'faith without works is dead,' and is of none effect.

Now that which, secondly, we shall speak to, shall be this, To point out to you some differences betwixt justifying faith, which is in a real believer, and temporary faith, which is in an hypocrite, and one that is destitute of that, is destitute of everlasting hope, though he pretend to have it.

And first, That there is such a thing as temporary faith, is clear from Luke viii. 13. It is said there of some, that they believed for a season; yea, in Acts viii. 13. it is said of Simon Magus ('who was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity'), he believed; and those in John ii. 23. when they did behold the miracles, they believed on Jesus Christ, and yet we perceive that their faith was not sincere, and so this was not saving faith. And indeed ye may see a difference betwixt these two in the name temporary; for this is such a faith, as doth not continue long with him that hath it, but doth vanish and pass away; for as this is certain, 'That an hypocrite will not always call upon God,' Job. xxvii. 10. so that is also certain, that an hypocrite will not always believe in God. I tell you, that the longest time that an hypocrite doth keep his faith, Job hath set down in his xviiith chap. verse 14. 'Their hope,' (saith he) 'shall bring them to the king of terrors, and then it shall be rooted out of them, and their tabernacle,' their faith will bring them no further than the gates of death, and then their faith will fly away as a dream, and vanish as a vision of the night.

II. There is this difference likewise betwixt them, that tem-

porary faith closeth with Christ as a Saviour, and for righteousness, but it closeth not with Christ as a Prince, and for sanctification: but justifying faith taketh Christ as well for a Prince, as it taketh him for a Saviour: and if Solomon did discern who was the true mother of the child, by that, that she who would have the child divided, was not the mother of the child; so we may say, that they who would divide Christ in his offices, it is an evidence that they are not amongst those who are actually made partakers of the adoption of children; there is somewhat of this pointed at in John vi. 60. where that which made many, who were his disciples (and did once believe) desert him, was because of the hardness of his commands, ‘ This is a hard saying, who can bear it?’ And it is certain, that it is a greater difficulty for a Christian to take Christ as a Prince, than as a Saviour; for by that he must make an absolute resignation of himself over to Christ never to be reduced. O! when saw you such a sight of Christ, that you were constrained to cry out (without a compliment) to him, ‘ Truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant?’ Or were you never ravished with one of his eyes, nor overtaken with one chain of his neck? believe me, they who see him, do believe that his commands are not grievous.

III. There is this difference, that temporary faith is attained unto without the exercise of the law; but justifying faith is not attained to without some measure of the exercise of the law: this is clear, Mark iv. 5. where, speaking of these temporary believers, it is said of them, ‘ the fruit immediately sprang up, &c.’ Are there not some (it may be here) who think they do believe; and yet were never in any measure trembling under the discovering and condemning power of the law? Is not that a mystery, that one should bring forth without travelling? And is not this a mystery in Christianity, that one should believe before he hath found the pangs of the new birth? I am afraid of this, that many of us hath taken up our religion at our foot; for there are many that take up religion before religion take them up. But would ye know the properties of a Christian’s faith? It is a begotten faith, 1 Pet. i. 2. and not a faith that is taken up at our pleasure; and I would only say these two things to you; be persuaded of this, that hypocrisy may be spun with a very small thread, so that the most discerning Christian cannot take up that desperate enmity that is in them. How long did Judas lurk under the name of a saint, even with those that were most discerning? And there is that we would say, that among all these ‘ that shall be eternally excommunicate from ‘ the pre-ence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,’ hypocrites in Sion shall have the bitterest cup of divine indignation presented unto them. Hence it is, that Christ, when he

would tell the worst company that one should have in hell, it is always this, ye shall go to that place where hypocrites and sinners are: and so it would be of your concernment, that by the candle of the Lord you will search the inward parts of the belly, before ye go down to the grave with a lie in your right hand: a deceiving heart having turned you aside. We confess it is sad to consider these anxious disappointments that many in these days shall once meet with.

IV. But there is this last difference betwixt justifying faith and temporary faith, That there are three precious effects of justifying faith, which a temporary believer cannot win to.

1 To be denied to all his enjoyments and attainments, and walk humbly under them; for we may see, that it is impossible for an hypocrite to be denied to his enjoyments, he maketh such a deity of them, and worships them, or rather he worshippeth himself in them. There are three great graces that an hypocrite doth pursue after (though he rather seeketh them as gifts than as graces), knowledge, prayer, and humility: and though it be but little that he can attain of any of the three (or rather nothing in a saving way), yet least of all can he attain to the last; yea, we may judge that there is always within his bosom a standing conviction, that he could never win to that grace of humility. O! could you never win to this, to count your own righteousness as filthy rags, and to rejoice alone in the righteousness of a crucified Saviour? I would press this upon you by the way (O Christians of this generation), forget your perfections, and remember your imperfections; have a holy oblivion of your attainments, but have a divine remembrance of your short-comings: look more to what is before unperfected, than what is behind, and thus shall you evidence true justifying faith.

2. It is an effect of justifying faith, to be under some constant and divine impressions of the preciousness of Jesus Christ, according to that word, 1 Pet. ii. 7, 'To you who believe, Christ is precious.' It is not said, that Christ was precious, or shall be precious, but it is said, 'He is precious;' which doth import (as we use to speak) a continued act. Did you never know what it was to dwell twenty-four hours under the impression of the matchless excellency and precious worth of a crucified Saviour? I will pose you with this, are there not some here, and else where, that pass under the notion of saints, that never knew what it was to dwell half an hour under these high and elevating thoughts of the preciousness of Jesus Christ? So that we profess, we cannot tell whether we shall call him precious or undervalued; but we may conjoin these two names together, that he is precious, and yet an undervalued Christ.

3. By true justifying faith, a Christian winneth to mortification of his invisible and predominant lusts, which is impossible for a temporary believer to win to. And is there not a great difference betwixt an idol when it is cast out, and an idol when it goeth out? I will tell you the great mortification of hypocrites, the devil was living in them, as one that was a black one, and now he cometh again and transformeth himself into an angel of light: he was living in them before by the spirit of profanity, and now he liveth in them by the spirit of hypocrisy, and counterfeiting of these things that were never clear attainments, while it is the dignity of faith, Acts xv. 9. 'to purify the heart.' But are there not many here, who never knew what it was to mortify one lust for Christ? Can such a delusion overtake you, O atheists! that ye shall reign with Christ, if ye die not with him? There is an opinion vented in these days, that there may be repentance in heaven; and I think it would seem, that the Christians of this age have much of that opinion, we are so little in repentance while we are here below, but know that faith and sanctification are two inseparable companions: and let me tell you, if ye would know the compend of the precious exercise of faith, it is this, faith hath three great things that it perpetually contemplates and views. 1. Faith looketh to the promise, and there it doth rejoice and rest upon it. 2. Faith looketh to the duties that are commanded, and there it crieth out, 'Here I am, I will obey and hearken to the voice of thy word.' And, 3. Faith looketh to the crown, and there it doth exult and sweetly rejoice in divine expectations. And O! what a light is that, to behold that everlasting Prince standing at the end of our race, having a crown in his right hand, with this motto engraven on it, 'He that persevereth to the end shall be saved.' And what a faith, suppose ye, shall it be thought, when we shall get on that immortal crown of blessedness? What think ye is the exercise of those that are above? O! heaven, heaven. If we did know it, would we not be in an holy extasy of desire till we were there? And blessed be he eternally, that hath purchased that precious felicity to us.

Now we shall, at this time, shut up our discourse, by speaking a little to these things in which a Christian doth ordinarily meet with assurance of his interest in God, and is put to the divine actings of the grace of faith, for there are some sealing times to a Christian.

I. The first time of the sealing is, after the mortification of some predominant lust and idol, when they are admitted to read their names in these precious and ancient records of hea-

ven, and to see (in these books) their own unworthy names written by the hand of that everlasting Prince. This is clear, Rev. ii. 17. 'To him that overcometh, will I give a white stone, and in it a new name written, that no man knows saving he that receiveth it:' and from that, 2 Tim. iv. 8. Believe me, more mortification would make more believing; but would ye know the original of misbelief; it is the want of the exercise of spiritual mortification of our lusts. I know not where the most part of us intendeth to lodge at night, but this is certain, that we live with much contentment with our lusts, and these predominant idols, that do so much possess us.

II. It is really a sealing time to a Christian, when he is admitted to the divine enjoyment of these satisfying delights that are to be found in Christ; whence was it that the spouse cried out so often, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his?' Was it not when she was brought to the banqueting house, and his banner over her was love? Believe me, more communion with an absent Christ would make more intimation (in a divine manner) of our peace with him. We desire to bless thoss that are above the reach of all these disputings and questions that we are so much subject unto.

III. This is a sealing time to a Christian, when he is much in the exercise of secret prayer, and of much conversing, and corresponding with God in that duty; as is clear from that word in Daniel, xi. 21. When Daniel was praying at the evening oblation, in the verse 23. he meets with a divine intimation, that is, peace with God, O man, greatly beloved of God, as the original hath it, O man of great desires, for he was desirable indeed, and precious to him who holdeth the saints in his right hand.

IV. This also is a sealing time to a Christian, when he is called to the exercise of some great work, and is to be put upon some eminent holy employment. This is clear from Jer. i. 5. where Jeremiah, being called to preach the gospel unto such a rebellious people, then he hath his eternal election declared unto him; 'Before thou wast formed in the womb, I knew thee.' Christ, as it were, giveth them that, to be meat to them for forty days, and that, in the strength of it, they may go many a day's journey.

V. There is also another sealing time, when a Christian is first begotten to a precious and everlasting hope; for when at first Christians began to be acquainted with Christ, even then sometimes he declareth to them his boundless and everlasting love. And this is the ground why some of these, who are but babes in Christ, are so much in the exercise of diligence, so much in

the exercise of the grace of love, and so much in the exercise of the grace of tenderness, it is even because of the solemn impression of their interest in Christ; that, as it were, they are daily taken in to read their own names in legible letters in the Lamb's book of life.

VI. And there is this last time, that is a sealing time to a Christian, and that is, when he is put under some sad afflicting dispensation; 'When the furnace is heated seven times more than ordinary,' then doth God condescend to manifest himself to his own. When was it that John met with most of the revelations of heaven? was it not when he was 'in the isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus Christ's kingdom, and patience of our blessed Lord?' Rev. i. 9. And in that place, 2 Cor. iv. 6. 'Though our outward man decay, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.'

Now we would press you to be more serious in the exercise of this precious grace. And I shall tell you the compend of Christianity in these words, 1. By faith to solace yourselves in Christ's invisible virtues and excellencies. And, 2. By hope, to be viewing that precious crown, and those everlasting dignities that are to be given to the saints. And, 3. By mortification, to be crucifying your idols. And, 4. By patience, to be possessing your souls, until once you shall pass through the dark land to that valley of everlasting delight. And as for those that contemn and undervalue the blood of this everlasting covenant (and I would have all those that delight not with closing with Christ, and those who have not misbelief as their cross, to consider this) 'the wrath of the living and eternal God doth abide upon them who do not believe; according to the word, John iii. 36. 'He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him;' it is a remarkable phrase, because of this the wrath of God will not be as a pilgrim to a misbeliever, and will turn aside to tarry but for a night, but the wrath of God (to them that will not believe) shall be their household companion, and shall dwell with them; and woe, woe to them eternally who have this sad and everlasting companion to abide with them, the wrath of a living God. There is one thing we would have these knowing, that amongst all these who are eternally debarred from Jesus Christ, misbelievers are put in the foremost rank, Rev. xxi. There he is to put away the fearful and unbelieving: and from 2 Thess. i. 18. 'When Christ shall come from heaven with ten thousand of his saints.' (what to do?) 'it is even to execute vengeance on those that obey not the truth of the gospel,' that is, who do not believe. And I pose your own hearts with this, whether or not your names be written there in that roll, amongst those that shall be cut off! and that word, 2 Thess. ii. 12. 'That they might be

damned who believe not, but took pleasure in unrighteousness.' O but the wrath of a dying Christ, and of a crucified Saviour, is dreadful; it is more sad and terrible than the wrath of God should have been if Christ had not died. I will tell you (O hypocrites in Zion) the worst news that ever was published in your ears, and it is this, Christ died and rose again, and to those that are begotten to a lively hope, they are glad tidings of great joy (and therein they may comfort themselves), but ye may wear a rough garment to deceive, and go to heaven in your own apprehension; but, O! the said disappointment that is waiting on many such. And to close with this, we would obtest you, as ye would answer to your terrible and dreadful Judge, that shall stand one day upon his throne, which he shall fix in the clouds, we obtest you, by all the joys of heaven, and we obtest you by all the everlasting pains of hell, and we obtest you by all the curses that are written within the volume of this book, and by all the sweet and comfortable promises that are in this everlasting gospel, and by the love that you owe to your immortal souls, and as ye would not crucify Christ afresh, believe, and embrace the offers that are presented now unto you. Know ye whether or not this shall be the last summons that ye shall get to believe? That so, if ye do reject it, Christ shall come from heaven and pronounce that sad and lamentable sentence unto you, 'Depart from me ye cursed, I know you not' Now to him that can bless these things to you, we desire to give praise.

SERMON III.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c.*

IT was a command that Solomon gave unto his son, Prov. xxii. 26. 'That he should not be surety for debt, nor should be one of those that striketh hands;' but, O! what spotless branches of that command hath our blessed Lord Jesus committed, when he did condescend to be surety for our debt, and to pay what was impossible for us to satisfy? Hath not Christ made a precious exchange with sinners? He wreathed about his own precious neck that bond and yoke of our iniquities, and hath given to us that unweariable ease, and portable yoke of his commandments; among which this is one, That we should believe on him. Spotless Christ was made sin for us, that sinful we might be made the righteousness of God in him: and is not this the

condemnation of the world, that will not believe in him, that we will not delight ourselves in loving of him? And I would say this to you, that though you would weep one half of your days, and pray the other half; yet, if ye want this noble grace of faith, 'Your righteousness shall be but like a menstruous cloth and filthy rags before him;' for what is praying without believing, but a taking of his blessed name in vain? What is conferring upon the most divine and precious truths of God, without believing? Is it not a lying to the Holy Ghost, and a flattering of God with our mouth? And we would have you knowing this, that there is a sweet harmony that is now made up betwixt Moses and Christ, betwixt the law and the gospel. The law bringeth us to Christ as a Saviour, and Christ bringeth us back again to the law to be a rule of our walk, to which we must subject ourselves. So then, would you know the compend of a Christian's walk? It is a sweet travelling between mount Sinai and mount Sion, betwixt Moses and Christ, betwixt the law and the gospel. And we conceive, that the more deep that the exercise of the law be in a Christian's conscience before his closing with Christ, there is so much the more precious and excellent advantages waiting for him.

I. There is this advantage that waiteth on the deep exercise of the law, that it is the way to win to much establishment in the faith when once we begin to close with Christ. O Christians, would ye know that which maketh the superstructure and building of grace to be within you, as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence, so that oftentimes ye are in hazard to raze the foundation? it is this, ye were not under the exercise of the law before your believing in Jesus Christ. There are some who do not abide three days at mount Sinai, and these shall not dwell many days at mount Sion.

II. There is this advantage that waiteth on the deep exercise of the law, it maketh Christ precious to a man's soul. What is that which filleth the soul of a Christian with many high and excellent thoughts of Christ? Is it not this, to have the law registering our bond, and putting us (as we use to speak) to the horn, that is, to have the law cursing us, and using the sentence of condemnation against us? That which maketh us to have such low and undervaluing thoughts of precious Christ, is, because the most part of us are not acquainted with the deep and serious exercise of the law; that is, a mystery to the most part of Christians' practice. Ye know that there were four streams which went out from the paradise of God, into which man was first placed; and so we may say, that there are four golden streams, by which lost and destroyed men are brought back again to this

Eden and Paradise of everlasting delight. *Firstly*, There is the precious stream of Christ's righteousness, by which we must be justified. And, *Secondly*, there is the stream of his sanctification, by which we must be purified. *Thirdly*, There is the stream of the wisdom of Christ, by which we must be conducted through this wilderness wherein we have lost our way. And, *Fourthly*, There is the stream of Christ's redemption, by which we must be delivered from the power of our enemies, and must turn the battle in the gate. It is by the redemption of Christ that we shall once sing that triumphant song, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?' O! but all these streams will be sweet and refreshing to a soul that is hotly pursued by the law, so long as we see not the ugliness of our leprosy in the glass of the law, we have our own Abana and Pharpar, that we think may do our turn; but when once our case is truly laid open to us, then we will be content to wash ourselves in Jordan seven times.

III. There is this advantage that waiteth on the deep exercise of the law, that it maketh a Christian live constantly under the impression of the sinfulness of sin. What is it that maketh sin exceeding sinful to a Christian? Is it not this, he hath been forty days in Moses' school? And we conceive that the ground why such fools as we make a mock at sin, is because we know not what it is to be under the power of his wrath, and the apprehensions of the indignation of God.

But now to come to that which we intend to speak of: we told you, that the first occasion that we spake upon these words, that there were many excellent things concerning the grace of faith holden forth in them. The first thing, which was holden forth concerning this radical grace of faith, was the infinite advantage that redounded to a Christian through the exercise of faith, and giving obedience to this command, which we cleared to be holden forth, not only from the scope, but also from the nature of this command. And now to speak a little to the point, we shall propose these considerations, that may abundantly shew how advantageous a thing this excellence of faith is.

I. The first consideration that speaketh it, is this, That faith maketh Christ precious to a soul, according to that word, 1 Pet. iii. 7. 'To you that believe, Christ is precious.' And we would have you knowing this, that faith maketh Christ more precious to a soul, than sense or any other thing can make him. And, *First*, Faith maketh Christ more precious than sense, because the estimation which the grace of faith hath of Christ, is builded upon the excellency of his person; but the estimation of sense is builded upon the excellency of his actings: so that because he is such to them, therefore they love and esteem him. But

that heroic grace of faith taketh up the excellency of Christ's person, and that maketh him precious to them. *Secondly*, Faith maketh Christ more precious than sense, because sense looketh to that love which Christ manifesteth in his face, and in his hands, and in his feet; but faith looketh to that love which is in his heart. Sense will cry forth, 'Who is like to thee? whose countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars, whose hand are as gold rings set with beryl, and whose legs are like pillars of marble set in sockets of gold.' Sense will look to the smilings of Christ, and will wonder: it will look to his dispensations and actings, and will be constrained to cry out, 'Who is like unto thee?' But the grace of faith solaceth itself in the fountain from whence all these springs and sweet inundations of love do flow. *Thirdly*, Faith maketh Christ more precious than sense; because faith looketh not only to what Christ is presently, but unto what Christ is from eternity before time, and what Christ shall be unto eternity after time; but sense only doth look to what Christ is presently. And ye must conceive, that the sweet travellings of faith betwixt infinite love from eternity before, and infinite love unto eternity after, must make faith to fall in a sea of wondering, and raiseth the thoughts to the highest pitch of desire and estimation. *Fourthly*, We may likewise add, that the impression of the preciousness of Christ, which sense maketh upon the soul, is not so constant, nor so single, as that which faith doth make. O but the grace of faith giveth the Christian a broad look of Christ, and letteth him see Christ clothed with ornaments of glory and divine majesty. Sense followeth Christ rather that it may see his miracles and love, and that it may be fed with loaves; but faith follows Christ for himself above all.

II. The second consideration, to speak the advantage of it, is, that the grace of faith hath as it were an arbitrary power with God: so that whatsoever a Christian shall seek in faith, he shall receive it. It is the noble gift that was once given to faith, that it should never seek any thing and be denied, according to that word in Matth. xxi. 22. 'And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive it.' And that word in John xv. 7. 'Abide in me,' that is, believe; and the promise is annexed to this, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask, ye shall receive.' And it is clear likewise from the preceding verse of our text, that if we obey this commandment of faith, 'Whatsoever we shall ask of God, we shall receive it. And I would speak these two things to you from this, *First*, That sometimes Christ putteth a blank in a Christian's hand, who is much in the exercise of faith, according to that in Matth. xx. 32. Is there not an ample blank put into that man's hand? 'What wilt thou that I should do un-

to thee?' Christ desireth him to fill up that blank with what he would. And, *Secondly*, There is this, which is one of the greatest steps of Christ's matchless condescendency, that oftentimes, when his own have sought in their presumption a blank to be put in their hand, Christ condescendeth to give it, according to that strange passage in Mark. x. 35, 36. The two disciples who presented this desire to Christ, we desire, say they, 'That whatsoever we ask thou shouldst give it unto us.' And presently that is answered, 'What will ye that I should do for you? Christ hath an infinite good-will to satisfy the desires of his own: and that which yet more speaketh out Christ's boundless good-will to satisfy the desires of all who belong to him, may be cleared in that word, John xvi. 24 where he chargeth his disciples with this, 'Hitherto,' saith he, 'have ye asked me nothing;' ye must not suppose that Peter, James, and John, never sought a suit of Christ; but the meaning of that expression is this, ye sought nothing in comparison of that which I was willing to give, and which your necessity did call for at my hands, which ye should have sought.

III. There is this third consideration, to point out that advantage of faith; it is that grace that keepeth all the graces of the Spirit in life and exercise. Faith is that high wheel, at the motion of which all the lower wheels do move: if so we may speak, faith is that *primum mobile*, that first moves and turns about all the lower graces of the Spirit, accordnig to that, 2. Pet. i. 5. 'Add to your faith, virtue, and to your virtue, patience, and to your patience, brotherly kindness. *First*, The grace of faith keepeth in exercise the grace of love, as is clear, Eph. iii. 17, where these two graces are subjoined; as likewise from Rom. v. 1. compared with verse 5 'Being justified by faith.' Then this effect followeth upon it, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our own hearts.' And so it is certain, that faith keepeth love in life, faith being the spy of the soul, and that intelligencer and precious messenger, it goeth out and bringeth in objects unto love. Faith draweth aside the vail, and love sitteth down and solaceth itself in the discoveries of faith. *Secondly*, The grace of faith likewise keepeth the grace of mortification in exercise, as is clear not only from Eph. vi. 6 but from 1 John v. 4. 'This is our victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith. And it is certain that faith keepeth mortification in exercise, and advanceth holiness, not only because of this that faith is that grace that presenteth to a Christian the absolute purity and spotless holiness of Jesus Christ; but also because it maketh them esteem their idols tasteless, as the white of an egg, and they become unto them as their sorrowful meat. The best principle of

mortification is this, the discoveries of the invisible virtues of Jesus Christ: that mortification, which arises from the lovely discoveries of the excellencies of Jesus Christ, is most real and abiding; as those waters which arise from the highest springs, are not only constant, but likewise most deep and excellent. *Thirdly*, Faith likewise hath influence upon mortification, as it doth take hold of the infinite strength that is in Christ, by which a Christian is enabled to mortify his corruptions. *Fourthly*, Faith likewise maketh application 'of the blood of sprinkling, by which we are purified from dead works.' *Fifthly*, Likewise the grace of faith keepeth in exercise the grace of humility; as is clear, Rom. viii. 27. By what law, saith he, is boasting excluded? It is not by the law of works, but by the law of faith. *Sixthly*, Faith keepeth in exercise the grace of joy; as is clear, Rom. xv. 13. 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' So that ye see the proper fruit of faith, 'is joy in the Holy Ghost.' And certainly, did we believe more, we should rejoice more. *Seventhly*, and *lastly*, Faith keepeth in exercise the grace of hope; for it is impossible for hope to be in lively exercise, except faith once be exercised, which may be a shame unto you, for how can we hope to attain the thing that is promised, except our faith first close with the promise? So there is this difference betwixt the grace of faith and the grace of hope; the grace of faith closeth with the promises; but the grace of hope closeth with the thing that is promised.

IV. There is this fourth consideration, that may speak out the excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace by which a Christian doth attain to most divine fellowship and constant correspondence with heaven. Would ye have that question resolved and determined, what is the best way, 'Not to stir up our beloved, or awake him till he please?' It is this, be much in the grace of faith: this is clear from Eph. iii. 17. 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: by the exercise of all other graces Christ is but a sojourner, 'that turneth aside to tarry but for a night;' but by the exercise of this grace he cometh to take up house with us. I will tell you what faith is, it is a ladder that reacheth between heaven and earth; by the steps of which a Christian doth daily go up to heaven, and converse with the higher house; faith is that grace (as the apostle speaketh) 'by which we have access to the throne of his grace.' Faith ushers in the believer to the throne: and without it he cannot have access there, nor joy when he is there.

V. Here is this advantage that attendeth the exercise of faith, a believing Christian is a praying Christian: according to that word in Mark ix. 24. where these two are conjoined together,

Lord, I believe?' and then he falleth to his prayer presently after that confession, 'Help thou my unbelief.' And it is clear from Psalm lxiii. 1. 'O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee?' And sometimes faith is a most impatient grace; but we may always say of it, that it is a most diligent grace. O! is it not the neglect of this precious exercise of faith, and of the duty of secret prayer, that makes our leanness testify to our face, and maketh our souls a barren wilderness? I am persuaded of this, that since Christ had any followers, and since ever this everlasting gospel was preached in paradise: the exercise of secret prayer was never so much neglected. We have turned over all our prayers into compliments with God. We know not what it is 'to rise at midnight and call upon God, and to inquire after our Maker under the silent watches of the night.' O! but it is a sweet diversion from sleep, to retire ourselves, in the silent seasons of the night, from all thoughts about worldly matters, and to converse with that invisible Majesty.

VI. There is this sixth consideration to point out the advantage of faith: that faith is that grace that doth facilitate a Christian's obedience, and maketh it most pleasant and easy; this is clear from Heb. xi. 8. 'By faith Abraham, when commanded to go to a strange land, obeyed and went out, not knowing whether he went.' The word may be rendered, He did cheerfully obey. And verse 17. 'By faith he offered up his only son.' Would ye know the reason why his commands are your burden, and why his precepts are your crosses? It is because of this, ye do not believe. And so it is most certain, that it is impossible for a Christian to attain to a pleasant way of obedience, without the exercise of faith. Faith holdeth up the crown to a Christian, and his crown maketh him to obey. Faith gathereth strength from Christ, and that strength maketh obedience very easy. Faith taketh up the excellency of Christ, and this maketh a Christian to look upon his duty, more as his dignity than his duty. And we are persuaded of this, that our chariot-wheel should move more swiftly ' (like the chariots of Abinadab), ' if we were more in the exercise of the grace of faith. Would ye know an answer to that question, what is first more requisite for a Christian while here below? Faith. And what is secondly most requisite? Faith. And what, thirdly, is first most requisite for a Christian? Even faith above all things, and above all things, faith.

VII. There is another advantage of it, that by faith our service and prayers are accepted of God. Would ye know what is the prayer of a Christian that is not in faith? 'It is a smoke in his nostrils, and a fire that burneth all the day. The unbeliever's sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord.' This is clear from Heb.

xi. 4. 'By faith Abel offered up unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain;' and we conceive that there are many unanswered prayers which we do put up, because we want that noble exercise of faith.

VIII. And lastly, we shall likewise add this, that faith is that grace by which a Christian hath that perfect and immediate sight (as it were) of great things that are promised to him; faith bringeth a Christian within sight of heaven, and faith bringeth a Christian within sight of God, according to that word, Heb. xi. 1. 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen,' and that noble paradox that is said of faith, Heb. xi. 27. 'By faith Moses saw him that is invisible.' Is it not an impossible thing to see that which cannot be seen? But the meaning of it is this, that faith's discoveries of God, are as certain and sure as the discoveries of our bodily eyes are: faith is an intelligent grace; yea, it is a most sure and infallible grace: what will faith not do? And what can we do who want faith?

Now to enforce the advantages and excellencies of faith a little more, we shall propose to you the disadvantages of that woeful sin of unbelief.

I. There is this disadvantage of the sin of unbelief; that all the actions, that proceed from an unbeliever, are impure and defiled, according to that in Titus i. 15. 'But unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.' Their prayer is unclean: yea (as Solomon speaketh) 'their plowing is sin: yea, their going about the most excellent duties (for matter) is an abomination to God; according to that word, Rom. xiv. 23. 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.' So the want of faith is the great polluter of all our actions, and of all our performances.

II. There is this second disadvantage of misbelief, that it is impossible for one, in the exercise of unbelief, to mortify a lust or idol, and we may allude unto these words in Matth. xvii. 20. when his disciples came to him, and asked this question, 'Why could we not cast out this devil?' that was given an answer, 'Because of your unbelief:' unbelief is that which taketh up arms for our idols, and doth most strongly defend them, for there is nothing that will kill corruption so much, as the exercise of faith: and when all this is laid aside, we have laid by our weapons, and have in a manner concluded a treaty of peace with our idols, that we shall not offend them, if they offend not us.

III. There is this disadvantage, that waiteth upon the sin of unbelief, that such an one cannot win nor attain to the grace of establishment, 'But is always as the waves of the sea, tossed

to and fro, until once he win to the exercise of faith; as is clear from Isa. vii. 2. Except ye believe ye shall not be established.

IV. There is this disadvantage that waiteth on it, it is the mother of hardness and stupidity of heart, according to that word in Mark xvi. 14. where he upbraideth them because of their unbelief; and then what danger followeth? to wit. 'hardness of heart:' this is clear also from Acts xix. 9. where these two sister devils are conjoined and locked together, 'unbelief and hardness of heart, because it is unbelief indeed that hindereth all the graces by which the grace of tenderness must be maintained.

V. There is this disadvantage in the sin of unbelief, that it is big with child of apostacy from God, and of defection from him, according to that word, Heb. iii. 12. 'Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief (and the fruit of it) 'to depart from the living God.' And certainly it is no wonder that unbelief travail in birth till that cursed child of apostacy be brought forth; not only because of this, that an unbeliever loseth the thoughts of the excellency of Christ, but also because he increaseth in his thoughts of love towards his idols, for Christ doth decrease in those who misbelieve, and their idols do increase in their love, and in their desires, and in their estimation.

VI. There is this sixth disadvantage in the sin of unbelief. it hindereth the communication of many signal workings and tokens of the love and favour of the Most High, according to that sad word that is in Matth. xiii. 58. at the close, 'He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' Unbelief, as it were, laid a restraint upon Christ, that he could not effectuate those things which he was willing to perform: and (to shut up our discourse at this time) I would only add these two aggravations, which may somewhat enforce what we have spoken; (I say) there are these two aggravations in the sin of unbelief, even in his own who have a right (and also his call) to believe.

1. That after Christ hath given most sensible discoveries of himself, Wherein ye have seen him, as it were face to face, yet ye will not believe; this is clear from John vi. 36. 'Though ye have seen me,' saith Christ, 'yet ye do not believe in me.' There is not a manifestation of Christ's presence, but it is a witness against you, because of your unbelief. Would you hear the voice of sense that is rectified? It is this, 'believe on the Son of God.'

2. That notwithstanding of the signal demonstrations of the power of Christ, yet though it were the mortifying of some lust and idol within them, yet they will not believe, but upon new temptations will doubt of his love to them. Christ preacheth faith by his word, he preacheth faith by his sufferings, he preacheth

eth faith by his dispensations, he preacheth faith by his promises, he preacheth faith by his rods; and if these five instruments will not engage your hearts to believe, what can move them? Do not his two wounds in his precious hands, preach out this point of faith, 'Believe him?' Doth not that hole opened in his side preach this doctrine, 'that we should believe in him?' And those two wounds that he received in his precious feet, do they not preach this, 'that we should believe in a crucified Saviour?' And we would only say this, that sometimes it is the case of his own, that after the convictions of this, that it is their duty to believe, and also after some desire to close with Christ, yet they find inability to close with him. Is it not certain, that to will (to believe) is sometimes present with you, but how to perform ye know not? And I would have a Christian making this fourfold use of such a dispensation as that, (which is most ordinary) when convictions of our duty to believe, and some desires to close with Christ, is not followed with actual performances.

1. To study to have your convictions more deeply rooted within you; for it doth sometimes follow, that resolutions and mints to believe, are not blest with actual believing; because the conviction of our duty to believe is not deeply imprinted upon our conscience.

2. Be convinced of that desperate enmity (and that mystery of iniquity) that is within you, that you can have some will to do, without ability to perform, we confess it is not an ordinary disease in these days, to have such a contrariety betwixt a Christian's will and his practice, our will for the most part being no better than our practice; but sometimes it is, which may make you cry forth, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

3. That ye would be much in the employing of Christ, that as he hath given you to will, so also he might make you to do. Christ is about to convince his own in such a dispensation as that, 'That faith is the gift of God.' Faith is so noble a grace, that it cannot be spinned out from our resolutions, nor from our endeavours; faith is such a divine principle as the Father's right-hand must plant in our souls.

4. Let it convince you of the excellency of the grace of faith, (for the difficulty of attaining to any thing may speak out the excellency of that thing) there is no sin but it may be easily win at; there is an easiness and facility to overtake the paths of our idols; but the graces of the Spirit are so excellent things, that we must fight before we attain them; and you who are strangers to Christ Jesus (and have never known what it is to close with him) we would request you, in Christ's name, to be reconciled

to him. What know ye, O men (or rather atheists), but this shall be the last summons that ye shall get to believe? And because ye disobey this precious summons, there shall be one presented to you that ye cannot sit. I remember of one man, who looked upon many thousands that were under his command, weeping over them, when he considered how that within a few years all these should be laid in their graves, and should be in eternity. O! but it were much of our concernment, to be trying ourselves how it is with us. We are not afraid that it is a breach of charity, to wish that but one of each ten that are within these doors, were heirs of the grace of life, and had the solid and spiritual expectation of heaven. I think, if Christ were to come presently to speak to us, he might not only say to each twelve that are here, "One of you shall betray me:" but we are afraid that he would say to each twelve that are here, "Eleven of you shall betray me, and but one only shall pass free." O! doth it not concern you, to inquire where you shall rest at night, when the long shadow of the everlasting evenings shall be stretched out upon you? I think there are some that are so settled upon their lees, that if they were one day in hell, and saw all the torments that are there, and were brought from it the next day to live on earth, they would not repent. And more, there are some, that take them up one day to see the joys of heaven, and bring them back again, they would not pursue after these blessed and everlasting enjoyments. O! is not Christ much undervalued by us? But I must tell you this, "One woe is past, but behold another woe is fast coming." O! the shrieking of these spirits that are entered into their everlasting prison-house, out of which there is no redemption. What shall be your choice, when Christ shall come in the clouds? I am persuaded, there are many to whom, at that day, this doctrine would be ravishing, viz "That there were not a death, that there were not a God, and that there were not an eternity." O! will ye believe 'that the sword of the justice of God is sheathed in heaven, and shall come down to make a sacrifice, not in the land of Idumea, nor in the land of Bozra, but he is to make a sacrifice among the people who seemed to make a covenant with him by sacrifice.' Ah, ah, shall we say that? If that argument were used to many, that within forty days they should be at their long and everlasting home, they would yet spend thirty-nine of these days in taking pleasure upon their lusts. I am persuaded of this, that there are many, who think that the way betwixt heaven and earth is but one day's journey; they think they can believe in one day, and triumph at night: but O! it shall be a short triumph that such believers as these shall have. Therefore, O study to close with

a crucified Saviour, rest on him by faith, delight yourselves in him with love, and let your souls be longing for the day when that voice shall be heard in heaven (and O how sweetly shall it be sung?) ‘Arise, arise, arise, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come away; for behold your winter is past, your everlasting summer is come, and the time of the singing of birds is near:’ when Christ shall come over ‘these mountains of Bether,’ he shall cry, ‘Behold I come:’ and the soul shall sweetly answer, ‘Come, blessed Lord Jesus, Come.’ O what a life shall it be: that with these two arms ye shall eternally encircle Christ, and hold him in your arms, or rather be encircled by him? ‘Wait for him, for he shall come, and his reward is with him’, and he shall once take home the wearied travellers of hope.

SERMON IV.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c.*

THERE are two great and excellent gifts, which God, in the depth of his boundless love, hath bestowed on his own. *First*, There is that infinite gift, and royal donation, his own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, which is called, ‘The gift of God,’ John iv. 10. And, *Secondly*, There is that excellent gift of the grace of faith, which God hath bestowed upon his own, which is also called ‘The gift of God,’ Eph. ii. 8. ‘Faith is the gift of God’. And is it not certain, that these two gracious gifts ought to engage our souls and hearts much unto him? Infinite Majesty could give no gift greater than his Son, and infinite poverty could receive no other gift so suitable as Christ: it was the most noble gift that heaven could give, and it is the greatest advantage for earth to receive it. And we could wish that the most part of the study and practice of men (that is spent in pursuit of these low and transient vanities) might be once taken up in that precious pursuit after Christ: we could wish that all the questions and debates of the time were turned over into that soul concerning question, ‘What shall we do to be saved?’ And that all the questions, controversies, and contentions of the time were turned over into that divine contention and heavenly debate, ‘Who should be most for Christ, who should be most for exalting of the noble and excellent plant of renown,’ and that all your judging and searchings of other men’s practices and estates might be turned over into that useful search, ‘To prove and examine our-

‘selves whether we be in the faith or not.’ And I would ask you this question, what are your thoughts concerning precious Christ, seeing he is that noble object of faith? We would only have you taking along these things, by which Christ may be much commended to your hearts: *First*, There was never any, that with the eyes of faith did behold the matchless beauty and transcendent worth of that crucified Saviour, that returned his enemy. There is soul-conquering virtue in the face of Christ, and there is a heart captivating, and overcoming power in the beauty of Jesus Christ. The first sight that ever persecuting Saul got of Christ, brought him to an endless captivity of love. *Secondly*, There is this that we would say of precious Christ, which may engage our souls unto him, that for all the wrongs believers do to Christ, yet hath he never an evil word of them to his Father, but commends them: which is clear from that of John xvii. 6. where Christ doth commend the disciples to the Father for the grace of obedience, ‘They have kept thy word;’ and for the grace of faith, verse 8. ‘They have believed that thou didst ‘send me.’ And yet were not the disciples most defective in obedience both in this, that they did not take up their cross and follow Christ? And also in that, they did not adhere to him in the day that he was brought to Caiaphas’ hall? And were they not most defective in the grace of faith? As is clear from Matth. xvii. 17. and likewise from John xiv. 1. He is pressing them to believe in him, and yet he doth commend them to the Father, as most perfect in these things. *Thirdly*, There is this that we would lastly say of him, who is that noble object of faith, look to the eminent depths of Christ’s condescendency, and then ye will be provoked to love him. Was it not infinite love that made Christ to lie three days in the grave, that we might be through all the ages of eternity with him? Was it not infinite condescendency that made his precious head wear a crown of thorns, that we might eternally wear a crown of glory? Was it not infinite condescendency that made Christ wear a purple robe, that so we might wear that precious robe of the righteousness of the saints? And was it not matchless condescendency, that Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, and like unto us, that so we might become like unto him, and be made the righteousness of God in him?

But to come to that which we intend mainly to speak unto at this time, which is that second thing we proposed to speak of from these words; and that is, concerning the excellency of this grace of faith, which we cleared, was holden out in that, that faith was called his commandment, which is so called by way of eminency and excellency. There are many things in scripture

which may sweetly point out the precious excellency of this grace of faith, and we shall only speak to these things.

I. The *First* thing that speaketh out the excellency of faith, is this, it exerciseth itself upon a most noble object, to wit, Jesus Christ; faith and love being the two arms of the immortal soul, by which we do embrace a crucified Saviour, which is so often pointed at in scripture: and we shall point at these three principal acts of faith, which it exerciseth on Jesus Christ as the object of it.

1. The *First* is, To make up an union betwixt Christ and the believer (faith being indeed an uniting grace, and that which knitteth the members to the head); and to make this more fully appear, we would point out a little what sweet harmony and correspondency there is betwixt these two sister-graces, to wit, faith and love. Faith is that nail which fasteneth the soul to Christ, and love is that grace that driveth the nail to the head; faith at first taketh up a tender grip of Christ, and then love cometh in and maketh the soul take a more sure grip of him.

2. *Secondly*, Ye may see that harmony in this; faith is that grace which taketh hold, as it were, of the garments of Christ, and of his word; but love (that ambitious grace) taketh hold of the heart of Christ, and, as it were, his heart doth melt in the hand of love. *Thirdly*, It may be seen in this, faith is that grace which draweth the first draught of the likeness and image of Christ upon a soul, but that accomplishing grace of love doth complete these first draughts, and these imperfect lineaments of Christ's image, which were first drawn on the soul. *Fourthly*, By faith and love the heart of Christ and of the believer are so united, that they are no more two, but one spirit.

2. There is this second act that faith exerciseth on Christ, and it is in discovering the matchless excellencies, and the transcendent properties of Jesus Christ. O what large and precious commentaries doth faith make upon Christ? It is indeed that faithful spy, which doth always bring up a good report of him. Hence it is, that faith is called 'understanding', Col. ii. 2. because it is that grace which revealeth much of the precious truth of that noble object.

3. And there is this third noble act of faith exercising itself upon Christ, viz. It maketh Christ precious to the soul, according to that word, 1 Pet. ii. 17. 'Unto you that believe, he is precious.' And if there were no other thing to speak forth its worth but that, it is more than sufficient: for no doubt this is the exercise of the higher-house, to be dwelling on the contemplation of Christ's beauty, and to have their souls transported with love to ward him, and with joy in him. Reason and amazement are sel-

dom companions, but here they do sweetly join together; 'First, A Christian loveth Christ because of Christ's actings; and then he loveth all these actings, because they come from Christ.

II. Now, *Secondly*, This pointeth out the precious excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace which is most mysterious and sublime in its actings, it hath a more divine and sublime way of acting than any other grace; hence it is called, 'The mystery of faith' which speaketh this, that the actings of faith are mysteries to the most part of the world; and I shall only point at these things which may speak out the mysterious actings of the grace of faith.

1. Faith can believe, and fix itself upon a word of promise, although sense, reason, and probability seem to contradict the accomplishment of that promise; faith walketh not by the low dictates of sense and reason, but by a higher rule, to wit, 'The sure word of prophecy:' which is clear from Rom. iv. 19. where Abraham believed the promise, notwithstanding that sense and reason seemed to contradict it: 'He considered not the deadness of his own body, neither the barrenness of Sarah's womb, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:' as is clear from Hebrews xi. 29, 30. where faith believed their 'passing through the red sea, as through dry ground,' which was most contrary to sense and reason: Faith believed the 'falling down of the walls of Jericho, by the blowing of horns.' Which things are most impossible for sense and reason; for sense will oftentimes cry out, 'All men are liars;' and reason will say, 'How can such a thing be?' And yet that heroic grace of faith crieth out, 'Hath he spoken it? He will also do it. Hath he said it? Then it shall come to pass.'

2. Faith can believe a word of promise, notwithstanding that the dispensations of God seem to contradict it; as was clear in Job, who professed, 'He would trust in God, though he should kill him.' And no doubt but this was the practice of believing Jacob, he trusted that promise should be accomplished, 'That the elder should serve the younger,' though all the dispensations of God (which he did meet with) seemed to say, that the promise should not be accomplished.

3. Faith can believe a word of promise, even when the commands of God seem to contradict the accomplishment of that promise: this is clear in that singular instance of Abraham's faith, that notwithstanding he was commanded to kill his promised seed (upon whom did depend the accomplishment of the promises), yet he believed that the promises should be performed. And though there were indeed extraordinary and strange trials of his faith, as he had natural affections to wrestle with, yet over the belly of all these, believing Abraham giveth faith to the promise, and bringeth his son Isaac to the altar (though he did receive him back again); this is clear from Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

4. Faith can exercise itself upon the promise, notwithstanding that challenges and convictions of unworthiness and guilt do wait on the Christian: that is clear, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. 'That altho' his house was not so with God as did become,' yet he believed the promise; as likewise is clear from Psalm lxxv. 3. 'Iniquities do prevail against me,' and yet that doth not interrupt his faith, 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' And certainly, it was a noble and precious act of faith to believe, notwithstanding of un-answerable challenges of guilt; the best way both to crucify our idols, and to answer these challenges, is believing, and hoping against hope; and closing with Christ; this is more clear from Isa. lxiv. 6, 7. compared with verse 8. where, after strange challenges, the prophet hath a strange word, 'But now, O Lord, thou art a Father.' There is an emphasis in the word *now* for all this, yet 'thou art *now* our Father.'

5. And, *Lastly*, This pointeth out the mysterious acting of the grace of faith, that it exerciseth itself upon an invisible object, even upon Christ not yet seen, according to that word, 1 Pet. v. 3. 'Whom having not seen, yet ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,' &c. I pose the greater part of you who are here, whether or not those be two of the greatest paradoxes and mysteries unto you? For is not this a mystery, to love him whom ye never saw? 'Whom having not seen, yet ye love: To love an absent and unseen Christ, is a mystery to the most part of the world: and is not this a mystery, to believe on him whom we never saw? 'In whom, though ye see him not, yet believing.' And I shall add this, that faith can hold fast its interest with God, notwithstanding the most precious Christian should call us hypocrites, and not acknowledge us; this is clear in the practice of Job; and most clear from that word, Isa. lxiii. 16. 'Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not.'

III. *Thirdly*, This pointeth out the excellency of the grace of faith, that faith (when it is in exercise) is that grace by which a Christian doth attain unto most sensible enjoyments. There is a great question, that is much debated among Christians, what is the way to win this happy length, to be always under the sweet and refreshing influence of heaven, and to have this dew always coming down upon our branches? I can give no answer to it but this, be much in the exercise of faith; this is clear upon that notion and name out upon faith, Isa. xlv. 22. It is called 'a look to Christ,' which is a most sensible act. If ye would know a description of faith, it is this, the divine contemplation of the immortal soul, upon that divine, excellent, and precious object, Jesus Christ. For God never made faith a liar, and there-

fore its eye is never off him that is the noble object of faith, Jesus Christ manifested in the gospel; as is clear, Eph. i. 13. 'After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise', which preacheth out the excellent enjoyments these had after their closing with Christ, 'who is invisible.' Our faith is called a seeing, which speaketh out this, that faith's sight of God is as certain as if we did behold him with our eyes; as is clear, Heb. xi. 27. 'Moses saw him by faith who is invisible.' And we conceive, that the ground which maketh the most part of us have such complaints, 'How long wilt thou forget us, for ever?' it is this, the want of the spiritual exercise of faith; and are there not some here that may cry out, 'It is more than thirty days since I did behold the king?' Yea, there are some who may go a greater length, and cry out, 'I have lived these two years at Jerusalem, and yet I have not seen the king's face?' Yea, there are some here whose complaint may go a little higher, and cry forth, 'these three years and six months it hath not rained on me,' but the clouds have been restrained and bound up, and the heavens have become brass. And would ye know the rise of these complaints, it is this, Ye are not much in the spiritual exercise of faith. And to you I would only say these two words, *First*, It is easier to persuade a reprobate that he is defective in the fear of God, and in his love to God, than to persuade some such that they are wanting to God in their faith; for they hold fast that piece of desperate iniquity till they die. *Secondly*, We would say to those of you who have the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and have tasted of the sweetness of Christ, some of you will be less convinced, for the neglect of the duty of faith, than for the neglect of the duty of prayer, or of the duty of keeping the sabbath-day. But I am persuaded of this, that if the noble worth of that transcendent object were known, we would have a holy impatience until once we did believe.

IV. *Fourthly*, this pointeth out the excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace by which a Christian is advanced to the highest and most inconceivable pitch of dignity, and that is, to be the child of the living God: as is clear, John i. 12. 'To as many as received (or believed in him) he gave power, or prerogative to become the sons of God.' And certainly that noble prerogative of adoption is much undervalued by many: and I will tell you two grounds whereon the most part of men undervalue the excellent gift of adoption: *First*, They do not take up the infinite highness of God, and what a one he is, otherwise they would cry out with David, 'seemeth it a small thing in your eyes to be a son to the King of kings?' *Secondly*, We do not take up nor understand these matchless privileges which are given

to them who are once in this estate. I am persuaded, if this were believed, that 'he who is a servant, doth not abide in the house for ever,' (though he that is a son doth) it would stir us up to more divine zeal in our pursuit after faith.

V. *Fifthly*, This likewise pointeth out this excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace by which all other actions are pleasant to God, and are taken off our hand; as is clear, Heb xi. 4. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice 'than Cain,' which must be understood even of all other duties. And that word, verse 6. 'Without faith it is impossible to please 'God' speaketh this also, That by faith we do exceedingly please him. And this is a most sad and lamentable reproof unto many who are here, that their actions do not please God, because they are not in faith. Would you know a description of your prayers? (ye who are hypocrites and destitute of the knowledge of God) it is this, you prayers are the breach of the third command, 'In 'taking the name of the Lord in vain, for which he will not hold 'you guiltless.' And would ye know what is your hearing of sermons? 'It is an abomination to the Lord,' according to that word in Titus i. 15. 'To the unbelieving and impure nothing is clean.' And as Solomon doth speak, 'The plowing of the wicked, is sin:' so that all your actions that you go about are but an offence to the majesty of the Lord.

Now we would speak to these two things before we proceed to the evidences of faith, to wit, *First*, That there is a difference betwixt the direct act of faith, and the reflecting act of faith. For there may be a direct act of faith in a Christian, when he is not persuaded that he doth believe; but the reflecting acts of faith are these that a Christian hath, when he is persuaded in his conscience that he doth believe. And we would, *Secondly*, say, that there are many that go down to their grave under that soul-destroying delusion, that they are in the faith, and yet never did know what faith is. I am persuaded, that there are many, whom all the preachings in the world did never persuade that they did never believe, their faith being born with them, and it will die with them, without any fruit. But faith being such an excellent grace, and so advantageous (whereof we have spoken a few things) we shall speak a little further of it. 1 In pointing out some evidences, by which a Christian may know whether or not he be indeed in the faith. 2 I shall give you some helps whereby faith may be kept in exercise.

I. Now there is this first evidence of faith, that a Christian who doth believe, accounteth ab-sence and a want of fellowship with Christ and communion with him, one of the greatest and most lamentable crosses that ever he had; as is clear, Psalm xiii.

3. 'Lighten mine eyes,' said David, that is, 'Let me behold and be satisfied with thy face;' and the motive that he backeth it with is this, 'Lest I sleep the sleep of death.' David thought himself a dead man if Christ did withdraw his presence from him. Also it is clear, Cant. iii. 1 (compared with the following verses) where absence from Christ, and want of communion with him, was the greatest cross that the spouse had; and it is clear from John xx. 11, 12 13 where Mary had a holy design of all things in respect and comparison of Christ. But I will tell you what a hypocrite doth most lament, and that is the want of reputation among the saints; that is the great god and idol among hypocrites, and that which (when not enjoined) hypocrites and atheists lament most, the world, and the lusts of their eyes; when they want these, then they cry out, 'they have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' They think heaven can never make up the loss of earth. And certainly, if many of us would examine ourselves by this, we would find ourselves most defective. I would pose all you who are here, who have taken on a name to be followers of Christ, whether or not ye have been content to walk thirty days in absence from Christ, and yet never to lament it? Hath not Christ been thirty days and more in heaven, without a visit from you? And yet for all this ye have not clothed yourselves with sackcloth. I will not say that this is an undeniable evidence of the total want of the grace of faith, but it doth evidently prove this, that the person who hath come this length, has lost much of his primitive love, and much of that high esteem which he ought to have of matchless Christ: what can you find in this world, that maketh you converse so little with heaven? I think that is the noble encouragement of a Christian, when he is going down to his grave, that he hath this wherewith to comfort himself; 'I am to change my place, but not my company;' death, to the believing Christian, being a blessed transition and transportation to a more immediate and constant uninterrupted enjoyment of God. But I believe, that if all who have the name of believers in this generation should go to heaven, they might have this to say, I am now not only to change my place, but also my company; for these seventy years I have been conversant with my idols, but now I am to converse with more blessed, divine, and excellent company. O that ye would be persuaded to pursue much after an absent Christ. Were it not a sweet period of our life, to breathe out our last breath in his arms, and to be living in the faith of being eternally with him, which might be founded upon his word?

II. There is this second evidence of one that is in the faith; they do endeavour to advance that necessary work of the mor-

tification of their idols, according to that word, 1 John iii. 4. 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.' Acts xv 9 'Faith purifieth the heart.' And concerning this evidence (lest any should mistake it) I would say these things to you. *First*, The mortification of a Christian, as long as he is here below, doth more consist in resolutions than attainments. It is certain that there are high attainments of a Christian in the mortification of his idols, but his resolutions go far above his performances. *Secondly*, We will say this, that those Christians, who never came this length in Christianity, to make that an universal conclusion, and full resolution, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' they may suspect themselves that they are not in the faith; for a Christian that is in Christ is universal in his resolutions, though he be not so in practice, but defective in performances; a Christian may have big resolutions with weak performances; for resolutions will be at the gate of heaven, before practice come from the borders of hell, there being a long distance betwixt resolution and practice; and the one much swifter than the other. And, *Thirdly*, We would likewise say, that ye, who never did know what it was to endeavour (by prayer and the exercise of other duties) the mortification of your lusts and idols; ye may be afraid that ye have not yet the hope of seeing him as he is. And I would say this to many, who are settled upon their lees, and who never did know what it was to spend one hour in secret prayer for mortifying of an idol, that they would beware lest that curse be past in heaven against them; 'I would have purged you, and ye would not be purged, therefore ye shall not be purged any more till ye die;' that iniquity of refusing to commune with Christ in the work of secret mortification, I say that iniquity shall not be purged away. And we would once seriously desire you, by that dreadful sentence that Christ shall pass against you, and by the love ye have to your immortal souls, and by the pains of these everlasting torments of hell; that ye would seriously set about the work of spiritual mortification, that so ye may evidence that ye have believed, and that ye have the soul-comforting hope of eternal life. I would only speak this one word to you (and I desire you seriously to ponder it), What if, within twelvey hours hereafter, a summons were given you (without continuation of days) to appear before the solemn and dreadful tribunal of that impartial judge, Jesus Christ? What, suppose ye, would be your thoughts? Will ye examine your own conscience, what think ye would be your thoughts, if some summons were given unto you? I am persuaded of this, 'That your knees should smite one against another, and your face should gather paleness,' seeing

your conscience would condemn you, 'That ye had been weighed in the balance and found light.' O think ye that ye can both fight and triumph in one day? Think ye that ye can fight and overcome in one day? Think ye your lusts and unmortified corruptions so weak and faint-hearted an enemy, that upon the first appearance of such imaginary champions (as most part of us are in our own eyes) that your idols would lay down arms, and let you trample on them? Believe me, mortification is not a work of one day, or one year, but it is a work will serve you all your time, begin as soon as you will; and therefore seeing you have spent your days in the works of the flesh, it is time that now ye would begin and pursue after him, whose work is with him, and whose reward shall come before him.

III. Now there is this third evidence by which a Christian may know whether he be in the faith or not, and it is, that Christ is matchless and incomparable unto such a one, according to that word, 1 Pet. ii. 7. 'To you that believe, Christ is precious,' and that word that Luke hath in his 7th chapter at the close, 'That she to whom much was forgiven, loved much.' Now, lest this likewise should prove a discouragement to any, I would only have you take notice to this, that a Christian may be a believer, and yet want the sensible discoveries of this, that Christ is matchlessly precious to him; but this is certain, that they who are in the lively exercise of faith, it is impossible then for them not to esteem Christ matchless. And I would speak this likewise to many who are here; have you not been living these ten years in faith? and I would pose you with this, esteem you not your idols more matchless than Christ, and more of worth than he? It is impossible that there can be any lively exercise of faith, and not esteem Christ matchless. It is not to say with your mouth, and contradict it with your heart, will do the business. For if your heart could speak, it would say, I would sell Christ 'for thirty pieces of silver.' But my idols would I sell at no rate. Are there not many of you, who love the world and its pleasures better than the eternity of joy? Oh! know ye not that word (O ye desperately ignorant of the truths of God), 'that he who loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him;' and yet notwithstanding of the light of the word, ye would sell your immortal souls (with Esau) 'for a mess of pottage.' O but it is a poor bargain when ye have sold the eternity of joy for a passing world, and for its transitory delights? I would earnestly know what shall be your thoughts in that day, when ye shall be standing upon the utmost line betwixt time and eternity. O what will be your thoughts at that day? But you are to follow on to an endless pain, (by appearance) and then you are to leave your idols. I shall only

desire, that ye may read that word, Isa. x. 3. 'What will ye do in the day of v'sitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will you leave your glory?' Ye shall then preach mortification to the life, though all the time of mortification shall then be cut off. O but to hear a worldly-minded man, when eternity of pain is looking him in the face (preach out concerning the vanity of this world), might it not persuade you that the world is a fancy, and a dream that shall flee away, and shall leave you in the day of your greatest strait?

IV. And there is this fourth evidence of faith, that a Christian who doth truly believe, he is a Christian who entertaineth a divine jealousy and a holy suspicion of himself, whether or not he doth believe. I love not that faith which is void of fear; this was clear in the practice of believing Noah, that though by faith he built the ark, yet he had fear mixed with his faith. I know that there are some who are ignorant concerning this, what it is to doubt concerning eternal peace; and more, it is not every one that doubteth that certainly shall get heaven; for I think an hypocrite may doubt concerning his eternal salvation; however, I think the exercise of a hypocrite, under his doubtings, is more the exercise of his judgment than the exercise of his conscience. And I may say, that if all the exercise of the law which is preached in these days, were narrowly searched, it would be more the exercise of light than the exercise of conscience. We speak these things as our doubt, which never was our exercise, and we make these things our public exercise, which was never our private chamber exercise. And I think, that if all that a Christian did speak to God in prayer, were his exercise, he would speak less and wonder more. We would be speechless when we go to God; for often, if we did speak nothing but our exercise, we would have nothing to say. And certainly it is true that we often fall into that woful sin, of desperate lying against the Holy Ghost, by flattering God with our mouth, and lying unto him with our tongue. And I shall only say these two words, there are some who have this for their great design, *viz.* they would be at peace with their conscience, and also they would be at peace with their idols, they would gladly reconcile conscience and their idols together, that is their great design. And there are some whose design is a little more refined, they study rather to be reconciled with their conscience, than to be reconciled with God; the great aim they shoot at is this, To get their consciences quieted, though they know not what it is to have the soul-comforting peace of God to quiet them.

V. Now there is this last evidence of faith, that justifying faith is a faith which putteth the Christian to be much in the exercise

of those duties, by which it may be maintained. for we must keep faith as the 'apple of our eye! and for that end, I would only give you these three things by which faith must be kept in exercise, and a real Christian will be endeavouring, in some measure, to attain unto these.

1. It keepeth faith much in exercise, to be much in marking and taking notice of the divine exercise and proofs of the love of God, wherewith a Christian doth meet; as is clear from that word, Rom. v. 4. 'Experience worketh hope.' I durst be bold to charge the most part that are indeed in Christ with this, that they are too little remarking and taking notice of the experience of his love. Ye should mark the place of your experience itself: as is clear from scripture, that the very place where Christians did meet with experience, in such an enjoyment of God, they marked it, Ezek. i. 1. 'By the river of Chebar the heavens were opened, and I saw the vision of God.' And Gen. xxxii. 30. 'Jacob called the place Peniel,' the place of living, after seeing the face of God: it was so remarkable unto him. And we conceive, that ye would mark these two things mainly in your practice: *First*, Ye would mark, if ye can possibly, the first day of your closing with Christ, and of your coming out of Egypt, and may allude unto the command (if not more than allude unto it) Deut. xxvi. 1. 'Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee out of the land of Egypt.' And, *Secondly*, We would have you much in marking these experiences which have increased your faith, and which have strengthened your love, and which have made you mortify your idols; these are experiences especially to be marked.

2. Faith is kept in exercise, and we win to the lively assurance of our interest in God: which we would press upon you, by being much in the exercise of secret prayer. O but many love much to pray when abroad, who never loved to pray when alone. And this is a desperate sign of hypocrisy, according to that, Matth. vi. 5. It is said of hypocrites, they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men: but it is never said of these persons, that they love to pray alone, only they loved to pray in the synagogues; but it is secret and retired prayer, by which faith must be kept in exercise.

And there is this likewise that we would press upon you, that ye would be much in studying communion and fellowship with God so that your faith may be kept in life. And O what a blessed life were it, each day to be taken up to the top of mount Pisgah, and there to behold that promised land, to get a refresh-

ing sight of the crown every morning, which might make us walk with joy all along that day? The heart of a Christian to be in heaven, his conversation ought to be there, his eyes ought to be there. And I know not what of a Christian ought to be out of heaven, even before his going there, save his lumpish tabernacle of clay, which cannot inherit incorruption, till he be made uncorruptible. But I shall say no more but this, many of us are readier to betray him with a kiss, and crucify him afresh, than to keep communion with him: ‘But wo eternally be to him by whom the Son of man is betrayed, and that doth crucify Christ afresh; it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depth of the sea. I remember an expression of a man not two days ago, who, upon his death-bed, being asked by one what he was doing; did most stupidly, though most truly, reply, That he was fighting with Christ; and I think that the most part of us (if he prevent us not) shall die fighting with Christ: but know, and be persuaded, that he is too sore a party for us to fight with, ‘He will once tread upon you in the wine-press of his fury, and he shall return with dyed garments from treading such of you as would not embrace him; he shall destroy you with all his heart. Therefore be instructed, lest his soul be disjoined from you (as that word in Jer. vi. 8.) and lest your souls be eternally separated from him,’ be, I say, instructed to close with him by faith. Now, to him who can make you do so, we desire to give praise.

In the two sermons next following, you have the rest of these sweet purposes, which the worthy Author preached upon the same text.

SERMON IV.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c.*

THERE are two great rocks upon which a Christian doth ordinarily dash in his way and motion toward his rest. 1. The rock of presumption and carnal confidence: so that when Christ dandleth them upon his knees, and satisfieth them with the breast of his consolations, and maketh their cup to overflow, then they cry out, ‘My mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved. And 2. The rock of misbelief and discouragement: so that, when he hideth his face, and turneth back the face of his throne, then they cry out, ‘Our hope and our strength

'is perished from the Lord,' we know not what it is to bear our enjoyments by humility, nor our crosses by patience and submission. O but misbelief and jealousy are bad interpreters of dark dispensations, they know not what it is to read these mysterious characters of divine providence, except they be written in legible letters of sense; misbelief is big with child of twins, and is travailing, till it bring forth apostacy and security; and no doubt he is a blessed Christian that hath overcome that woful idol of misbelief, and doth walk by that royal law of the word, and not by that changeable rule of dispensations. We conceive that there are three great idols and dagon of a Christian, that hindereth him from putting a blank in Christ's hand concerning his guiding to heaven, there is pride, self-indulgence, and security. Do we not covet to be more excellent than our neighbour? Do we not love to travel to heaven through a valley of riches? and do we not ambitiously desire to walk towards Sion, sleeping, rather than weeping, as we go? Are there not some words that we would have taken out of the Bible, that is sad divinity to flesh and blood? 'Through many tribulations must we enter into the kingdom of heaven;' we love not to be changed from vessel to vessel, that so our scent may be taken from us.

There are three great enemies to Christ, misbelief, hypocrisy, and profanity: misbelief is a bloody sin, hypocrisy is a silent sin, profanity is a crying sin. These are mother evils, and I shall give you these differences betwixt them: misbelief crucifieth Christ under the vail of humility; hypocrisy crucifieth Christ under the vail of love; and profanity putteth him to open shame. Misbelief denieth the love and power of God; hypocrisy denieth the omniscieny of God; and profanity denieth the justice of God. Misbelief is a sin that looketh after inherent righteousness; hypocrisy is a sin that looketh after external holiness only; and profanity is a sin that looketh after heaven without holiness; making connexion between those things that God hath always separated, and separating those things which he hath always put together: so that their faith shall once prove a delusion, and fly away as a dream in the night, but let us study this excellent grace of true and saving faith, which shall be a precious remedy against all those Christ-destroying and soul-destroying evils.

But now to come to that which we did propose, *Thirtdly*, to be spoken of from the words, which was the sweetness of this grace of faith; no doubt, it is a pleasant command, and it maketh all commands pleasant, it is that which casteth a divine lustre upon the most hard sayings of Christ, and maketh the Christian to cry forth, 'God hath spoken in his holiness. I will rejoice.' We need not stand long to show that faith is a sweet and refreshing

command, for it is oftentimes recorded in scripture to the advantage of this grace; and unspeakable joy and heavenly delight are the hand-maids that wait upon it. But more particularly to make it out, we shall speak to these things. The *First* is, That this grace giveth a Christian a broad and comprehensive sight of Christ, maketh him not only to behold the beauty of his actings, but the beauty of his person; and there are these three precious sights that faith giveth to a Christian of Christ: *First*, It letteth the Christian see Christ in his absolute and personal excellency, taking him up as the eternal Son of God, as the Ancient of Days, as the Father of eternity, ‘as the express image of his Father’s person, and brightness of his glory,’ and this filleth the soul with divine fear and admiration. Hence is that word, Heb. xi. 27. ‘That we see by faith him that is invisible. As if he had said, faith is that grace that maketh things that are invisible, visible unto us. *Secondly*, It letteth the soul see Christ in his relative excellencies, that is, what he is to us; faith taketh up Christ as a husband, and from thence we are provoked to much boldness and divine confidence, and withal, to see those rich possessions that are provided for us by our elder brother, who was born for adversity; faith taketh up Christ as a blessed days-man that did lay his hand upon us both; and from thence is constrained to wonder at the condescendency of Christ, it taketh him up as dying and as redeeming us from the power of the grave, and from the hands of our enemies: and this provoketh Christians to make a total and absolute resignation of themselves over unto Christ, ‘To serve him all the days of our life, in righteousness and holiness. And, *Thirdly*, Faith maketh the soul to behold these mysterious draughts of spotless love, those divine emanations of love that have flowed from his ancient and everlasting love since the world began. Would ye know the great ground why we are so ignorant of him, who is the study of angels, and of all that are about the throne? It is this, we are not much in the exercise of faith. And if we would ask that question, What is the way to attain to the saving knowledge of God in Christ? We would give no answer to it but this, Believe, and again believe, and again believe: faith openeth these mysterious seals of his boundless perfection, and in some way teacheth a Christian to answer that unanswerable question, ‘What is his name, and what is his son’s name?’

There is this *Secondly* that pointeth out the sweetness of faith, that it giveth an excellent relish unto the promises, and maketh them food to our soul. What are all the promises without faith (as to our use), but a dead letter that hath no life; but faith exercised upon the promises, maketh a Christianity out, ‘The words of his mouth are sweeter unto me than the honey and the honey-

comb,' as is clear from Heb. xi. 12, 13. It is by faith that we embrace the promises, and do receive them.

Thirdly, The sweetness of faith may appear by this, that it enableth a Christian to rejoice under the most anxious and afflicting dispensations that he meeteth with while he is here below; as is clear from Rom. v. 1. 5. where his being justified by faith hath this fruit attending it, to joy in tribulation; and likewise from Heb. x. 34. 35. Doth not faith hold the crown in the right-hand, and letteth a Christian behold the infinite dignities that are provided for them, after they have, as a strong man, run their race? And when a Christian is put into a furnace hot seven times more than ordinary, it bringeth down the Son of man, Jesus Christ, to walk with them in the furnace; so that they walk safely, and with joy through fire and water, and, in a manner, they can have no cross in his company. For would ye know what is the description of a cross? It is to want Christ in any estate. And would ye know what is the description of prosperity? It is to have Christ in any condition or state of life: What can ye want that have him? And what can ye have that want him? He is that All; so that all things beside him are but vanity. But besides this, faith doth discover unto a Christian, that there is a sweet period of all his trials and afflictions that he can be exposed unto, so that he can never say that of faith, which Ahab spake of Micaiah, 'He never prophesied good things unto me.' But rather he may say always the contrary, Faith never prophesied evil unto me, it being a grace that prophesieth excellent things in the darkest night, and sweetly declareth, that though 'weeping do endure for the evening. yet joy cometh in the morning;' and that, though now they go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, yet at last they shall return rejoicing, bearing sheaves in their bosom.

And this may bring in the *Fourth* consideration; to point put the sweetness of faith, that giveth a Christian a refreshing sight of that land that is afar off, and maketh him to behold that inheritance that is provided for the saints in light; it goeth forth to the brook Eshcol, and there doth pluck down those grapes that grow in Immanuel's land, to bring up a good report of that noble country we are sojourning towards, and the city, the streets whereof are paved with transparent gold. And, howbeit, it may be a perplexing debate between many and their own souls, whether or not these eyes that have been the windows through which so much uncleanness have entered, and these species of lusts have been conveyed into the heart, shall once be like the eyes of a dove washed with milk, and fitly set; and be admitted to see that glorious object, 'The Lamb that sitteth up-

on the throne:’ or whether ever these tongues, that have been set on fire of hell; and these polluted lips, that have spoken so much against God and heaven, and all his people and interests, shall ever be admitted to sing those heavenly hallelujahs amongst that spotless choir of angels, and that assembly of the first born or if these hands or feet that have been so active to commit iniquity, and so swift to run after vanity, shall ever be admitted hereafter to carry those palm branches, and to follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth; and whether ever these hearts that have been indeed a Bethaven, a house of idols, may yet, notwithstanding, be a dwelling for the Holy Ghost. Though these things, we say, and such like, may be the subject of many sad debates to some weary souls, and cause many tossings to and fro till the morning; yet faith can bring all these mysteries to light, and looking within the vail, can let us see thousands of thousands, who were once as ugly as ourselves, ‘yet now, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are admitted to stand before the throne of God, and serve him day and night.’

Now there is that, *Fourthly*, which we promise to speak of concerning this grace of faith from these words, and it is the absolute necessity there is of the exercise of this grace which is holden forth in that word, ‘His commandment;’ which doth import these three things, 1. That all the commands that we can obey without this commandment of faith, is but a polluting ourselves in the ditch till our own clothes abhor us. 2. That God taketh greater delight in the exercise of that grace of faith, than in the exercise of any other grace. And, *Lastly*, that as to the many imperfections which we have in our obedience, there is a sweet act of oblivion past of them all, if we make conscience seriously to obey this command of faith, which is indeed the sweet compend of the gospel; all these things do most clearly appear, in that believing here is called, ‘His commandment,’ by way of excellency, as if this were his only commandment.

But that we may yet a little more particularly point out the absolute necessity of faith, there are these things that speaketh it forth to the full, 1. That though rivers of tears should run down our eyes, because we kept not his law, though we should never rise off our knees from prayer, and should all our life-time speak to God with the tongue of angels, and though we should constantly obey his commands, yet without faith we should never escape that eternal sentence of excommunication from the presence of the Lord: there being no action that doth proceed from us which can please the majesty of the Lord, unless it hath its rise from this principle of faith; as is clear from Heb. xi. 6.

‘Without faith it is impossible to please God.’ And though we should offer unto him ten thousand rivers of oil, and thousands of rams, and should offer up in a burnt-sacrifice all the beasts that are upon the mountains, and the trees that are upon many hills, this would be the answer that God would return unto us, ‘Who hath required these things at your hand? I take no pleasure in these solemn sacrifices;’ because there is no way of attaining peace with God, but through the exercise of faith, making use of the spotless righteousness of Christ. 2 Let us do our utmost, by all the inventions we can, to bring down our body, and let us separate ourselves from all the pleasures of the flesh; yet all our idols shall reign without much contradiction, except once we do attain unto this grace of faith, which is that victory, ‘whereby we must overcome the world,’ and the hand which maketh use of infinite strength for subduing our corruption maketh the Christian sweetly to take up that song, ‘Stronger is he that is with us, than he that is in the world.’

From all this that we have said, both of the sweetness of faith, and of the necessity thereof, we would propose these few considerations to two or three sorts of persons, 1. There are some who live in that vain imaginary delusion of attaining heaven through a covenant of works, and neglect to seek salvation by faith in the righteousness of Christ. And to those who build upon this sandy foundation, I shall say but these two words, *First*, How long shall you labour in the fire of airy vanity? Do you never think to put on the cape-stone? Know ye not that the day is approaching, when your houses shall fall about your ears, your confidence shall be rejected, and ‘your hope shall vanish as a dream, and flee away as a vision of the night?’ *Secondly*, What a monstrous blindness, and what an unspeakable act of folly must it be, to say, That Christ was crucified in vain? Which yet we do practically assert when we go about to purchase a righteousness through the works of the law.

2. There are some who are secure in their own thoughts concerning their faith; they never questioned the reality of it, they never examined it. O! ye whose faith is cold as yourselves, ye say ye never knew what it was to dispute, and I may say ye never knew what it was to believe. Thou profane hypocrite, let me tell thee a strong faith, and yet strong idols, must needs be a strong delusion. Thou wilt not obey the Lord, thou wilt not pray, thou wilt not believe a threatening in all the word, thou wilt count all religion madness and foolishness, and yet thou wilt persuade thyself thou believest in Christ. ‘O be not deceived, God is not mocked:’ and why will ye mock yourselves? Shall I tell you that reprobates have a sad religion; one day they must

believe, obey, and pray, and give testimony to godliness; but alas, too late, and little to their advantage. Shall not they, whom all the ministers on earth could scarcely ever persuade to believe so much as a heaven or a hell, or one threatening in all the book of God, at last be forced to believe their own sense, when they shall see the Ancient of Days upon the throne, and shall hear the cries of so many thousand living witnesses come out both from heaven and hell, bearing testimony to the truth of threatenings and promises, that not one jot of them is fallen to the ground? And he who would never be persuaded to bow a knee to God in earnest all his life, shall he not then pray with greatest fervency, 'That hills and mountains might fall upon him, to cover him from the face of the Lamb? And he that would never submit to a command of God, must he not at last obey that dreadful command, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting torment, &c.' Yea, he who was the greatest mocker in the world, shall then confess, that they are blest who put their trust in the Lord, as they are excellently brought in, though in an Apocryphal book, Wisdom v 4 Crying out with great terror, while they behold that unexpected sight of the glorious condition of the godly, 'O here are the men,' say they, 'whom we mocked, whose life we accounted madness, and their end dishonourable?' be wise therefore in time, and do that willingly, which ye must do by constraint, and do that with sweetness and advantage that ye must do at length with loss and sorrow.

3. There are some who certainly have some hope of eternal life. but contenteth themselves with a small measure of assurance, and these I would beseech, that ye would be more endeavouring to make your calling and election sure, and would be endeavouring to see your names written in the ancient records of heaven: and this we shall press upon you by several arguments, 1. Those strong and subtile, and soul-destroying delusions that are amongst many, who conceive they do believe, as we were saying, and 'are pure in their own eyes, who are not yet purged from their iniquities.' O! are there not many of us that are in a golden dream, that suppose 'we are eating, but when we awake our soul is empty, whose faith is a metaphysic notion that hath no foundation, but men's apprehension? and this shall never bear us through the gates of death, nor convey us unto an eternity of joy. 2. May not this press you to follow after assurance? It is a compendious way to sweeten all your crosses; as is clear from Hab. iii. 17, 18, where the convictions of this made Habakkuk 'to rejoice in the God of his salvation, though the fig-tree did not bear fruit, and the labour of the olive did fail, and there were no sweetness to be found in the vine;' and from Heb. xi. 34.

where they took joyfully 'the spoiling of their goods, knowing within themselves, that they had a better and an enduring substance;' this is indeed that tree, which, if we cast into the waters of Marah, they will presently become sweet, for it is not below the child of hope to be anxious about those things that he meets with here, when he sincerely knoweth that commandment shall come forth; 'Lift up your head, for the day of your eternal redemption draweth near,' even the day when all the rivers of his sorrow shall sweetly run unto the ocean of everlasting delight. 3. A Christian, that is much in assurance, is much in communion and fellowship with God; as is clear from Song i. 13, 14. and Song ii. 3. where, when once she cometh to that, to be persuaded that Christ was her beloved, then 'she sat down under his shadow, and his fruit was pleasant unto her taste;' for the assured Christian doth taste of those crumbs that fall from that higher table; and, no doubt, those who have tasted of that old wine will not straightway desire the new, because the old is better. And then, 4th. It is the way to keep you from apostacy, and maketh defection from God; faith is that grace which will make you continue with Christ in all his temptations; as is clear from 2 Pet. i. 10. where this is set down as a fruit 'of making our calling and election sure, that if we do these things we shall never fall;' faith makes a Christian to live a dependent life; for would ye know the motto of a Christian, it is this, self-diffidence and Christ dependence; as is clear from that word in the Song viii. 5. that while we are walking through the wilderness, 'we are leaning upon our well-beloved.' 5. This assurance will help a Christian to overcome many temptations. There are four sorts of temptations that assault the Christian; there are temptations of desire, temptations of love, temptations in hope, and temptations of anxiety, all which a Christian, through this noble grace of assurance, may sweetly overcome; he that hath once made Christ his own, what can he desire but him; as Psalm xxvii. 4. 'One thing have I desired of the Lord;' what can he love more than Christ, or love besides Christ; all his love being drowned, as it were in that ocean of his excellencies, and a sweet complacency found in the enjoyments of him. And as to hope, will not assurance make a Christian cry forth, 'Now Lord what wait I for; my hope is in thee.' And when the heart is anxious, doth not assurance make a Christian content to 'bear the indignation of the Lord,' and patiently submit unto the cross, since there is a sweet connexion between his cross and his crown, Rom. viii. 35, 36 'If he suffer with him, he shall also reign with him.' And *Lastly*, There is this argument to press you to assurance, that it sweeteneth the thoughts of death; it maketh death unto a

Christian not the king of terrors, but the king of desires; and it is upon these grounds that assurance maketh death refreshful to a Christian. 1. He knoweth that it is the funeral of all his miseries, and the birth-day of all his blessings and eternal enjoyments. This is the coronation day of a Christian, and the day when he shall have that marriage betwixt Christ and him sweetly solemnized; and that when he is to step that last step, he knoweth that death will make him change his place, but not his company; and O that we could once win unto this, to seal that conclusion without presumption, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' we might, without presumption, sing one of the songs of Sion, even while we are in this strange land, and taking Christ in our arms, might sweetly cry forth, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!' Comfort yourselves in this, that all your clouds shall once pass away, and that truth shall once come to pass, which was confirmed by the oath of an angel, with his hand lifted up toward heaven, 'That time shall be no more.' Time shall once sweetly die out in eternity, and ye may be looking after new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' O long to be with him, for Christ longeth to have you with him.

SERMON VI.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c.*

THERE are three most precious and cardinal graces, which a Christian ought mainly to pursue; there is that exalting grace of faith, that comforting grace of hope, and that aspiring grace of love: and if once a Christian did take up that heavenly difference that is between these sister graces, he might be provoked to move after them most swiftly, as the chariots of Amīnadab; and there is this difference between these graces; faith is a sober and silent grace; hope is a patient and submissive grace; love is an ambitious and impatient grace; faith crieth out, 'I will wait patiently for the Lord, until the vision shall speak.' But love crieth out, 'How long art thou a coming?' and it is waiting to hear the sound of his feet coming over the mountains of separation. This is the motto of hope, *Quod defertur non aufertur*; That which is delayed, said hope, is not altogether taken away, and made void; and that may be the divine emblem of the grace of love; it is a sight infolding desire in his

arms, and it is desire clothed with wings, treading upon delay and impediments. There is this second difference between these graces; the grace of faith embraceth the truth of the promises: the grace of hope embraceth the goodness of the thing that is promised; but that exalting grace of love embraceth the promiser: faith crieth out, 'Hath he spoken it, he will also do it:' hope crieth out, 'Good is the word of the Lord, be it unto thy servant according to thy promise:' and love crieth with an higher note, 'As is the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my well-beloved among the sons.' *Thirdly*, There is that difference between these graces, faith overcometh temptations; hope overcometh difficulties, and love stayeth at home and divideth the spoil; there is a sweet correspondence between those graces in this; faith fighteth and conquereth; and hope fighteth and conquereth; but love doth enjoy the trophies of the victory. And, *Fourthly*, There is this difference, the noble grace of faith shall once evanish into sight; that noble grace of hope shall once evanish into possession and enjoyment; but that constant grace of love shall be the eternal companion of a Christian, and shall walk in with him to the streets of the new Jerusalem. And I would ask you that question, What a day shall it be, when faith shall cede with sight? What a day shall it be, when hope shall yield its place to love, and love and sight shall eternally sit down, and solace themselves in these blessed mysteries, these everlasting consolations of heaven, world without end. And, *Fifthly*, There is this difference, less will satisfy the grace of faith and the grace of hope, than will satisfy the grace of love; faith will be content with the promise, and hope will be content with the thing that is promised; but that ambitious grace of love will only be content with the promiser: love claspeth its arms about that precious and noble object Jesus Christ; love is a suspicious grace. It oftentimes crieth forth, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where 'they have laid him:' so that faith is oftentimes put to resolve suspicions of love. I can compare these three graces to nothing so fitly, as to those three worthies that David had. These three graces, they will break through all difficulties, were it an host of Philistines, that so they may please Christ, and may drink of the well of Bethlehem, the well of everlasting consolation that floweth from beneath the throne of God: love is like Noah's dove, it never findeith rest for the sole of its foot, until once it be within the ark, that place of repose, Jesus Christ

And, *Sixthly*, There is this last difference between them, faith taketh hold upon the faithfulness of Christ; hope taketh hold upon the goodness of Christ; but love taketh hold upon the

heart of Christ. And think ye not that it must be a pleasant and soul-refreshing exercise, to be continually taken up in embracing him, that is the eternal admiration of angels? Must it not be an excellent life, daily to be feeding on the finest of the wheat, and to be satisfied with honey out of the rock? O but heaven must be a pleasant place! and if once we would but taste of the first ripe grapes, and a cluster of wine that groweth in that pleasant land, might not we be constrained to bring up a good report of it?

But now to come to that which I promised mainly to speak of at this time, the last thing concerning faith that we proposed from the words, was the object upon which faith exerciseth itself, which is here set down to be the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. First, speak a little to the negative, what things are not the fit object of faith, and then to the positive, showing how this name of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, is that sure ground upon which a Christian may pitch his faith: For the First, Ye must know that a Christian is not to build his faith upon sense, nor sensible enjoyments. Sense may be an evidence of faith, but it must not be the foundation of faith: I know there are some that oftentimes cry out, 'Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into the hole of his side, I will not believe;' and indeed it is a mystery unto the most part of us, to be exercising faith upon a naked word of promise, abstractly from sense; to love an absent Christ, and to believe on an absent Christ, are the two greatest mysteries of Christianity. But that sense is no good foundation for faith, may appear, 1. That faith, which is builded upon sense, is a most inconstant, a most fluctuating and transient faith. I know sense hath its fits of love, and, as it were, hath its fits of faith; sometimes sense is sick of love, and sometimes sense is strong in faith; but ere six hours go about, sense may be sick of jealousy, and sick of unbelief; as you will see from Psalm xxv. 6. Sense, that bold thing, will instantly cry out, 'My mountain standeth strong, I will never be moved;' but behold how soon it changeth its note, 'Thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled.' At one time it will cry forth, 'Who is like unto him that pardoneth iniquity, and that passeth over transgressions?' But ere many hours go about, it will sing a song upon another key, and cry out, 'Why art thou become unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' 1. That faith which is built upon sense, it wanteth the promise of blessedness, for this is annexed to believing, that it is founded upon the word, according to that in John xx. 29. 'Blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed.' Nor hath that faith, which is built upon sense, such a solid joy waiting on it, as faith that is built upon

the naked word of promise; as may be cleared from that word, 1 Pet. i. 8. where faith exerciseth itself upon Christ not seen, maketh a Christian 'to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' a joy that doth not attend believing, founded upon sense. 3. That faith that is built upon sense, it giveth not much glory to God, for faith that is built upon sense, it exalteth not the faithfulness of God, it exalteth not the omnipotency of God. I will tell you what is the divinity of sense; let me see, and then I will believe; but it knoweth not what it is to believe upon trust, and because 'the Lord hath spoken in his holiness,' and in effect; faith that is built upon sense, is no faith, even as Rom. viii. 24. 'Hope that is seen, is not hope;' and therefore when the Lord seeth a Christian making sense an idol, that he will not believe, but when he seeth and feeleth, this doth often provoke the majesty of the Lord to withdraw himself from the Christian, and to deny him that sweet influence of heaven, and those consolations that are above, so that, in an instant, he hath both his sense and his faith to seek.

2. A Christian is not to make his graces the object of his faith; that is, when a Christian doth behold love burning within him, when he doth behold influences to prayer increasing, and mortification waxing strong, he is not to build his faith upon them; this was condemned in the church, in Ezek. xvi. 14. compared with the 15 verse, 'I made thee perfect with my comeliness: but the use that thou didst make of it, thou didst put thy trust in thy beauty, and then thou didst play the harlot.' It is certain that that grace, when it is the object of our faith, it doth provoke God to blast the lively exercise thereof, and to make a Christian oftentimes have that complaint, 'Wo to me, my leanness, my leanness testifieth to my face.' 'I will tell you three great mysteries in Christianity about grace: The First is, to red marches between these two, not to deny what they have, and yet to be denied to what they have, many times there is grace-denying and not self-denying; but this that we would press upon you, to be denied to grace, according to that word which is recorded of Moses, 'his face did shine, and he knew it not;' he did misken it (as it were) and was not at all puffed up with it; for so the words we conceive may run. Secondly, It is a great difficulty for a Christian to be denied to his self-denial, to be humbled in his being humble; for if pride can have no other foundation, it will build itself upon humility; and a Christian will grow proud in this, that he is growing humble. Thirdly, It is a difficulty for a Christian to examine his growth in grace, and not to be puffed up; it is certain, a Christian ought to examine his growth in grace humbly, according to that, Psal. lxiii. 8. 'My soul fol-

loweth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me.' He doth not only take notice of this, that his soul did follow after God; but of the measure of that pursuit, 'My soul followeth hard after thee,' and yet sweetly acknowledgeth, it was not his own feet which carried him, nor his own hand that kept him from falling.

3. Ye are not to build your faith upon your works, and upon the righteousness of the law; I need not stand long to refute that practical popery that is amongst us, that thinketh we can go to heaven through a covenant of works. I told you not long since, what your going to heaven through a covenant of works speaketh, even this horrid blasphemy, that it was an act of monstrous folly to send Christ to die for sinners: for if you can go to heaven without him, was not then Christ crucified in vain? And I would tell you now, that this speaketh out your damnable ignorance of the weakness and deceitfulness of your own hearts. O ye that are so great defenders of salvation by the covenant of works, I beseech you, What is the reason that you break the covenant of works oftener than any? for there is none that thinketh they will go to heaven this way, but those that are the greatest breakers of the covenant of works. And is not that inconsistent, and contradictory divinity, your faith contradicting your practice, and your practice telling you that your faith is a lie?

4. We must not mix our own righteousness with Christ's as the object of our believing: this is indeed an evil that often lodgeth in the bosom of the most refined hypocrite, when Satan cannot prevail to exclude Christ altogether, then he is content, with the whorish woman, to divide the child, and let the object of our faith be half Christ, and half self; and the truth is, many of these poor unwise sons, who stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children, do willingly hearken to this overture, for fear it be presumption for such poor wretches to meddle too boldly with the righteousness of Christ; but it were good such weak ones would consider that word, Rom. x. 2. where the Holy Ghost calleth the making use of his righteousness, an act of submission, 'They have not submitted' (saith he) 'unto the righteousness of Christ.' O will ye not lay this to heart, that our Lord will take your putting on his righteousness for an act of great humility, and will take your misbelief as a marvellous act of the highest pride and presumption.

5. We are not to make providence the object of our faith. I know there are some that ask the ground of their right to heaven, they will tell us that God has been kind to them all their days; I will only say to such, 'He may be feeding you unto the day of slaughter, and no man knoweth love or hatred by any

thing that is before him.' This much of the object of faith negatively.

And now to speak to it positively, We see the text holdeth out Christ himself, as that excellent and complete object of faith, 'This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son;' and thus faith closeth with Christ in a fourfold consideration. *First*, It closeth with God in Christ, not with God immediately and nakedly, for he dwelleth 'in light inaccessible, that no man can approach unto; he is higher than heaven, what can we do? And deeper than hell, what can we know?' Job xi. therefore we must approach unto him through a vail, even the vail of Christ's flesh, Heb. x. 'God is a consuming fire, and of purer eyes than he can behold iniquity;' and therefore we must first cast our eyes upon that blessed Days-man, that laid his hand upon us both; and look upon God as in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and so draw near unto him through a Mediator, 'who is the First and the Last, and he that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he 'liveth for ever to make intercession for them.' *Secondly*, Faith closeth with Christ, as tendered freely in a covenant of promise. We would have had nothing to do with Christ, if he had not been given of the Father, and offered himself in a free covenant of promise; but he being thus holden forth upon terms of free love (which he doth utterly abominate hire) and so noble a proclamation issued forth under the great seal of heaven, 'that whosoever will, may come and drink of the water of life freely.' Upon this the poor creature draweth near by virtue of a right, and stretching out the arm of most enlarged affections, doth run upon him with that joyful shout, 'My Lord, my God;' and then maketh an absolute resignation of itself to him; which is holden out in the scripture by that sweet expression 'of kissing the Son.' And there are three parts of Christ's blessed body, that the Christian must endeavour to kiss and embrace, the mouth of Christ, the hand of Christ, the feet of Christ; the kissing of his feet importeth the exercise of love; the kissing of his hands, the exercise of subjection; and the kissing of his mouth, the exercise of communion and fellowship with him. *Thirdly*, Faith closeth with Christ as the purchaser and meritorious cause of all the good we receive; he is the person that hath purchased all these things unto us, and there is not one blink of love, there is not the smallest enjoyment that a Christian meeteth with, but it is the price of the blood of Christ: Christ's precious blood was laid down for it. *Fourthly*, Faith closeth with Christ as the efficient and worker of all our mercies; all our enjoyments are from him as the efficient cause; that is, he is the

worker of all these things in us; it is his precious fingers that must accomplish that blessed work of grace, and they are from Christ as the dispenser of these things; Christ is the great steward in heaven, that doth communicate unto believers all the treasures of the higher house: for him hath God the Father sealed. O! but that word which Christ once spake, is much verified by himself, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Christ is that fountain and treasure in whom all our gifts and graces are treasured up: for before the blessing come to believers, they come to Christ as the head; according to that word, 2 Tim. i. 9. 'Which grace was given to us in him, before the foundations of the world were laid.' It was given to Christ before the world was made, and for that end, that it might be communicated unto all his members, and so out of his fulness we all receive and grace for grace.

But, *Secondly*, The text holdeth forth more particularly this excellent object of faith, to be the name of his Son, 'that ye believe in the name of his Son.' And there indeed we may be at a stand. It is long since Agur did nonplus all the world with that question, 'what is his name, or what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?' O how little a thing can be known of him! and O how brutish is this generation! that knoweth not so much loss, that might be known of him in such a day of the gospel, but that we may speak a little, according to our weak measure of faith, as closing with the name of Christ, his name is his glorious attributes, by which he revealeth so much of himself in scripture, as poor mortals can take up. We did show you before, that there was three of these that were main pillars of justifying faith, faithfulness, omnipotency, and his infinite love and mercy. And now from these may be answered all the objections of sense, of carnal reason, and of misbelief, arising from convictions of unworthiness. And certain it is, that faith, in all its conflicts, maketh use of the names of Christ. And there is not an objection that a poor tempted soul can make, but faith can make an answer to it, out of some of the excellent names of God, or of his Son Christ. It would be a more longsome work than I intend to let you see this in all; but I shall only instance that in one glorious name of God, by which he proclaimeth his glory, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7. 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, &c.' I think there are seven ordinary objections which may be answered from that place. *First*, It is an ordinary objection which misbelievers do make, that they are under the strength of their corruption, that they

are black as the tents of Kedar, and not beautiful as the curtains of Solomon; and doth not the first letter of that name answer this, 'That he is a merciful Lord?' The one importing his ability to save, and to bring down every high imagination: The other importing his infinite delight to help those who have no strength, and are under the power of their adversaries, the power of God being of no larger extent than his love. There is that *Second* objection of misbelief, that we have nothing to commend us to Christ; but all we have to boast of, are infirmities and imperfections; and this is abundantly answered from that second letter of his name, 'that he is gracious,' which importeth the freedom of the dispensations of his love, that he walketh not with us according to that rule of merit, but according to that golden and excellent rule of love. It is a great dispute, whether mercy or grace be the greatest wonder, whether the love of Christ or the freedom of it, be the greatest mystery. Sure both these put together make up a matchless wonder. *Thirdly*, Misbelief will object, that we have forsaken him days without number, and that we cannot trace back our apostacy unto the first day of its rise; and is not that abundantly answered from that letter of his name, 'that he is long-suffering?' This being that glorious attribute in God, the glory of which he desireth to magnify above all his names. *Fourthly*, Misbelief doth ordinarily propose this objection, that we have multiplied our transgressions, and have committed whoredom under every green tree; and have given gifts to our lovers, even hiring our idols; so that we may take up that lamentation, is not our sin great, and our transgressions infinite? And is not this an answer from that letter of his name, 'that he is abundant in goodness?' That though sin abound in us, yet grace doth much more superabound in him. We confess, indeed, that there are some who may walk under that condition, that if they had no other exercise throughout eternity, but to make confession, they might confess, and never make any needless repetition; and truly, in some respect, it is a mercy that we are mysteries unto ourselves; for if we did know completely the seven abominations of our hearts, and those mysterious actings of the body of death, we would be in hazard to choose strangling and death rather than life; yet may not one glimpse of that abundant goodness satisfy us, and calm the storm? *Fifthly*, Saith misbelief, We know that we have broken our vows and covenants with God, and that all these things that we have taken on, have been but as flax before the fire of temptation, so that we have no hope that he will have mercy upon those that have broken wedlock, and have not been stedfast in his covenant; but is not that abundantly answered from that letter of his name,

‘that he is abundant in truth?’ which speaketh thus, That though we deny ourselves, yet he abideth faithful, and doth not alter the words that hath gone out of his mouth. It is the infinite blessedness of men, that though they be changeable, yet they have to do with one that is an unchangeable being. *Sixthly*, There is that objection, That notwithstanding all these things are matters of encouragement to some, yet they know not whether or not the lot of everlasting love have fallen upon them, and whether their names be in the ancient records of heaven. But this is answered from that letter of his name, ‘He keepeth mercy for thousands;’ which sheweth us that great number of those upon whom the lot of everlasting love shall fall; and if there were no other sentence in all the scripture, this might be a sufficient matter of a song, and might make us cry out, ‘Who is like unto him, whose compassions have no end? and who desires to magnify his mercy above all his works.’ And, *Lastly*, Misbelief maketh this objection, they have sinned not only against light, not only against vows, not only after much enjoyment of God, but even after the application of the threatening; so that they conceive ‘that their Maker will not have mercy upon such.’ Yet this is fully answered likewise from that letter of his name, ‘he forgiveth iniquity, transgression and sin;’ which three words do abundantly speak forth, that there is no transgression which he will not pardon; there being but one particular amongst all that innumerable number of sins which lodgeth in the heart of fallen men, that he declareth unpardonable; and there is none of our diseases that is above the infinite art of love, and concerning which we can take up that complaint, ‘there is no balm in Gilead, and there is no physician there.’ And though providence may muster up many impossibilities, yet let faith take the promise in one hand, and impossibilities in the other, and desire God to reconcile them, that if we cannot see any connection between providence and the word, yet may we reflect upon the omnipotency of God, that can make things that are seeming contrary, sweetly agree together; the commentary will never destroy the text, nor will providence ever destroy the faithfulness of God. And let me give you this advice, that those objections of misbelief which you cannot answer, and in a manner putteth you to a nonplus, and when ye have looked over all the names of God, ye cannot find an answer to them, slight them, and overcome them, as we have often told you was the practice of believing Abraham, Rom. iv. 19, where that strong objection of misbelief appearing before his eyes, ‘the deadness of his body, and the barrenness of Sarah’s womb, it is recorded of him, ‘he considered not these things,’ as it were, he had a divine tran-

sition from the objections of misbelief to the actings of faith: and this is clear from Matthew xv. 25, 26. where that strong objection of misbelief being proposed against that woman, that she was not within the compass of Christ's commission, she hath a noble way of answering with this, 'Lord, have mercy upon me.' And, if so we may speak, faith, a kind of divine impertinency in answering the objections of misbelief, or rather a holy slighting of them that gaineth the victory, when cavilling with temptations, will not do it: the like also may be instanced in his Son's name; "O how glorious titles are given to that Prince of the kings of the earth, and to that Plant of renown, upon which the weakest faith may cast anchor, and ride out the greatest storm;" I shall not detain you long on this subject, but this we would have you know, that there is no strait or difficulty that a Christian can be exposed unto, but there is some name or attribute of Christ that may sweetly answer that difficulty, and make up that disadvantage. If a Christian be exposed unto afflictions and troubles in a present world, let him comfort himself in this, 'That Christ is the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' Is a Christian under inward anxiety and vexation of mind? let him comfort himself in this, 'That Christ is the God of peace, and of all consolation.' Is a Christian under darkness and confusion of spirit? Let him comfort himself in this, 'that Christ is the Father of light, and the eternal Wisdom of God.' Is a Christian under the conviction of this, that he is under the power and dominion of his lusts? Let him comfort himself in this, 'that Christ is redemption;' yea, that I stay no longer, if it were possible that a Christian could have a necessity that he could not find a name in Christ to answer it, he may lawfully frame a name to Christ out of any promise in all the book of God, and he should find it forthcoming for the relieving and making up of that necessity, God will not disappoint his expectation.

There is yet one thing further, in reference to the object of faith, which we shall desire you to take notice of; and it is the way of faith's closing with its noble object, and its resting on him: and this we conceive may be excellently taken up, by our considering of the many several names that faith getteth in scripture, beyond any other of the graces of the Spirit. It is called looking, Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me.' It is called, abiding in Christ, John xv. 4. 'Abide in me.' It is called, a keeping silence unto God, Psalm iii. 7. 'My soul, trust in God:' or as the word is in the original, 'My soul, be silent unto God;' and that in Psalm lxii. 1. 'My soul waiteth:' or as the word is, 'Truly my soul is silent unto God.' Likewise, faith is called a leaning, Psalm vii. 15. 'I have leaned upon thee from my mother's womb.' Faith is called

an 'eating of Christ's flesh, John vi. 53. Faith is called a casting of our burden upon God, Psalm lv. 22. 'Cast your burden upon God:' and faith is called 'a coming unto God,' Matth. xi. 28. And according to these different names, there are seven noble properties, and matchless differences of this grace of faith: The *First* is, That this is the grace by which a Christian doth enjoy much communion with God: hence it is called 'a looking:' which importeth, that faith is a continual contemplation of the immortal soul upon that precious and excellent object, Jesus Christ. There is that *Second* property of faith; That it is that grace by which communion with God is maintained: hence it is called 'an abiding in God. It is that grace that maketh Christ and the believer to dwell together. The *Third* property of faith is, That it is a submissive grace; hence it is called, 'a keeping silence unto God;' faith, as it were, knoweth not what it is to repine; it is the noble excellency of faith, it never knew what it was to misconstrue Christ; it is the noble excellency of faith, it never knew what it was to pass an evil report upon Christ. Faith will promise good things to a Christian in the darkest night, for when love asketh faith that question, Isa. xxi. 11, 12. 'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? Or, when shall the morning break?' Faith answereth it with these words (only a little inverting the order) "The night cometh, and also "the morning, the morning is approaching, that admitteth of no following night." There is that *Fourth* property of faith, It is the grace that keepeth a Christian in perseverance, by its building upon the rock. Hence it is called 'a leaning upon God: for a Christian by faith doth perpetually join himself to Christ, so that whatever trouble he be cast into by faith, he cometh out of that wilderness, leaning upon his beloved, and by faith he is led up to the rock that is higher than he, where he may sit in safety, and even laugh at death and destruction when assailing him. There is the *Fifth* property of faith, that it is the grace that bringeth satisfaction unto the spiritual senses of a Christian, by a close particular application of Christ as the nourishment of the soul. Hence it is called 'an eating of the flesh of Christ.' There are three senses that faith satisfieth: faith satisfieth the sense of sight, it satisfieth the sense of taste, and it satisfieth the sense of touch; faith will make a Christian handle that eternal word of life: faith will make a Christian see that noble Plant of renown; and faith will make a Christian taste and see how gracious the Lord is. And, no doubt, those that have once satisfied their sight, they will be longing to satisfy their taste. There is that *Sixth* property of faith, It is that grace which giveth rest unto a Christian: hence it is called, 'A casting of our

burden upon him.' It is, as it were, the soul giving unto Christ that unsupportable yoke of our iniquities, and taking from Christ that easy and portable yoke of his commandments. And Seventhly, There is that last property of faith. It is that grace by which sanctification is promoted: hence it is called 'a coming to Christ;' it is the soul in a divine motion and travelling from the land of Egypt unto the land of Canaan: faith is the soul in a pleasant motion from the land of the north, the land of our captivity, unto the land of perfect liberty, all along going out by "the footsteps of the flock, and walking in that new and living way, even in him, "who is the way, the truth, and the life."

And now for a more full application of this, we shall speak but to two things further, 1. We would have it considered, that there are some that come unto the covenant of promise with less difficulty, and after a more divine and evangelic way; and there are some that close with Christ in a more difficult and legal way; there are some that before they can come to mount Sion, they must dwell forty days at mount Sinai. There are some, before the decree of heaven shall be given to them, they must roar as an ox, and cover themselves with sackcloth, having ashes upon their heads. We must be a Benoni before we be a Benjamin; that is, we must be a son of sorrow, before we can be a son of consolation. But this is certain, that Christ leadeth sometimes some to himself through a valley of roses; and I would only have you taking notice of these two, which, though we conceive they be not infallible in the rule, yet oftentimes experience maketh them out to be truth: that there are three sorts of persons who are most ordinarily brought under great terrors ere they close with Christ. First, Those who have committed some gross and abominable sin that is most contradicting unto the light of nature. Secondly, That person that sinneth much against light, before conversion. Hence it is observed in all the books of the gospel, and in the book of the Acts, there was more gospel and love in the way of converting the Gentiles, than was of converting the Jews, see Acts ii. 27. There is a sharp law exercised among them who had crucified the Lord of life: and Acts ix. Paul, who had been a grievous persecutor at his conversion, is first stricken dead to the ground before he be made a captive to the love of Christ, and constrained to cry out, 'What wilt thou have me to do? But look to Acts viii. and there you will find a more fair and smooth way of begetting sons to Christ. And Thirdly, That person, who is much in conceit of his own righteousness, he useth to be brought to Christ through much terror and exercise of the law: that is clear in Paul, his condition also Phil. iii. and Acts ix. compared, certainly whosoever thinketh to come

that length in self-abasement, and will count as the apostle doth in that chapter, must dwell many days at mount Sinai, and learn his arithmetic there. 2. We would have you taking notice of this, that though the person that is brought to Christ in a more smooth and evangelic way, may have the pre-eminency of the person that is brought to Christ after a more legal and terrible way in some things; yet we conceive that a Christian that is brought to Christ through much of the exercise of the law, and through many of the thunderings of mount Sinai, after he hath won to see his right of Christ, he is much constant in the exercise of faith; and the reason of it is, because that an ordinary ground of misbelief is our not distinct uptaking either of the time of our conversion, which is oftentimes hid from those persons that are converted in a more evangelic way, as likewise this, that those persons that are brought to Christ in a more gospel chariot, are sometimes put to debate, whether ever they were under the exercise of the law, and this maketh them often (as it were) to raze the foundation, and to cry forth, 'My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord'. And now to shut up our discourse, we shall add this one word of exhortation, that ye would carefully lay hold of that noble object, and exercise your faith upon him; and I shall say but this, that all those that have this noble grace of faith, and that are heirs of that everlasting inheritance, there is a fourfold crown prepared for you. There is a crown of life that is prepared for him that shall fight that good fight of faith; but what may you say is a crown of life, except we have joy waiting upon that life? For what is life without joy, but a bitterness and a burden to itself? Therefore ye shall have a crown of joy; but what were a crown of life, and a crown of joy, except we had the grace of holiness, and were complete in that? Therefore ye shall have also a crown of righteousness. But what were life, joy, and righteousness, without glory? Therefore ye shall have likewise a crown of glory: but what of all these, if that crown should once fall from our head, and we should be deprived of our kingdom? Therefore take this to make up all the rest, it is an eternal crown of glory. That word in Prov. xxvii. near to the close, the crown, saith Solomon, doth not endure for ever: but this precious crown that the hands of Christ fixeth upon the head of an overcoming Christian, this is the motto that is engraven upon it, *Unchangeable and eternal, eternal and unchangeable*. And O what a day suppose ye shall that be, when that precious crown shall be put upon our heads? What think ye will be the difference betwixt Christ and the believers in heaven? They shall have these four crowns, which are indeed one; but Christ shall have upon his head many crowns,

according to that word, Rev. xix. 12. But let me say one word also to you who are strangers from God, and are destitute of the grace of Christ, and will not by faith close with this excellent object. There is a fourfold crown that once shall be put upon your heads; but do not misinterpret the vision: there is a difference betwixt the butler and baker; ye may prophesy good things to yourselves, but there is a crown of death which ye shall once have put upon your heads; ye shall be always dying, and yet never able to die: there is a crown of sorrow that ye shall have put upon your heads, when ye shall eternally sigh forth that lamentation, O to be annihilate and reduced into nothing! when the reduction of you into nothing would be a heaven, when ye shall be tormented in those everlasting flames. And I would say this by the way, ye will be all miserable and comfortless one to another, there shall be no ground of consolation that ye shall reap, for the community of your sorrow shall increase the degrees of that sorrow; and there is another crown also that ye shall put on, and that is a crown of sin, instead of that crown of righteousness. Would ye know your exercise, O ye that are predestinate unto these everlasting pains? Would you know your exercise? It is this, ye shall eternally blaspheme and curse the God that made you. I am persuaded of this, that the terrors of hell will afflict you more, and doth, than that of the sinning perpetually in hell; ye would think nothing, many of you, to be in hell, if there were no pain there; for the exercise of sin will be your delight and life; but be persuaded of it, that when your conscience is awakened, the exercise of sinning shall exceedingly aggravate your pain. And there is this crown, *Lastly* that ye shall put on, and that is the crown of shame. The prophet Isaiah maketh mention of a crown of pride, but ye that have put on that crown of everlasting confusion and shame, when ye shall not be able to lift up your eyes to him, whom ye have pierced, I would fain desire you to know what will be your exercise at these three days? What will be your exercise when death shall be summoning you to remove, and ye shall first be entered heirs to these everlasting pains? I am persuaded ye will reflect much. Will ye not reflect upon many sermons that ye have heard, wherein ye have been invited to partake of the sweet offers of salvation? I remember of one, that upon his death-bed cried out, 'A world for time, a world for an inch of time,' one that perhaps did hold his head high, and no doubt was greater than the greatest here. His crown could not purchase an inch of time, but dying with this, 'Call time again, call time again;' that petition was denied; and so shall it be, I fear, to the most part that are here. I think it was a pretty hieroglyphic of the Egyptians, they painted time

with three heads; the first head that pointed out time that was past, was a greedy wolf gaping; which importeth this, that our time past was mispent, and there was nothing left, but like a wolf to gape for it again: and there was that second head of a roaring lion round: which importeth the time present, and for this end was so painted that people might layhold upon their present opportunities, otherwise it would be the matter of their ruin, and of their eternal undoing. And there was that last head, which was a deceitful dog fanning; which signifies that the people may deceive themselves with the time to come, thinking they will be religious at their death, and that they will overcome at death; but this is a flattery no better than the fanning of a mad dog. I think we may learn much of this, even to be provoked to lay hold upon our golden opportunities, that we sell not our time, but that we buy it. There are two things that a Christian must not sell, that is, sell not the truth, but buy it, and sell not your time, but buy it. I am persuaded of this, that one moment of time is worth ten thousand worlds, if improved; and I would ask you what advantage shall ye have of all things that ye have tormented yourselves about when time shall be no more? I suppose indeed this is an ordinary evil amongst the people of this age, of which we have our own share and portion; there are many that envy godliness, and the godly, 'the excellent ones that are in the earth,' that think it pleasure to vent their malice against such: I know that ordinary practice; it is older by a thousand years than themselves, that they persecute godliness under the name of hypocrisy; they call godliness hypocrisy, and upon that account they begin and speak maliciously against it. I would only ask you this question, what will you say in that day when Christ will ask that question at you, that Gideon asked at Zeba and Zalmunna, Who are these that ye killed with your tongue? Must it not be answered, 'Every one resembled the person of a king?' O will ye not believe? Will ye not close with Christ? I know it is ordinary that we run upon these two extremes. Sometimes we do not believe the threatenings of the law, and sometimes we will not believe the promises of the gospel. But I would only desire to know, what if it had been so ordered in the infinite wisdom of God, that all the letters of this book should have been threatenings? what should have been our lot, if all the promises should have been scraped out of it? But certainly this must be your lot, all the promises of the book of the covenant shall be taken from you, and all the curses thereof shall be a flying roll that shall enter within your houses, and shall eternally there remain. Know this, O ye that are enemies to Christ, know it, and think upon it, 'every battle of the warrior is with confused noise,

and with garments rolled in blood:' but that war which Christ shall have against the hypocrites in Zion, and those that are ignorant of him, and will not close with him, it shall be with fuel of fire and eternal indignation. O what will be your thoughts, suppose you, when Christ shall come with that two-edged sword of the fury of the Lord to enter to fight with you? It is no delightful exercise: O that ye were not almost but altogether persuaded to be Christians, and that once Christ may conquer you with that two-edged sword that proceedeth out of his mouth, that so you might subject yourselves to him, and make him the object of your faith. Now to him that hath engraven upon his 'vesture, and on his thigh, that he is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,' we desire to give praise.

TWO

SERMONS

CONCERNING THE

GREAT SALVATION.

SERMON I.

HEB. ii. 3. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*

THIS everlasting gospel which is preached unto you. is that glorious star, which must lead us to the place where blessed Christ doth lie. This gospel and glad tidings of this great salvation is come near unto you; and Christ is standing at the everlasting doors of your hearts, desiring that ye would open unto him. There is that one great request which heaven this day hath to present unto you, and it is, 'That ye would at last embrace this great salvation freely offered by him.' It is the thing for which ye are called to mourn this day, that since the beginning of your own days, ye have stopped your ears from that sweet and chanting voice of this blessed charmer, 'Ye would never dance to Christ when he piped, neither would ye weep to him when he lamented'

But to come to the words, which we have read to you, the