

A  
SERMON

CONCERNING THE

Usefulness of FAITH in advancing SANCTIFICATION.

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Acts xxvi. 18. *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.*

WHEN we began our discourse upon the precious and excellent grace of faith, we told you, that we intended to speak of it under a twofold notion and consideration. *First*, As it layeth hold upon Christ for justification; and of this we have spoken to you at some length, as ye have heard. *Secondly*, As it closeth with Christ for sanctification; and of this we are now to speak, which is a part of that excellent oration and discourse that Paul had before Agrippa in his own defence: in which oration and discourse of his ye may behold these four things eminently shining. 1. That godliness and good manners are not inconsistent, nor contrary to each other; therefore ye will see in the second and third verses of this chapter, Paul acting the part of a courtly orator; and believe it, there is more good manners to be learned by being seven days in the school of Christ, than by being seven years in the courts of France. This 2. That innocent policy he made use of in the deliverance of this oration, which likewise appeareth in the second and third verses of this chapter, where he endeavours to insinuate and ingratiate himself into the favour of the person before whom he stood. I confess piety is the best policy, that is taken up in entertaining piety. Howbeit, true policy may move in one orb and sphere with piety, and the one is not contrary to the other in some case. 3. This shineth in that discourse, even the spiritual boldness Paul had, in giving an excellent confession of his faith, and declaring him to be God, even Jesus Christ, in whom he did believe: Christ witnessed a glorious confession before Pontius Pilate for him, and he would witness a glorious confession before Agrippa for Christ; that since Christ had not denied him in that notable day, he would not now deny precious Christ in this day, and this is from the beginning and all alongst. *Lastly*, This shineth in the words that Paul doth set forth, the matchless freedom and unspeakable riches of Christ, not only toward

himself, in that he did cast the lot of everlasting love toward him, but likewise towards the Gentiles, to whom he was sent as a preacher, and that he did gloriously condescend to visit the dark places of the earth, and to have 'the morning and the day spring from on high,' arising on the habitations of cruelty. In the verse which we have read, you may behold these five glorious ends of the preaching of the gospel, for the attaining of which, ministers are made instruments under God. The *first* is, 'To open the eyes of the blind,' which in short is this, to give those who are ignorant of God, the spiritual knowledge of the deep mysteries of the Father, and of the Son; so that from this ye may see, that the gospel hath a kind of omnipotency in producing effects above the power of nature.

The *second* we may see in these words, 'to remove them from darkness to light.' Which importeth these two; 1. The removing of persons from an estate of misery, into an estate of consummate joy. 2. The removing of persons from an estate of iniquity into an estate of holiness. Darkness, in scripture, pointeth out sin, and light in scripture pointeth out holiness. *Thirdly*, The bringing us 'from under the power of Satan unto God,' making a blessed exchange of captivity and bondage, that those who were under the captivity of Satan, may be under the captivity of love: that those who were under the bondage of sin, may be brought under the obedience of Christ, 'whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light,' Matth. ix. 30. *Fourthly*, That persons may receive 'the remission of sin, and the forgiveness of their iniquity.' This is the great voice of the gospel, come to a crucified Christ, come to a pardoning Christ, come to a glorified Christ, who hath the pardon of iniquity in one hand, and the riches of himself in the other. And these are the great motives by which he studieth to persuade us to come. And the *last* is in the close of the verse, 'that persons may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me;' that is, that they have a share of that glorious mansion, of that excellent kingdom which Christ hath purchased, and hath gone before to prepare. And withal, in this verse, ye may see the beautiful and orderly method that the gospel keepeth in conquering souls, and you may see the excellent allurements, and the persuasive arguments that Christ holdeth forth to conquer you. Christ, as it were, cometh to us not clothed with the robes of majesty, but clothed with the robes of love and advantage, knowing that in this posture he shall most gain our hearts.

Now, in speaking unto that last end of the preaching of the gospel, we shall only, according to our present purpose, take no-

tice of this one thing from it (not intending to persecute it as an end of the gospel, but as a property of faith), and it is, that faith in Jesus Christ hath a noble influence upon the growth of sanctification, and the attaining of holiness, 'They are sanctified (saith he) through faith in me.' We shall not stand long to clear this unto you, it is evident from Acts xv. 9. where the apostle telleth us of 'purifying our hearts by faith;' and likewise, 1 Tim. i. 5. where a pure heart, and faith unfeigned,' are joined and linked together. As likewise, 1 John iii. 3. 'Every man that hath his hope in him, he purifieth himself.' All the graces of the gospel are linked together by a golden and unseparable chain; so that he who obtaineth one, obtaineth all: yea, more, all the graces of the gospel have a mutual influence upon one another's growth; so that we may compare them unto Hippocrates's twins, of whom it was reported, 'They did laugh and weep together, and they did grow together;' even so, when one grace doth rejoice, the rest rejoiceth with it; and when one grace doth mourn, the rest also mourneth with it; and when one grace doth grow, the other graces of the Spirit likewise groweth apace.

There are only three particulars that we shall insist a little upon; *first*, We shall shew you how faith hath influence upon the attaining of sanctification; and this we shall make clear unto you in these respects.

1. In that it discovereth to the soul that matchless excellency, that transcendent beauty, and that surpassing comeliness which is in Christ; which sight doth exceedingly persuade the soul to draw this conclusion, 'what have I to do any more with idols?' A glorious sight of Christ, and acquaintance with him, maketh us lose our acquaintance with our idols; and when once we are united unto Christ by faith, we break the union we had with them. And, indeed, the want of the knowledge of the excellent comeliness that is in Christ, and of love to him, is the great cause why the poorest deities and idols in the world taketh up your hearts; did ye but once see him who is the glorious Sun of righteousness, ye would be forced to put in your *amen* unto that excellent confession of faith, Eccles. i. 2. 'Vanity of vanities, and all is but vanity and vexation of spirit.'

2. In that it is the grace which discovers unto a Christian the spotless holiness of Christ. Faith doth not only discover the beauty of Christ, but likewise his holiness, and this maketh a soul fall in love with that excellent thing sanctification. It is recorded amongst the first steps to sin and misery, that we desire 'to be as God, knowing good and evil; but certainly it is amongst the first steps to life and happiness, when the soul desireth 'to be

holy, as he is holy.' And I suppose this is the great ground that ye are not much endeavouring a blessed conformity to God, and to be partakers of the blessed image of Christ, ye know not the beauty of holiness.

3. Faith layeth hold upon Jesus Christ, and draweth strength and virtue from him, for the conquering of lusts, and in raising us up into a blessed conformity unto himself. When the Christian is weak, faith is that noble correspondent between the emptiness that is in us, and the fulness that is in Christ. Faith is that noble correspondent between the weakness that is in us, and the everlasting strength that is in him; therefore, there are two noble and excellent counsels of faith, *first*, It counsels us, not to lean to our own strength. And *secondly*, To have our recourse unto him whose name is Jehovah, that everlasting strength. And, no doubt, if we were more taken up in employing Christ by faith, that prophesy should be accomplished, 'I will make the feeble ones as David, and David as the angels of God.' And when a Christian is most diffident in himself, then God should prove himself to be Almighty, and All-sufficient.

And 4. Faith's influence may be cleared in this, that it layeth hold upon the promises, and doth believe them; and believing the promises bringeth forth that noble birth, 'conformity to God;' according to that word upon which we were speaking, 2 Pet. i. 4. By believing the promises, this is the advantage of it, 'we are by them made partakers of the divine nature.'

Faith also believeth the threatenings that are past in scripture against sin, and the believing them hath a strong and undoubted influence upon the attaining and growth of sanctification. Faith strengtheneth the Christian against the committing of iniquity, with these two words, Rom. vi. 29. 'O soul (saith faith), commit not iniquity, for the wages of sin is death.' And that word, Rev. xxi. ult. 'There shall in no wise enter into that city any thing that is unclean, or that committeth iniquity.' And be persuaded of it, that the faith of the threatenings, and of the promises that are in scripture, would be as a threefold cord, not easily broken to restrain you from the acting of iniquity.' And shall I tell you briefly, the ground why these cursed hearts of ours do commit iniquity with so little fear, and with so much delight? It is even this, because we believe not the threatenings of God, which shall be accomplished in their own season; for it is impossible, if ye believe that word, Rev. xxi. ult. 'That nothing shall enter into the new Jerusalem that defileth, or worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie;' that ye durst for a world adventure upon the committing of iniquity as ye do? And I shall only say to such that do undervalue the threatenings of God

the day is coming when they shall be constrained to cry out, he hath spoken it, and hath done it, and faithful is he. There is not one jot nor tittle in the word of the Lord that shall fall to the ground. And believe it, God will be faithful in the accomplishment of his threatenings, as he is faithful in the accomplishment of his promises.

6 Faith discovereth unto a Christian the noble excellencies, and those spiritual dignities that are in that everlasting estate that is provided for the saints in light. Faith, as it were, carrieth the soul to the top of Pisgah, from which it is permitted to behold the promised land. And truly, the seeing of those noble things that are provided for the saints, cannot but make them study holiness, since they know that it is impossible to attain to that estate without holiness, because he hath said, 'without holiness no man shall see God.' O then! if once ye saw heaven, ye would be constrained to walk in the path of sanctification, since it is the glorious way by which ye must walk in through the gates of that blessed city; but ye know not the happiness that is there, it is a fancy and notion unto you; and the reason is, because ye do not study to conform yourselves unto the blessed image of God. And I would only ask you this one question, is it possible, that such delusion as this can overtake you, as to think, that you, who never studied holiness on earth, shall enter into heaven's gates? I know that there are some who say in their hearts, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart.' And many suppose, that they might fight and overcome, that they may quit the estate of nature, and be complete in the estate of grace, all in one day; but why will you deceive yourselves, 'Can a nation be born in one day?' Or, is there but one step between hell and heaven? O remember, though nothing be impossible with God, yet there was but one thief saved upon the cross.

7. Faith hath influence upon the attaining of holiness in this respect, that it believeth the exceeding great advantages that are promised unto the person who studieth holiness. Faith believeth that word, Matth. v. 8. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Faith layeth hold upon the truth of these excellent sayings, and maketh the Christian endeavour to attain unto a likeness and conformity with him, so that he may be admitted to behold his face through all eternity, and made like unto him.

8. Faith discovereth unto a Christian the sinfulness of sin. This is never done till once they be in the lively exercise of the grace of faith. And I will give you these three grounds why faith completely discovereth the sinfulness of sin.

1. Faith letteth us see the person against whom we commit this sin, and that doth exceedingly aggravate sin; for when the Christian is admitted to behold God, and to see the matchless excellency that is in him, then he saith, what a beast was I, to offend such a glorious majesty as he is? what a fool was I, to kick against the pricks, or to enter into the lists with such an infinite God.

2. Faith letteth a Christian see the great obligations of love that Christ hath imposed upon us; faith letteth us see the ancient and everlasting love of Christ; faith is the grace that letteth us see his sufferings; faith letteth us see all that he hath done for us; and this maketh the Christian to cry out, do I thus requit the Lord, O foolish one, and unwise? And, no doubt, if a Christian were more taken up in the study of his duty, he would be less in contracting debt; and were you but seriously taken up in the study of these two great registers; 1. The register in which all the infinite acts of love are recorded; and, 2. The register in which all our acts of offending precious Christ are written, ye would be astonished and ashamed to see so much forgiven you, and durst not sin any more. There ye would see infinite mercy desiring to rejoice over judgment; and there ye would see the spotless riches of the transcendent grace that is in Christ.

3. Faith letteth a Christian see the disadvantages of sin, and what woful effects doth follow upon it; and this showeth the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The *Second* thing that we shall speak to concerning faith's influence in the attaining of sanctification, shall be to inquire a little into those things that hinder even believers from attaining this blessed effect of their faith; for some Christians there are, that in some respects are taken up in the exercise of faith, making use of Christ for sanctification, and yet their making use of Christ by faith doth not weaken the strength of their idols, (at least to their apprehensions) neither doth raise them up to a conformity with God; so that they are constrained sometimes to cry out, 'I shall once fall by the hand of one of mine iniquities;' and when they fight and do not overcome, they are at last constrained to say, 'there is no hope.'

The *First* ground of such a dispensation is, that a Christian is not constant in his actings of faith; he will be strong in faith to day, and when the morrow cometh, he will faint in the exercise, that doth exceedingly interrupt that noble victory of faith; for when faith hath gotten its advantages, they lose them through security and negligence; this is a command that should be continually obeyed, 'trust in the Lord at all times.' And, no doubt,

if a Christian was more taken up in the constant acting of faith, he should sometimes sing you that song, 'I trusted in God, and I was helped.'

*Secondly*, The most part of Christians are not strong and vigorous in the actings of their faith; their faith is exceeding weak, and so they cannot bring forth these noble fruits and effects of faith. If we were trusting in God with all our hearts, then that promise, Psalm xxxvii. 5. should be accomplished unto us, 'Trust in the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass.' *Thirdly*, There is a strong heart-conjunction and soul-union between us and our idols. We are joined to our idols, and therefore we cannot be easily divorced: yea, when we are in the heat of the war against them, there is a procurator within that crieth, O spare this little one; or, this profitable; or, pleasant one: and this is ordinarily our practice, to spare the choicest of our idols; so that our Agags may cry out, the bitterness of death is past. But I confess, if that union were once dissolved, we should then be heard with the greatest earnestness to cry out, 'O blessed be the Lord, that teacheth my hands to fight.' *Fourthly* Sometimes a Christian layeth too much weight upon the actings of faith, and doth not employ faith, but as an instrument to which Christ must bestow strength to conquer. Sometimes we think that faith hath the virtue of overcoming in its own hand: but remember, faith is but an empty thing without Christ; as you may see, Acts xv. 9. where the 'purifying of their hearts by faith' is ascribed to the Holy Ghost: so that the activity of faith is from him, and not in itself. *Fifthly*, A Christian doth not hate sin with a perfect hatred, even in the time of his warfare with his lusts, and with those strong idols that are within him: but here is a secret heart-inclination to that very idol which he doth oppose; so that oftentimes there is this twofold contradiction in a Christian; sometimes his light will cry, mortify such an idol; and yet his heart will cry out, O spare such an idol! yea, more, sometimes his heart will cry, mortify such an idol; and yet his heart will cry, O spare such an idol! that is to say, there will be one part of our affection crying one thing, and another part of it will cry another thing. O but there is a remarkable command for the perfect hatred of sin, Rom. xi. 'Abhor that which is evil;' the word is in the original, 'Hate evil as ye would do hell;' that is, have perfect hatred to sin; O to hate sin as much as hell; and join that word, Eph. v. 11. 'Reprove the unfruitful works of darkness;' or as the word may be rendered, 'Make out by unanswerable arguments,' to your temptation, that you cannot embrace the 'unfruitful works of darkness; convince your tempta-

tions that ye cannot do it. It was a noble argument of Joseph, when he was tempted, 'how shall I do this?' He put the temptation, as it were, to it; O temptation! give me one ground why I should commit such an iniquity. And certainly if we were thus reasoning with our temptations, they would flee before us; but the truth is, we embrace the desire of our temptation upon implicit faith. It is a sad regret, and yet I shall utter it, O! if men would but deal with God, as they do by Satan, we never dispute the promise of Satan, and never examine the allurements he setteth forth; and yet we constantly dispute with God upon every thing. *Sixthly*. A Christian advanceth not in the growth of sanctification, though in some measure exercising faith, because he hath not such a heart to holiness. If we discovered more the excellent beauty there is in being clothed with that glorious robe of the righteousness of Christ, and in having the sweet draught of the image of Christ engraven upon our hearts, we would have more victory over our lusts. There is a command for *perfect love* to that which is good and holy, Rom. xii. 9. 'Cleave (saith he) to that which is good;' or, as the word may be rendered, 'Be married and glued to that which is good;' let there be an unseparable and indissoluble knot of union between you and that which is good. And certainly if once we believed that report which is given of holiness, we would endeavour more to be clothed with it; but this is the great ground that we advance not in holiness, we know not the advantage nor dignity to be made like God. O will ye think on it? what a thing is it for you, who are the dust of his feet, to be made conform to him? *Seventhly*. A Christian is not much in the exercise of other duties that should go along with faith. Suspect that faith for presumption, that can act, and be maintained without prayer; certainly prayer keepeth in the life of faith; prayer is that grace that must act mutually with faith, in accomplishing the blessed work of sanctification. And if we prayed more, and believed more, then we should have more to speak concerning the victory over our lusts. When was it, O Christian and expectant of heaven! that you was constrained to put up an Ebenezer, and cry out, hitherto hath the Lord helped me? When was it, O Christian and expectant of heaven! that you was made to cry out, 'God hath arisen, and mine enemies are scattered before my face?' I will tell you what is your practice, ye make such a covenant with your idols, as Nahash did with the men of Jabesh-gilead, 1 Sam. xi. 2. Your lusts desire to make you pluck out your right eyes, and there is nothing your lusts will command you, but almost ye will obey: but would you send out prayers as a messenger

to tell the king of such a tyranny, ye should know better what it is to be victorious. There is such a covenant between the graces of the Spirit, especially between faith and prayer, (if so we may allude) as was made between Joab and Abishai, 2 Sam. x. 11. One grace, as it were, saith to another, 'If I be weak, come over and help me; and if ye be weak, I will come and help you.' When one grace is like to fall in battle, then another cometh and helpeth it. When faith is like to die, then prayer and experience cometh in, and sweetly helpeth faith. When love is beginning to die, and wax cold in the fight, then faith cometh in, and putteth life in love. And when patience is like to fail and be overcome, then faith cometh in and speaks this word to patience, 'Wait on God, for I shall yet praise him, for the health of his countenance.' Oftentimes our patience and our senses join together; for when sense speaketh good things, patience is in life; but when sense preacheth hard things, it is like to die, and faith must then maintain and uphold it.

The *third* thing that we shall speak as to faith's influence upon sanctification, shall be to draw these four conclusions from the point.

The *first* is, that ye may know from this the rise and origin of your little success over corruption. There are many who are troubled with this question, O! what is the ground that I get not the victory over my lusts? And they propose the question to Christ, that once the disciples proposed to him, 'Why was it that I could not cast out such a devil?' And I can give no other answer than Christ gave to them, 'it is because ye have not faith. For if ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto your idols, depart from us, and they should obey you; and, if ye had faith, there should not be a mountain in the way between you and heaven, that would not be rolled away, and become plain. And the great ground why many are groaning under the captivity of their idols, is that they are not much in the exercise of faith. Sometimes ye enter the lists with your lusts in your own strength, then ye are carried captives; and if ye do ever enter the lists, having some faith, yet ye maintain not the war if faith get but one stroke.

I will tell you six things, which if faith overcome, it keepeth the field, and maketh the Christian sing a song of triumph, even before a complete victory.

*First*, Faith helpeth a Christian to overcome the idol of impatience and discontent. Some never meet with a discouragement but they cry out, 'this evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?' They are soon put to the end of their impatience, how faith can overcome such an idol. And I will tell you three

excellent things that faith performeth to the soul under impatience, or when it is in hazard of it; 1. Faith telleth the Christian, 'there is an end, and their expectation shall not be cut off.' Faith telleth, 'there is a morning, as well as a night,' and this keepeth the soul from being overcome with discouragement, when they are brought to the mid-night of trouble, faith can tell what hour of the night it is, and how near the approaching of the morning, when day shall break and their clouds fly away 2. Faith helpeth the Christian to see there is much in Christ, to make up any loss or disadvantage that he may meet with. If ye lose your son, or your choicest contentment in the world, faith will say as Elkanah said to Hannah, 1 Sam. i 8. 'Is not Christ better to thee than ten sons?' The choicest contentments ye can lose (that is faith's divinity) Christ is worth an hundred of them, and so this maketh the soul to be ashamed of their impatience; and to give over their fretting at the excellent and wise dispensations of God. 3. Faith letteth a Christian see, that there is not a dispensation that he meeteth with, but hath these two excellent ends; it hath our advantage as one end, and the glory of the Lord as another. And there is not a dispensation that a Christian meeteth with, but these are the glorious ends proposed. And therefore I would only give you this advice, when you meet with a dark dispensation, always let faith interpret it, for it is the best interpreter of dark dispensations; or if ye meet with sense, this is its interpretation, 'he is not chastening in love, but punishing me with the wound of an enemy;' but faith will prophesy good things to you in the darkest night.

The *second* next great idol that faith will bring low is, the idol of covetousness, and desire to the things of the world. I think that word, Eccles. iii. 1. was never so much accomplished as it is in these days, and amongst us, he hath set the world in your hearts; that is, 'the idol that dwelleth and lodgeth within you: yea, the world hath your first thoughts in the morning, and your last thoughts at night; yea more, it hath your thoughts when you are at prayer, and when you are at preaching: yea, it hath such a dominion over you, that it giveth you, as it were, a new Bible, and in all the ten commands scrapeth out the name of God, and setteth down the world. And whereas God saith, 'thou shalt have no other God but Me; the world saith, 'thou shalt have no other God but me,' &c. But faith will bring this idol low, and let you see the vanity and emptiness of it; yea, faith will let you see a more noble object, and, withal, discover unto you how short your time is, and how few hours ye have to spend in following after lies. And I am persuaded of this, that

if ye could win to shake hands with cold death every day, and say, thou at last shall be my promise, and shall be the king to whom I shall be a subject; and if ye believed that the day of eternity was approaching, it would be a mean to mortify these pursuits in the world. And I shall say, he is a blessed Christian, who can maintain always such thoughts of the world, as he shall have when he is standing upon the utmost line, between time and eternity. I shall say it, and believe, O worlding! and thou that hast the moon upon thy head, and in thy heart, that the day shall once come, when thou wilt preach as much of the vanity of the world, as those that undervalued it never so much.

The *third* great idol that faith will bring low, is the idol of self-love, and self-indulgence, which is the great mother of all other idols. I think, if there were no more to be said against the idol of self-love, and self-indulgence, than that which is in 2 Tim. iii. 2. it were sufficient; that among all the great idols of these latter times, this is put in the first place, 'they shall be lovers of themselves.' We cannot take pains for Christ, we cannot go about the exercise of any duty, because the idol of self-indulgence forbiddeth us: I will tell you the counsel and great advice it giveth you, O person, pity thyself! that same counsel Peter gave to his master, it biddeth you pity yourself; but if you could rightly interpret that language, it would be this, destroy yourself: for self-indulgence, and self-love, is that which will ruin you. O what blessed attainments of God! what blessed fruition of Jesus Christ; what advancement in mortification! what conformity to God hath that idol of self-indulgence obstructed, and utterly ruined even in the very best? I think, if once ye could set your foot upon this idol, the rest should fall apace: that is the general of all the forces of your lusts, and it is a Saul, the head higher than all the rest of your idols within you.

The *fourth* idol that faith can subdue, is self-righteousness. This is a great thing we maintain, we will never renounce our own righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of Christ. The great ground of it is, that there is this principle within us all, we love to go to heaven through a covenant of works, and we never desire to be obliged to any other; we cannot submit ourselves to the righteousness of Christ.

The *fifth* great idol that faith can subdue, is that of pleasure, the world, and the attainments of it. Pleasure is the great idol that many worship and adore. There are some who love the gain of the world, and there are others that love the pleasures of the world; but faith hath a noble influence upon the bringing low such an idol; for faith discovereth to a soul more excellent pleasures, more sweet delights, than are to be found under the sun;

faith maketh a Christian lose his taste for all things that are here below; faith is the grace that maketh us grow blind; and not much to behold these passing vanities, these transient delights of a present evil world.

Our *second* conclusion is, that as faith helpeth sanctification, so sanctification helpeth faith. I will tell you three great advantages faith hath by the growth and exercise of sanctification; 1. It is a noble evidence of faith, and maketh a Christian to be persuaded that he is settled upon the rock, and that his interest in God is made sure. Sanctification is that which will help a Christian daily to read his interest in God; this is clear from James ii. 13. 'I will show thee my faith by my works.' Where this is clearly held forth, that a Christian, who is much in the work of sanctification, can upon all times give an extract of his faith, and as it were discover it, and show it to the world. 2. Sanctification maketh faith perfect, according to that remarkable word, James ii. 22. 'And by works was faith made perfect.' There is a noble perfection that redoundeth to faith through the exercise of the work of sanctification; for not only is it thereby made manifest, and receiveth such a shining lustre and splendor, as that sometimes the eyes of carnal men are even dazzled to behold a believer; but it also receiveth strength and power; faith is not of the nature of those things that spend themselves in bringing forth; but, on the contrary, if faith bring forth an hundred children (I mean works of holiness) in one day, it groweth strong; and this is further clear, 2 Pet. i. 8. 'For if these things be in you, and abound, ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.' And from this other word, James ii. where it is said, 'that faith without works is dead, being alone.' If faith be alone, it wants its spiritual life and vigour; but if ye were much in the exercise of the work of sanctification, ye would no doubt attain to a noble and lively acting of the grace of faith. And, *lastly*, if a Christian be much in the work of sanctification, there will be a comfortable exercise of faith. Sometimes faith is exercised with much anxiety, and sometimes with much doubting; but faith and a pure conscience joined together, maketh an excellent feast, and causeth a Christian to rejoice 'with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

*Thirdly*, We may draw this conclusion, if faith have influence upon the work of sanctification, and helpeth the producing of a noble conformity to God; then, I say, there are many whose faith is a delusion, and their hope shall be cut off as a spider's web. There are some who have faith, that have not sanctification, nor knows not what it is. And shall not that faith unquestionably 'perish as a dream, and evanish as the vision of the night?' And, therefore, if ye will testify the reality of your

faith, then study more the work of sanctification. I shall, from Job viii. 14, 15. give you these eight properties of a hypocrite's faith and hope, which may make you try and examine yourself:

1. Their hope and their faith is but an act of folly; yea, there is not such an act of foolishness under heaven, as an hypocrite's hope; because it is but a castle in the air, and as writing to himself a character on the sand: so that word ye have rendered, 'whose hope shall be cut off,' is in the original, 'whose folly shall be cut off.' Showing this, that they build without a foundation, and so their faith must be most unsure and uncertain.
2. The thing they hope for shall at last loath them. O hypocrites! ye hope for enjoyment of Christ; but be persuaded of it, Christ shall eternally loath you, and ye shall eternally loath Christ: that is clear in these same words, 'whose hope shall be cut off;' or, as the words may be read, 'whose hope shall loath them.' The thing he hopeth for shall loath him, and Christ shall say, 'depart, I know you not.'
3. And though ye have now much delight and pleasure in the actings of your presumptuous hope, yet at last ye shall loath that hope. The word will carry, that not only the things ye hoped for shall loath you, but ye likewise shall loath your hope. The day is coming, that ye shall cry out, cursed be the day that ever I believed that I should get heaven.
4. It shall at last be the matter of his vexation; for these words, 'whose hope shall be cut off,' or, as they may be rendered, 'whose hope shall vex him.' O! when the hypocrites shall meet with that anxious, that dreadful disappointment one day, they shall then put their hand on their head, being ashamed because of their confidence.
5. He studieth by all means to keep his hope, though it be but false: therefore have ye that word in the 15th verse, 'He holdeth it fast;' or, as the words are, 'He keepeth it with hand and arm, with all his strength,' he keepeth his hope. So that if Christ would come from heaven, and say, man, thou art an hypocrite, and thy hope shall be cut off; they would say, I will keep my hope, sir, and maintain it; and that is an evidence your hope is not builded upon the foundation. I never love a faith that on this side of time is unchangeable, and never knoweth what it is to have ups or downs.
6. It is built always upon a wrong foundation, which is imported in that word, 'he shall lean upon his house;' which we suppose may be interpreted thus, 'he shall lean upon his worldly enjoyments, or upon these spiritual-like enjoyments he meets with.' The hope of a hypocrite is never built upon Christ, and so unquestionably that hope shall be cut off and vanish.
7. Let hypocrites hold fast their hope with both their arms. I will say these three words unto them: *First*, If all the ministers should preach unto you, and desire you to quit your

hope, and ye will not, yet both your hope and you shall be separate; as it is in that word, 'your hope shall depart from you, and ye shall quit it.' *Secondly*, Your hope will bring you to death, and no further; according to that word, Job xviii. 14. 'whose hope shall bring him to the king of terrors.' Will it bring me no further, say you? O! no, the king of terrors shall separate you and your hope. *Thirdly*, The day is coming, when the foundations of it shall be discovered, and there shall not be a delusion that shall not be unfolded. The day is approaching, when Christ shall ask, how you got your faith, and how you maintained it. 8. The hypocrite's hope is a poor building, it is a spider's web. Which I conceive (without being critic) is this, the hope of hypocrites is spun out of their own bowels, they have it not from Christ, but as ye see a spider spin it out of its own bowels, so they do out of themselves, it is no better stuff than their own rotten righteousness; Christ never begat those unto a lively hope. Let me beseech you, therefore, that by all means ye would study to make sure your interest in God, and to build your faith on him, whose name is that *munitio* of rocks; for believe it, I may say it with much confidence, I know there are many that shall once meet (if God prevent it not) with a dreadful disappointment; and, therefore, as ye would not incur that eternal hazard which is attending those who presumptuously take hold of a hope, before Christ take hold of them, study to search what your hope is. I desire not to raze any foundation of hope that is laid by the hand of Christ, but would desire and charge you to raze the foundation of that hope which you have laid from the beginning by your own hands, 'and he knew it not.' I would press these three things upon you: *First*, O! ye that are strangers to Christ, and who know not what it is to embrace the offers of the everlasting gospel, obey that excellent counsel, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. 'Give Christ your hand;' for that word which ye have rendered, 'Yield yourself unto the Lord,' is in the original, 'Give your hand unto God:' which is, in short, marry him, and be content to contract yourself to him. For believe it, the day is coming, that either that contract between you and Christ shall be certainly confirmed, or that contract between the devil and you shall be eternally ratified. And I suppose there is much spoken to the commendation of that noble Plant of renown, that ye may take Christ (if so we may speak) blindly, ye may close your eyes and take him, for he shall never disappoint your hope: for let you think of him to eternity, he shall always be above your thoughts. *Secondly*, I would earnestly desire you to search and try what was the first rise of your faith in Jesus Christ. I am persuaded, that there are many who take up

their faith at their foot, they never travail in pain, and yet faith is brought forth. Is not this a mystery? Shall it be said, 'before they travailed, they brought forth?' I do not question but there may be lesser and greater pangs of the new birth: but this is most certain, there is always some either lesser troubles or greater, till that child be brought forth: and yet I may condemn those who 'stay too long in the place of the breaking forth of children.' Christ will never refuse you when ye do really come: because ye have not been so many years and days imprisoned to the law. *Thirdly*, Let me desire you to go and ask, is there a grave between you and heaven, in all that way through which the saints have travelled, upon which this is written, "Here lieth a man " who sincerely sought life from Christ, and he denied him?" I think, without encroaching too much upon the searching forth of the exercise of the saints in heaven, I think, we may suppose, there may be in heaven some queries and interrogations. Christ shall ask O beloved! did ye want any thing here below, when ye were sent forth to travel in the world? And ye shall be constrained to answer, no. Christ shall ask this question at you, did I not all things well? And ye shall be constrained to answer, yes. Christ shall propose that question, are ye not well rewarded for all your pains? And ye shall be constrained to answer, yes. O but take him! he is the blessed and most excellent one in heaven and earth: it is the best bargain that ever ye made. O ye merchants, that have made many excellent bargains to your own apprehensions, will ye come and make an excellent bargain, yea, that will make you eternally up? And what is that? Come and buy Christ, and take him for nothing. This is not your ordinary bargaining. There are few who will come to you; and bid you buy excellent things *without money*; but come in the gospel, and ye shall get Christ *without money*. O niggards! that are loath to spend your money in the world, will ye come to Christ, and believe on him, take him freely? O! say ye, if I could get three things of Christ, I would come. *First*, I would have much gold and silver: I say, come to Christ, and ye shall get much gold and silver. Is that true? It is abundantly true: see Job xxii. 22, 25, 26. where pressing that exhortation, 'Acquaint thyself with God;' and using many arguments, he saith, 'thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks: Is not that gold enough? Yea, ye shall have silver likewise, 'thou shalt have plenty of silver.' In the 26th verse ye shall not only have gold and silver, but ye shall have 'plenty of it;' and shall have the most excellent and refined gold. But O! say ye, what, will that promise be literally accomplished to me if I come to Christ? I would only say these three things to thee.

1. Come to Christ, and if gold and silver be for thy advantage, thou shalt have it literally accomplished. 2. I say ye shall have as much contentment in Jesus Christ, as if ye had this house full of gold. 3. I will say this to thee, Christ will be thy gold and silver, according to that word in the 26 verse, which is most remarkable, yea, 'the Almighty shall be thy defence,' or as it is in the original, 'shall be thy gold,' speaking of the promise of gold before. *Secondly*, Ye say, I would have this, that what I propose might be accomplished: I say come to Christ, and ye shall have that likewise, Job xxii. 28. 'Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be accomplished unto thee;' which I conceive doth not only take in these spiritual degrees, but likewise those that relate to temporal enjoyments. But there is a *third* thing I would have, say ye, and I would come to Christ, and that is, that I might have all the desires of my heart. I say, O man! and O woman! come to Christ, and thou shalt have what thou desirest: this is clear from Psalm xxxvii. 4. 'Delight thyself in God, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.' What can ye have, man, but it is there? Would ye have any thing of Christ? He putteth a blank in your hand, and saith that word which is said to Solomon, ask, 'what would ye have, and I shall give you.' Christ, as it were, putteth his name to the foot of a clean sheet of paper, and he desireth you to ask what ye would have: and is not this an excellent bargain? O niggard! what would ye have, which ye will not get in Christ? And be persuaded, that ye who refuse and will not take him, the eternal curse of all that is in heaven will return upon thy head, the eternal curse of all the expectants of heaven, and heirs of life will return upon the head of that person who will not take Christ. And cursed, cursed shall that person be, who will not take Christ, and one day all the congregation in heaven and earth shall say, *Amen*.

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### THREE SERMONS

CONCERNING THE

## FAITH OF ASSURANCE.

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### SERMON I.

2 COR. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

ASSURANCE is a precious gift, which many who live in these days do undervalue, and tread under foot. Do not the Christians of these times go halting between two opinions, be-