

Now, I am come here to-day, to demand your last answer, if you will take Christ. I hope you are content to marry him. Now, what is your answer; are you content, young men and maidens? Old men and women, are you content? Is there none that will subscribe? Oh! shall this contract of marriage be sent back to heaven? Oh! let it not be. And this I press, that you marry Christ, in these five things. *First*, If all the saints of heaven were to give you their advice, they would say, it is good to be married to Christ. 'It is better to marry than to burn,' to marry Christ, than to burn in lust with the world. *Secondly*, Christ is very importunate in it to all within these doors: he is sitting down on his knees, and praying us to be married to himself, and shall we not? But must he steal away our hearts? Oh! will you embrace him, because he is importunate? *Thirdly*, There is this, I am sure we are not far from our long home, and then I pose you, on your consciences, what will you answer to this question? O sinners! why will you not choose me? We shall all get one sight of him, and that shall be in the day of his sentence of wrath. Think then on it, and let the terror of God persuade you. *Fourthly*, Will you consider the courtesy of the King, and let it allure you. O! what a sweet thing shall it be, when he shall say to thee, welcome, O sinner. Come, think on this, and he that waits on his master, shall find him. *Lastly*, There is this, there is a day coming, when there shall not be a word in heaven and earth, but go and come. And will it not be an excellent day, when all shall be crying, come? Christ, the Spirit and the bride, and heaven and earth, crying, come? And there shall be no speech betwixt Christ and the spouse, but, come, come. O that excellent invitation, Song ii. 10. 'Come, my sister, my spouse, my dove, arise, come, when we shall sit down on the throne of our beloved, and shall sing as Moses;' and Jeremy cries out no more now as in Jer. iv. 19. But, on the contrary, what a day shall it be, when it shall be said, 'Depart, depart, I know you not?' How doleful a thing will it be! Well, then, let us embrace him, and be content to be married to him; and the day shall be, when we will sing to him for ever and ever. And unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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### SERMON III.

JOB xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat:*

THESE words hold out the breathings and longing of a soul, after the enjoyment and fruition of God; Job being

as it were, constrained to cry out, 'Oh! When shall I come and appear before God?'

I suppose, that if the question were asked at every one here to-day, 'Whom seek ye?' I doubt much, that if one in twenty could answer it thus, 'It is Jesus of Nazareth whom we seek.' There are many complaints of private and public; but it were a more suitable commendation in these days, to complain of a lost God, and communion with him, that you might be made to cry out, 'O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!' It were a pleasant and most excellent thing, if we could make this report to-day concerning you, that is in Mark i. 37. 'All men seek after thee.' O Christians, and expectants of the crown of heaven! are you not longing for a sight of an absent God, and one that is lost? Strangers to God! are ye not longing to get a sight of him, that is the excellency of the higher house, and makes all the hearts that are there to rejoice? Think you not that Christ is worth the seeking? I suppose that there is a gulph fixed between God and us, 'that we cannot pass from hence to him, and he cannot come from thence to us, (so to speak.) Yea, some may be afraid that there is a sentence of excommunication past in heaven that they shall not see his face any more. And many of us may take up Saul's lamentation, and say, 'The Lord is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by dream, nor vision, nor by prophet, nor by Urim, nor by Phummin any more.' Believe it, Christ is a great loss when he is away. I can say no more, but they are well that are above the clouds, without the reach of losing him: neither have aiming for such a desire, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' I suppose we might be made to present that mislear'd desire that David hath, in Psalm cxix. 176: 'O Lord seek thy servant.' It is a strange word to bid the Master seek the servant, but if Christ do not seek us, we will never seek him, nor yet answer him: the loss of a stranger to God is, Christ is lost: and the loss of a stranger-seeker of Christ is, Christ is gone: but to come a little nearer to the words.

In the chapter we have Job answering two great accusations and challenges that were tabled against him: the *first* was, concerning his impatience under the cross. And the *second* was, concerning his hypocrisy.

As for the *first*, concerning his impatience, he answers it in the second verse, by two things: 1st, 'Even to-day is my complaint bitter.' As if he had said, 'Do not charge me with impatience: for to complain against God, is exceedingly bitter unto me.' And, *secondly*, he said, 'My stroke is heavier than my groaning:' that is, as if he would say, 'Put my calamities in the

‘balance with my complaints, you will see the one weigh down the other.’

From the beginning of the third verse to the close, he answers to a second challenge which was concerning his hypocrisy, his friend bearing it upon him that he was not sincere. Do not say so, saith he, ‘for I am so sincere, that I desire that God should judge me.’ In the words read, we have two things. *First*, The excellent desire and request that Job hath to God; ‘O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat.’

The reason why he sets not down God’s name, but points him out under the word Him, is, *1st*, Because he supposed that all would know that none was worthy to be sought so earnestly beside God. And, *2dly*, because he was so much frightened and endued with reverence and high apprehensions of God, that he cannot express what he is: but as if he had said, ‘he is a matchless One; not that he wants a name, but that it cannot be expressed.’ His great end in tabling of the request is, ‘That he might come even to his seat;’ or, as it may be read, ‘Even to his prepared throne;’ which is, as if he had said, ‘I have a sweet end in my tabling of this request,’ and it is this, ‘That I might come where he is, and have a sweet soul-refreshing joy and correspondence with him.’

From this great request or desire, we shall make six or seven observations. And,

*First*, That distance and desertion from God is a case not unordinary to the saints: for while he saith, ‘O that I knew where I might find him,’ it holds out that he had lost God, and was at a distance from him.

I will not stand to prove it, the frame of most part of professors doth prove it; it is written on the most part of our foreheads, ‘Christ is gone, and shall never come again any more.’ I shall point at seven steps, to which a Christian’s desertion may go.

A *first* step is, a Christian may be so deserted of God, that he knows not where to find him. Not only may Christ be gone, but so far gone, that the believer knows not where to find him, or where to go and seek him, till he be forced to cry out, ‘O that I knew where I might find him?’ Job knew not where to find him. And will not others come in the like condition? Undoubtedly they will; as is clear, Song i. 7. where the spouse not only finds Christ absent, but so far absent, that she knows not where to find, till she bids him tell her where he feeds? And John xx. 13. ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.’ A Christian, as it were, may be put into the dark, so that he knows not how, nor where to direct



his steps; he is sometimes with darkness in desertion. A *second* step is, a Christian may go to desertion: he may be diligent about the use of means for the recovery of Christ, and yet the means be blasted unto him; he may be about practice and obedience, and yet be useless in regaining of Christ; as is clear, Song iii. 2. where the spouse is much taken up about the use of means, yet her o'er word is, 'I sought him, but I found him not; I called, but he gave no answer;' so Song v. 6. She goes about all means, and yet she hath the same word: and this is a great step indeed, when the Christian is put, not only to wrestle with an absent God, but with a silent God. A *third* step is, Christ may be gone, and the Christian not know that he is gone, nor yet so much as affected with it, nor sorrowful for it. This is ordinary in our days; are there not many of us, of whom it may be said, Christ is gone, and yet we seek him not, Song v. 2. where Christ is absent, and yet the bride is not affected with it. It is a sad evidence when absence from Christ makes us not to walk in sackcloth. A *fourth* step is, Christ may be gone, and yet the Christian somewhat formal and indifferent about the use of means to regain him; as is clear, Song iii. 4. 'I sought him on my bed.' Christ is gone, and yet the bride seeks him in a lazy and indifferent manner. Many of us do not stir up ourselves to lay hold upon Christ, nor to enquire after him. A *fifth* step is, a Christian may be deserted not only in respect of love, but in respect of faith, tenderness and diligence, so as the duties he goes about, may be gone about in a carnal and dead manner.

*First*, In respect of love, so as the heat of it is gone, and there is no sweetness to be found. *Secondly*, In respect of tenderness, whereas stupidity and hardness of heart is come over him. *Thirdly*, In respect of faith, whereas before he could read his interest in Christ, and say, 'I am his, and he is mine; yet now he calls in question if ever he shall find him any more. *Fourthly*, In respect of diligence, whereas before he could have prayed six or seven times, now he will not pray once or twice a day. I fear this be almost an universal evil in those days.

A *sixth* step is, Christ may be gone, and yet the Christian not know of it. Sometimes Christ hath a silent departure, occasioned through want of watchfulness, and spiritual tenderness.

A *Seventh* step is, that all the means a Christian may use, may become tasteless to him. When those duties and means, that serve for the recovery of Christ back again to the soul, become tasteless; when prayer loseth its lustre, and love loseth its hue, and hearing hath no life, and we have no delight in those things that serve to regain time, it is a great step of desertion indeed; I shall say no more but this to it, so long as a Christian is de-

serted, he may call himself Ichabod, 'my glory is departed from me;' and his duties, Jabesh, for with sorrow doth he bring them forth.' Absence from Christ, and little affectedness with it, says that it is long to the breaking of our everlasting day. Christ hides his face, and we are not troubled with it. And surely some of us may be put to this question, is there any of the precious company about the throne that bore absence from Christ as we do? Is there any that has tasted that he is gracious, that lays so little weight upon his presence as we do? It is like, we care not for Christ, and there is two great appearance that Christ careth not for us. O Christians! is he not gone? And yet how few are there that cry out, 'O that I knew where I might find him?' Some of us may be put to this question, shall ever Christ and we meet together again?

A *second* thing which we mind to insist a little upon is, that a Christian ought to make it his great design to seek and to find Christ; which is clear from these words of the text, 'O that I knew where I might find him.'

Ere I prosecute this point of doctrine, I shall speak a little to these two things. *First*, What it is to seek and find God. *Secondly*, I shall clear unto you, that it is your duty to make it your great design to seek and to find God.'

As for the *First* thing, what it is to seek and to find God. It comprehends these six things. 1. To engage your heart and strength in the accomplishment of this great and excellent design to seek and to find God; as is clear, Psalm cxix. 10. 'With my whole heart have I sought thee.' I suppose that the half of the heart is not engaged in the accomplishment of this precious work, which says, it is not our great design to seek to find God.

2. It is to be diligent about all the means, that there be not a duty required of us, in which Christ is to be found, but we should follow it; as is clear, Song iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. where she declares, it is her design to seek and to find Christ by the diligent use of all the means. There you see that her diligence about the use of the means is very large, which sheweth that it is her great design to seek and to find Christ. And Job ii. 3, 8, 9. Behold, 'I go forward, and look before me and behind me, and on either side;' which shows his great diligence.

3. Notwithstanding of all the oppositions and disappointments he meets with in duties, and of his not finding of God at first, yet not to give over seeking, or his pursuit, but to seek till he find him, as the bride, Song iii. 4, 'go a little further, and thou shalt find him whom thy soul loveth.' If thou go to prayer, and find him not there; and to hearing, and find him not there; and to reading, and find him not there; and to study and me-

dition, and find him not there; and about all the means wherein Christ is still to be found, and find him not there; 'yet go a little further and thou shalt find him.' Say you, where shall I go to, since I have been about all the means? Be a little more diligent and a little more painful.

4. It is for a soul to lay bonds, ties, and resolutions upon his own heart in the accomplishment of finding of Christ, 2 Chron. xv. 12. 'They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul;' that is, to bind ourselves with all bonds, whereby our hearts may be engaged in seriousness in seeking and finding. It is a remarkable word that David hath, Psalm lxiii. 8. 'My soul followeth hard after thee;' that is, 'though thou run away, I will follow hard after thee, and will not let thee go until I find thee again.'

5. It is to be instant in diligence about all commanded duties, and the use of means for regaining and finding of Christ. A soul that would find God, he must not go on about the use of means for a day, but must pursue, going on till he find God; and when he has found him, he must make it his common exercise, that he may keep him; many of us have our diligences, and make it but of one day's length, and ere two days are at an end, our diligence is past, two days are most of our constant diligence.

6. It is to warn and summon all that is within us, in the accomplishment of this great design to seek and to find God. It is said of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 19. 'Be zealous and repent;' ye would be zealous, I shall say no more to it but this, be sure the first sight of an absent Christ will make up all your losses, or what is amiss; thou shalt forget thy seven years work, when thou meetest with Christ whom thy soul loveth. Thy nine years watch will appear as a watch by night. But the most part of us make it not our great design to seek and to find Christ, and communion with him. Absence from Christ is turned more to be matter and occasion of our discourse, than matter of our exercise.

As for the *second* thing, that it is our duty to make it our great design to seek and to find God, we shall clear it unto you as we are able.

1. It is commanded, 1 Chron. xxii. 19. 'Now set yourselves with all your heart, and with all your soul, to seek the Lord your God.' This is, as it were, to have our hearts fixed and bent about this work.

2. It is clear from the practice of the saints that they have made it their great design to seek and to find Christ, Psalm xxvii. 4. 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek to obtain.'



3. There is much talking of designs now in these days, but, O! if this were the design of all, to seek and to find an absent God, this were a sweet and precious design. In prosecuting of this more fully, we shall speak a word to six or seven things. 1. To some evidences and marks of these that are near finding him. From the text we shall give you these six or seven. And, *first*, For a person to be under low and undervaluing thoughts of himself, and high and mysterious thoughts of Christ, as is clear from the text: for while he saith, ‘O that I knew where I might find him!’ he says, he knows not how to call him. These words contain an emphasis, *I* and *Him*. I am persuaded, a soul is never nearer finding of Christ than when he is as the dust in his own eyes. Pride is that cloud that interrupts communion with God. A *second* evidence is, to have high, mysterious, and reverent thoughts of Christ. There is an emphasis in the word *Him*, and it is this much, ‘O that I knew where I might find beautiful, spotless, compassionate, majestic, infinite Him! omniscient, omnipotent Him.’ Job’s thoughts are overcome with the thoughts of God. When he spake of God, as it were, he blesseth his lips. Our low and undervaluing thoughts of Christ is the reason why we seek not him as we should, and find him not: there are many of us that care not for him, there is no form nor beauty in him wherefore we should desire him. He is grown like an old almanack out of date, and tasteless. A *third* evidence is, for a soul to be serious in seeking of God, and seriously exercised about his duty, ‘O that I knew where I might find him!’ His seriousness is pointed out by his framing of his desires. We but compliment with God, we should wrestle with him, as Jacob did where he behaved himself as a prince, and is commended; if we would wrestle with God, we should prevail. A *fourth* evidence is, for a person to take up the distance that is betwixt God and him. Jacob takes up the distance that was betwixt Christ and him, which made him to cry out, ‘O that I might know where I might find him!’ A *fifth* evidence is, for a person to be submissive to the doing of all duties that are required of him for the finding of Christ; for so the words may be rendered, ‘O that any would shew me the way!’ Which shews he is willing and submissive to duty; which is as if he had said, ‘if any will shew me the way, I will follow it with all my heart.’ A *sixth* evidence for one near finding of God, is, to be obedient to the counsel of others, and to take direction from them, for so much Job’s words import, while he says, ‘O that I knew where I might find him! which is, as if he had said, ‘O that any would shew me the way where to find him!’ for so the words may be rendered, ‘O that any would make me know

where to find him!" A *seventh* evidence is, for a person to have high and mysterious ends in his seeking to find God, which is clear in this instance of Job: for he had two excellent ends in his seeking and finding of God: and the *first* end that he hath in his seeking is, only to find God, and nothing else beside him, either external or internal, but himself alone, as he was, and is. A *second* end or design that he hath in his seeking is, when he hath found him, to hold him fast, and not to let him go; as is clear, 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' or, as the words may be read, 'even to his prepared throne.' Would he say, "If I had once my grips of him, I would make good use of him! I would improve it so, that I would cause him bring me even where he is. Every step of communion, would he say, I would cause it bring me more near him, as it were, to make a stepping-stone of it for more communion with God; I would not sit down with finding of him, but I would cause him bring me even to his seat, that I might have the incomprehensible refreshing blinks of his presence, and be watered with his springs."

The next thing that we shall speak to, shall be to some grounds or reasons, why folks, in their seeking of God, find him not: and here I must hint at these six or seven. And,

*First*, It is because they seek him not with the whole heart, Deut. iv. 29. 'Thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart.' And Jer. xiii. 'And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' Would ye know why we seek so much, and find so little; it is even this, because our hearts are not engaged in the work as they should. I suppose that the most part of our desires are running in another cursed channel, we know what it is to tongue our prayers, but we know not what it is to heart our prayers.

A *second* reason or ground is, our woful formality and indifferency in the exercise of seeking and finding of God. There is the occasion of the distance betwixt God and many of us, we seek as if we cared not for an answer at all; as is clear, Song iii. 1. The spouse sought him, and found him not; and the reason was, she sought him upon her bed. If we were real seekers of Christ, it would sometimes take away our night's rest from us: but the most part of us had rather want Christ ten hours, than our rest one hour. O what a cursed formality there is in all our duties! that is the fore-runner of some awakening from the Lord. Are there not many of us, that when we go to prayer, how exceedingly soon do we return from it: because we find no sweetness at all in it.

A *third* reason or ground why we come so short in our find-



ing of God when we seek him is, these woful designs and ends that we have in our seeking of God; as is clear, James i. 3. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts." We seek a sight of Christ, more to satisfy curiosity, than to strengthen love and help faith.

A *fourth* reason or ground is, because we are not constant, but take all our religion by fits, and when we are not constant and diligent about the use of the means, what wonder is it that we find him not; for the promise of finding him is to the diligent seekers; as is clear, Heb. xi. 6. "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If Christians were up early in the morning, and busy all day, and up late at night about their duty, they would come better speed than they do.

A *fifth* reason or ground why we come so short in finding of God is, because of our too much dependance upon our own strength, and too little upon the strength of God; and likewise a resting upon our own duties so, we suppose, that there is an infallible connection between the seeking and finding of Christ: and Jesus Christ will have us taught, that all our seeking and finding is free grace.

A *sixth* reason or ground is, our abusing of former mercies and enjoyments; as is clear, Song iii. 2. compared with chap. v. 6. 'I sought him, but I found him not:' what was the reason of all this? It was only the abuse of former enjoyments: and it is no wonder though Christ suffers us to seek long ere we find him, we thrust him to the door when he is present, and give him so little room in our hearts.

A *seventh* reason or ground is our misbelieving way of seeking of God; as is clear, James i. 7. "Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord, that seeketh doubtingly." The best way for us to seek, is in faith and spiritual boldness; the which, if a Christian would use, he would undoubtedly seek the good of it.

*Thirdly*, I shall propose some considerations to provoke you to be much taken up with this excellent design in seeking and finding of God. Indeed there are some that never think they want Christ, and that is the reason why they stir not up themselves to seek Christ. But to press the matter home upon you all, take these six or seven considerations alongst with you.

The *first* consideration is, that one taken up in seeking of Christ, 'shall want no good thing,' Psalm xxxiv. 10. What would you have sirs? Ye hear that seekers of God 'shall want no good thing,' how much more enjoyers of him. If the truth of this were believed, it would put us to a more ardent pursuit after Christ. What want ye, but ye might have it, if ye were seri-

ous seekers of God? Enlarge your desire as the sea-shore, and ye shall get them filled in this precious work, and accomplishment thereof; though ye would enlarge your desires as the sand that is by the sea-shore for multitude, there is no way to get them filled but in seeking and finding God. Think it an excellent bargain to seek and to find Christ. Alas! we take his promise for fair words that shall not be accomplished.

The *second* consideration is, if ye be a sincere seeker of Christ, no case, no condition shall be dark to thee, no truth of the conscience, but thou shalt have the knowledge of it; as is clear, Prov. xxviii. 5. 'They that seek the Lord, understand all things. If thou wert a seeker of God, nothing needful but God would give thee the clear and distinct knowledge of it. And the reason why we walk in darkness concerning our condition and case oftentimes is, because we seek not God to purpose. John says, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Would he say, is there any that would have their ignorance removed, come, and let him follow me, or be a seeker of me, get your names enrolled in that generation, Psalm xxiv. 6. There is no dignity under heaven comparable to it.

The *third* consideration is, O Christians! would you have your deadness removed? Be much in seeking of Christ, and then you will get your deadness removed; as is clear, Amos v. 4 6. 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live.' Their hearts shall live that seek him. Why is it that there is so much deadness of spirit and stupidity? It is, because there is but little seeking of Christ. Are there not many here to-day, that sought not Christ before they came here? And it is a doubt if they seek him now either; and what wonder is it that such find him not: but if there be a design to have the heart living in him, be much taken up in seeking of him.

The *fourth* consideration is, would you have joy and delight in all contentments? Be much in seeking of God, and ye shall find it; as is clear, 1 Chron. xvi. 10. 'the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.' How much more in enjoying of God.

*Fifthly*, There is another excellent delight to be found in seeking of Christ, and it is this, when ye are standing upon the utmost pinch of time, betwixt time and eternity, a witness in thy bosom, that thou hast been taken up in seeking of Christ will comfort thee exceedingly, how much more real seeing of Christ? 2 Chron. xiv. 11. Asa mentions it thrice, it was so pleasant to him to remember, his heart was glad, his heart was overwhelmed with it. The day is coming, that ye will not think it ill spent, that hath been spent in finding Christ.

The *sixth* consideration is, "He hath not said to the house



“of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain.” Do not think it to no purpose to seek God. He hath past his word for it, ‘that ye shall not seek his face in vain.’

The *last* consideration is, the excellency of this precious object we press you to seek. Is there any thing in heaven more to be desired than he? Or is there any thing below comparable to him? Alas! we may preach and encroach, and in preaching press you to choose him, and to seek him; but there are hundreds here, that will take a thousand times more pains in seeking the things of the world.

There are three things in the world more sought than God. 1. The applause of the world. 2. The riches of the world. 3. The pleasures of the world. Many are more taken up with the knowledge of Christ, than with Christ himself. But, O! if all our designs were consumed under this blessed design, to seek and to find God.

I would persuade you, to-day, if you would set about it, you would find it easier to-morrow. And what can you gain, if you lose this excellent prize, Jesus Christ? Then will ye be persuaded to seek him? I shall not insist.

But to him that hath the tongue of the learned, teach you these things, and persuade you to begin this precious work, to seek and to find Christ. Amen.

#### SERMON IV.

*JOB. xxiii. 3. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat.*

**T**HIS ought to be our great and precious design, to seek and to find Christ; “That ye may be found in him, not having your own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, which is of God by faith.” Phil. iii. 9. It is certain, so long as we are here, we are both out of Christ and in Christ, and going to Christ; in Christ, in respect of faith; out of Christ, in respect of complete conformity; and going to Christ, in respect of that endless fruition and happiness we shall enjoy for ever.

Is there any person here to-day sick of love for Christ? It is Christ’s love that maketh sick, and it is Christ’s love that maketh whole. It is Christ’s presence that cuts, and it is Christ’s presence that heals. I am afraid, that the most part of us, our name may be read, desolate; and our surname, forsaken. There is a great distance betwixt Christ and us. If that question were asked at us, How long is it since ye saw him? How few are they that could answer that question? There are few that could an-



swer this, that ever they shall get him at all: some of us have a name to be seekers of God, and that is a question if ever we shall find him.

Ere I proceed in the words, ye would remember, what is, and should be the Christian's great design; what is his design now presently, there is much talking of designs, and of men's prosecuting of them; 'To dig down deep in broken cisterns that can hold no water;' in overturning kingdoms, and purchasing crowns: but it were more suitable in our days, to seek and to find an absent God. And if ye be not prosecuting this, it is in vain to prosecute other designs. It is a poor thing to purchase a crown and to lose Christ; to gain the world, and to lose thy own soul, to find pleasure here, and bitterness for ever hereafter, and lose him that is the delight of nations.

Yesterday we spake to a *second* direction from the text, that it ought to be a Christian's great design to seek and to find Christ, and that all other things ought to be but lost, in the buying of this thing.

I have spoken to several things from the text. There remain yet four things that I would speak a word to: 1. To some directions for those that have made it their great design to seek and to find Christ, and have found him, and how to keep him: it being as great a difficulty to keep him when found, as to find him when lost. And,

The *first* direction is, 'When ye have found him, hold him, and let him not go, until ye bring him into your mother's house, and to the chambers of her that conceived you;' as is clear, Song iii. 4. There are three cords by which Christ is held when he is found, which must be made use of. And the *first* is the cord of love, it lays hold upon the heart of Christ, and Christ's heart meets in the hands of love. *Secondly*, The communicable cord of faith, that lays hold upon Christ by his word and faithfulness. *Thirdly*, The humble cord of prayer and supplication: for it is the poor that useth intreaties. When you have found him, sit down and hold him till the breaking of your everlasting day, and the night be past, Song iii. 4. 'I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me,' as if she would say, 'I could not let him go, he was so sweet and precious company.' Compare it with Song vii. 5. 'The King is held in the galleries,' or as the word is, 'Strongly violated.' Luke xxiv. 20. 'They constrained him to abide all night,' though he strengthened them to constrain him.

The *second* direction is, guard against all things that may stir him up, or awake him before he please. Song iii. 5. 'I charge

you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please.' Put all things to the door, that would put Christ to the door. Oftentimes Christians value communion with God more when they want it, than when they have it. They prize Christ more when he is absent, than when he is present. It is with the most part of us and Christ, as with children and a pleasant thing, they care not for it when once they have got a whiles play with it, and their minds begin to lothe it. O how soon do we weary of any condition!

The *third* direction is, guard against limiting of Christ. Do not prescribe times to him to stay with you, Song ii. 7. I charge you that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please.' And so she gives him a latitude; limiting of Christ is a dangerous thing, and that which provokes him much to absent. There is a fourfold limiting of Christ. *1st*, A limiting of Christ to desires. *2dly*, A limiting of him to times. *3dly*, A limiting of him to means. *Lastly*, A limiting of him to designs.

*First*, A limiting of him to desires, when we set such a time, against which, if he comes not, we will give over hope. *Secondly*, A limiting of him to times; when we will point such a time, for such a turn and purpose, we will not want such a thing. *Thirdly*, A limiting of him to means when we will appoint the way to get such a thing, as if the Lord knew not of a better way to do such a thing. *Lastly*, A limiting of him to designs, when we will put him to it proportionally. There is a threefold rule by which a Christian's desires ought to be regulated.

*First*, Whatever God commands, he may desire it may be obeyed. *Secondly*, Whatever Christ promises, he may desire it may be accomplished. *Thirdly*, Whatever prophesied, he may desire it may come to pass: but it is hateful not to give Christ a blank as to his coming and going, and not to be indifferent.

The *fourth* direction is, when you have found him, not to content yourselves with this, nor rest upon what you have gotten, but to make use of it to help you to more. Make that degree of fellowship, as is clear, a stepping-stone to more, to win more near to him; as is clear from the practice of Job, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' As if he would say, 'If I had him once, I would not let him go, or stay content there; but the use that I would make of such a mercy is this, I would cause him bring me even to his seat.' The Christian's business, so long as he is here, should be to say, give me Christ, give me Christ. He should never be satisfied so long as he is hereaway, till his shadow fly away in the morning of eternity, we are over soon satisfied with Christ, we cannot please him better, than to seek much.



The *fifth* direction is, keep nothing from him untold in thy heart; as is clear also in the practice of Job: as if one would say unto Job, what would you do if you were near him? He answers, 'I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments:' nothing but I would tell him of it, would he say, freedom with God is that which relishes well? O Christian! when, when wilt thou tell that to God, that thou wilt not tell to all thy kin? For he is an excellent secretary, and will help us in our need.

The *sixth* direction is, be much in the exercise of love. Many of us wit not what it is to take Christ in our arms; but there should be a mutual and reciprocal fellowship betwixt Christ and us, and acting of our love in the enjoying of him, Song viii. 1. 'O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee.' But, alas! for that cold entertainment that the presence of Christ gets from the most part of us? Often we put him away, when he desires not to go away.

The *seventh* and *last* direction is, to study to 'walk humbly with your God, Micah vi. 8. When he lifts you up to the third heaven, sit down in the dust, and call thyself unclean; when he calls your love fair for delights, and comely, call yourself deformed; as is clear, Micah vi. 8. 'walk humbly with thy God, he and we cannot be long together, if pride be entertained in our hearts; it is that which separates between him and us. But this last direction may be more fully prosecuted. And I shall follow it forth in eight or nine faults or errors that Christians will readily fall under when they are near God, all which have been their very frame.

The *first* fault or error that a Christian will readily fall into, when he is near Christ is, his preparing and being taken up with some curious questions, and asking of them, or requiring curious desires, when he brings him into the chamber of his presence; too great familiarity corrupts good manners; as is clear, Gen. xxxii. 29. When Jacob is near God, he asks what is his name, a too curious question. And Judges xiii. 17. Manoah falls into the next question. And the disciples likewise, when they were upon mount Tabor, falls out in the like desire, 'let us build here three tabernacles.' Beware of proposing curious questions to Christ.

The *second* fault or error is, when we are near God, and have much communion with him, we would wish that many of our acquaintances knew of it, and were spectators to it. And that is a piece of presumption and pride. I have often thought it a strange word, Gen. xxxii. 26. Jacob, let me go, which is, as if



he would say, 'Jacob, free me, the day breaketh, it will be known that I am with thee, and it is not fit that any should know that I am with thee, for thou art not in case to bear it.'

The *third* fault or error is, when souls are near God, they are much taken up with sinful wandering, rather than improving that which they have gotten, to their further enlargement in the way of finding of Christ; think they, what a thing is this! And their very gazing and sinful wandering draws a cloud between them and their enjoyments; as is clear, Acts i. 11. 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?'

The *fourth* fault or error is, to be more taken up with the light of our enjoyments, than with the life of our enjoyments and comforting ourselves by the light of them. It is not known by experience, that while we are near God, we would sit down and study the light of our enjoyments, when we will not sit down and study the life of our enjoyments; to eye the light and expression of our enjoyments, more than the life and effect of them, is unsound and discommendable in them. Wherefore let us leave off thinking on words, and observe, in the close, that life, power and comfort to our spirits.

The *fifth* fault or error is, an heartless kind of unbelief, as if some were brought near God, and cry out, 'now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. But look to the bottom of that wish, and the rise of it, it will be found to be ignorant unbelief that they will not get to the like again, if they lose that which they have.

The *sixth* fault or error is, folks bringing down of Christ to the likeness of some other thing, or a little god, or some idol likeness in reputation, to their own mind. And this piece of a spiritual idol, that is in the most part of the children of God, which is a breach of the second command, and a changing of the glory of the incorruptible God, to an image made like unto man. For it is a most ordinary fault in our nearness to Christ; therefore guard against it.

The *seventh* fault or error is, ignorant humility that we come under in the time of our enjoyments. As there is ignorant humility, so likewise there is ignorant unbelief, Luke v. 8. When Peter gets a sight of the draught of fishes, 'Depart from me, saith he, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' And cursed had he been if he had given him his desire. Hence it is, that when the soul is near God, it will foolishly fly away from him.

The *eighth* fault or error is, we often forget God under our manifestation, and therefore limit him.

The *ninth* fault or error is, in our nearness we forget the body of death and sin that we are accompanied with, and that we

are sinful men. I confess, that there is a time when we are carried far beyond the wind, without all sight of sin or a body of death, or any thing below; but in what condition ever thou art, forget not that thou art a sinful man, and walk not without the sense of the body of death. Therefore in the most eminent enjoyments that the saints have met with, there is something that keeps them humble; as is clear, Jacob must have a halt in his thigh, that he may walk humbly; and Paul must have a messenger of Satan to buffet him. There are three most remarkable dispensations in immediate approaches to Christ. *First*, when we go over the bounds, God on the back of that trists us with some desertions, and saith, break not through lest thou be consumed. *Secondly*, When a Christian is near God, he will trist him with some evil or old sin, that it may keep him humble, and that he may remember the rock from whence he was hewn, and the pit from whence he was digged. *Thirdly*, When a Christian is going without the bounds, Christ imposes some bodily harm on him: as is clear in the instance of Jacob: and it is known sometimes to Christian experience. The use we make of it is this, since there are so many faults and errors in our nearness to Christ. *First*, To remember what manner of spirits we are of, and not to break through the blessed bounds which Christ has set, lest we be consumed. *Secondly*, Long for the day when we shall be above the reach of abusing communion, and there shall not be room for any anxious thoughts any more.

1. A Christian may find Christ, and yet not know that he has found him. There is a difference betwixt finding of Christ, and knowing that we have found him; as is clear, John xx. 14, 15. 'Mary, when she saw him, supposed he had been the gardener:' and Luke xxiv. 37. 'they were afraid, supposing they had seen a spirit.' And here we shall speak to seven or eight grounds or reasons why a Christian may find Christ, and yet not know that he hath found him.

The *first* ground or reason is, if his fellowship do not come up to that length and degree that formerly it hath been at, and to that ancient degree that he expected, for we may find him, and yet not know that we have found him. We often judge of our enjoyment by the degree and effect; if the degree be abated, we think we have not found him.

The *second* ground or reason is, Christ changeth the way of his manifesting of himself: we are ready to suspect him, if he keep not the same method and order in the manifesting of himself; as is clear, Luke xxiv. 38, 39. Isa. lxiii. 1. where the changing of his manifesting of himself caused him to be mistaken and suspected, 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed gar-



ments from Bozrah?' There are three several ways in which Christ ordinarily manifesteth himself in. *First*, In robes of holy condescendency, that whatever question a believer proposeth to him, he will answer it; and whatever desire he desireth, he will do it, if it be according to his will. There is a speaking familiarity, face to face. *Secondly*, In robes of stately majesty, as he did to Daniel, Ezekiel, and John, when he appeared clothed with that as with a garment. *Thirdly*, In rebukes and challenges, when he challengeth for sin and iniquity; and if he change one of these ways, we are ready to suspect him, and judge that it is not he. And Christ may manifest himself in the first, when he manifesteth not himself in the last: and in the last, when he manifesteth not himself in the first.

The *third* ground or reason is, Christ will stop a believer's eyes, that he will not know him when he is present; as is clear Luke xxiv. 17. 'Their eyes were shut, that they knew him not.' He will sometimes manifest himself to our light, when he will not manifest himself to our hearts; and he will sometimes manifest himself to our hearts, when he will draw a vail betwixt him and us.

The *fourth* ground or reason is, our joy or admiration may cause us to mistake Christ; as is clear, Luke xxiv. 41. 'They believed not for joy,' they would so fain have had it so: their joy interrupted their faith.

The *fifth* ground or reason is, our ignorance of Christ. Ignorance of Christ, and his mysterious way of working, may cause us to mistake Christ when found.

The *sixth* ground or reason is, want of spiritual watchfulness. When a Christian is on his watch-tower, Christ may steal a visit, and we not know of it; or he may be present, and the Christian not know of it, if he be off his watch-tower; as is clear, Isa. xl. 20. 'Seeing many things, but thou observest them not.'

The *seventh* ground or reason is, oftentimes we mistake the nature of communion with Christ. And hence it is, he is found, and we not know of it. Some think, that communion stands in eminent soul-rapture, and extasies of Spirit, and ravishment up to the third heavens: and if they find not this, they think they have no communion with Christ, whereas you may have much real communion with him: *1st*, By desires. And, *2dly*, by hoping. And, *lastly*, by sending your hearts up, and panting after him; which is real communion, though we pass it as no communion. Christ doth often sweetly surprise his own at a sermon, even in the last watch of the night, and they cannot believe that it is he. When they are wringing their hands, and giving over hope, then he will come in sweetly, and say, 'It is



I, be not afraid.' When we cannot be persuaded that he will come at such a time. It is much I believe these three sorts of enjoyments: *First*, The most eminent enjoyments are subject to dispute. *Secondly*, Surprise in the enjoyments. *Thirdly*, Unconstant enjoyments; that is, when Christ is giving a standing visit.

I would press this on all of us, that now at length we may begin so precious a work, as to seek and to find Christ. If all the persons that are not among the seekers of Christ here to-day, were away, I suppose that we should make a thin congregation: and yet all say, are we not all seekers of Christ?

I shall give you six considerations, to move you to make it your great design to seek and to find Christ. And,

*First*, It is the command of Christ, that all that hear his word should obey it: and his word is come to you this day, therefore you ought to obey it, 1 Chron. xxii. 19. 'Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.' There is emphasis in that word, *now*; it says, do not delay for an hour, but set about it presently. And Isa. lv. 6. 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.' Now, since there is such a royal and precious command for it, suspend it not, be not stiff-necked any more, but obey it.

The *second* consideration is, Christ's abiding with us is but of short continuance, therefore we should make use of the time; as is clear, John vii. 33. 'Yet a little while am I with you.' Therefore since his bidding is but for a little, it doth admit of no delay. Many think, that they may delay till the hour of death; but a hundred to one if ever they win to repentance.

The *third* consideration is, delays are dangerous. And if in any thing, much more in this: therefore, it saith, delay not. I suppose some of us have delayed so long, that they shall never find Christ.

The *fourth* consideration is, a delay for two days may provoke the Lord to smite us with deadness; as is clear, 1 Chron. xv. 13. 'Because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us.' And John viii. 21, 24, there is a sad and lamentable word, and I fear it be the lot of many, 'Ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come;' therefore delay not.

The *fifth* consideration is, since that your occasion of finding of Christ is but for a time; therefore we should not delay it, but set about it presently. What know we, if ever we shall get an hour after this. We may compare occasions to Peter's sheet, let down from heaven unto him, short and uncertain; therefore delay it not.

The *sixth* consideration is, there is an hour approaching, that

though you should seek him with tears of blood, ye shall not find him, Isa. lv. 6. 'There is a time when he may be found; or, as the word is, 'a finding time.' And often Christ has threatened, 'Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me.' I would leave this word with that of Bildad, Job viii. 5. 'If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes;' or, as the word may be rendered, 'morning Christ.' But how shall that person seek Christ, that never knew what it was to want Christ? I am persuaded, if you would begin so precious a work to-day, and speak but a few words, ye would get him. But there are many families among you, that are the very image of hell; the voice of prayer is not heard within their walls, but the voice of cursing; and that is the experience of the damned in hell; but that is written upon your walls, Christ shall never come near you. To press this a little further, and close, there are six sorts of folk that shall never find Christ, which are seekers of Christ.

The *first* sort is, these that seek him for gain and advantage; in a word, they shall never find him. O! if ye could seek him for himself, and nothing else. Sometimes sense will seek to find Christ for his miracles, and love to the loaves, but faith seeks him only for himself.

The *second* sort is, these that seek him to maintain their applause. Are there not many of us that will seek Christ in company, while if we were alone upon the top of a mountain, we would not seek him? The great Diana applause, is the idol that many seek to keep up.

The *third* sort is, these whose hearts are divided in seeking of Christ, who have not all their hearts engaged in the work, which shall never find him. And now I would pose you, if there be not many here to-day that never sought Christ with all their heart? The promise of finding him, is to none but these that seek him with all their heart. Yea, I may suppose, that many of you never sought Christ with that earnestness that ye have sought after the present world. Are there not many here to-day, that have lived sixty or seventy years, and if all that time were counted, it would not extend to an hour that they have spent in seeking Christ.

The *fourth* sort is, these that seek to please their natural conscience; and if they had not a conscience to please, they would not go to prayer. These, I say, had rather please their conscience than Christ.

The *fifth* sort is, these who are hypocritical seekers of Christ, who seek him only for the fashion; and are more taken up in seeking the picture than the person and substance of Christ; seeking rather to be covered with the coat of Christ, than with the grace of Christ.



The *sixth* sort is, these that seek him to destroy sin, as Herod; that is, to destroy all sin, but that which they like well to keep. Are there any such here? I fear there are too many. Are there not many that seek him, that they may sin with greater delight, without remorse, as the whore in the Proverbs, boasting 'that she had paid her vows?' O such a mistake as this is a sad and revocable mistake. I would only ask you three questions.

*Quest. 1.* Are there not many here, that never knew what it was to have Christ, or to want him? And he that never knew what it is to have him, or to want him, that could never distinguish betwixt absence and presence, never knew what it was to seek Christ. I never loved an unchangeable fellowship with Christ.

*Quest. 2.* Are there not many here, that never knew what it was to shed one tear for the want of Christ, or so much as to be sad? And these never knew what it was to want him, or yet to seek him.

*Quest. 3.* Are there not many in the world, that would prefer a trifle to the presence of Christ? And these never knew what it was to find him. I would ask at some of you, was you ever as glad in prayer, as you have been in gaining some little thing in the world? Hath not some excellent bargain made you more glad than ever you was in prayer? How many are there here to-day that can answer these questions? Oh! that you would make it your great design, to seek and to find Christ. And to him be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

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### SERMON V.

*JOB. xxiii. 3. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!*

**J**OB made it his great design to seek and to find Christ, 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' Are not the most part of Christ's visits, while we are here, rather surprises, than the birth of our expectation and hope? So that oftentimes a Christian hath occasion to sing these two blessed songs, Isa. lxxv. 1. 'I am found of them that sought me not;' and that other song, Song vi. 12. 'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab,' Is it not certain, that when Christians are wringing their hands, and giving over hope, Christ will come, stepping in sweetly, saying, 'It is I, be not afraid?' I suppose, if our necessities were fully discovered, we should be found restless seekers of Christ, and impatient till we find him. Necessity makes a soul go out of himself into

Christ. When once a soul meets with Christ, it takes up Ruth's resolution, Ruth i. 17. 'If ought but death part thee and me.' Is it not certain, that there is much distance betwixt Christ and the most part of his own, while they are hereaway? Almost there is not one among a thousand that can say, 'They have sought Christ three days sorrowing; though he be one of the greatest losses, and gain ungainable. What can they gain that have lost him; and what can they lose that have gained him?

We shall speak a little to two things from the text.

*First*, That desertion from Christ is an evil incident to the preciousness of the saints, not only to be deserted, but so as they know not where to find Christ.

*Secondly*, That a Christian ought to make it his great design to seek and to find Christ. There are five things more that I would point at from the text.

*First*, That a Christian ought to make use of, and improve his enjoyments in finding of Christ; as is clear in the practice of Job, 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' Ye see the end that Job would have had him for; and it is this, 'that he might come even to his seat!' Would Job say, 'That if I could find him. I would make use of such a mercy: I would make every step of communion an incentive to my desires, and pursue for more nearness with Christ; I would not content myself with finding of him, but the use that I would make of finding of him, is, 'to bring me even to his seat;' or, as the word is, 'even to his prepared throne.'

*Secondly*, That a Christian, under a sanctified rod or cross, does make it his great design to seek and to find Christ. He is exercised in finding of Christ. When was this Job's exercise? If we compare the second with the third verse of this chapter, it was, 'When his stroke was heavier than his groaning.'

*Thirdly*, That a Christian best takes up his distance from God, when he is under some sanctified rod or cross.

*Fourthly*, A Christian that would make earnest in seeking and finding of Christ, will take direction from any Christian that will shew him the way; as is clear from the practice of Job, for the words may be rendered, 'O that any would shew me the way where I might find him.'

*Fifthly*, That a Christian that is most near this mercy of enjoying of Christ, hath much low thoughts of himself, and most high and exalting thoughts of Christ; as is clear from the words of the text: for there is an emphasis on these two words, *I* and *Him*; and it is this, 'O that unworthy and sinful, wretched I, knew where to find matchless, spotless Him! that finite I, knew where to find infinite him!' And the reason why Job speaks so



of himself, and of Christ, is, because he cannot name Christ, he hath such majestic thoughts of him.

We shall speak a little to the first five of these things.

*First*, That a Christian ought to make use of, and improve his enjoyments in finding of Christ; as is clear from the practice and experience of the saints, Song iii. 4. 'I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.' And Song viii. 1. 'O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee.' As if she would say, 'I think it a pity to let him go; I would take his soul-refreshing blinks, as motives to stir me up to seek more communion with himself; how would I improve such a mercy!' Song i. 4. 'The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will remember thy love more than wine.

We shall speak a little unto three things.

*First*, What it is whereunto improving of enjoyments do stand. And we do conceive, that a Christian should improve his enjoyments, and make use of them for these eight excellent ends.

*First*, For strengthening of the grace of love; as is clear, Song i. 12. 'While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.'

*Secondly*, We conceive, that a Christian should make use of enjoyments, for the strengthening of the grace of faith; as is clear John xx. 27. 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.' And Song i. 13. when, he has enjoyments, then upon the back of it, she draws her knot nearer, 'A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me: he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.' We may call enjoyments, Levi, and say, 'Now shall my husband be joined unto me.' A Christian should then cry out, 'Now is my beloved mine, and I am his,' I shall be eternally so. Enjoyments are not real, or else they are abused, when they do not strengthen the grace of faith and love, Song vii. 11, 12. It is the very scope of the bride to strengthen the grace of faith and love, 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field: or, to the vineyards, there I will give thee my loves:' as if she would say, 'If thou wilt once visit me, my heart shall utter inexpressible love and desire to thee.'

*Thirdly*, Enjoyments should be made use of, for strengthening the grace of experience. When thou meets with a manifestation of Christ, put such a mercy upon record, that it may be a valley of Achor for a door of hope, and one of the chains that comes from the right hand of Christ to thee, when Christians slight the growth, it is one of the sad things that hath influence on our decay in faith, and strengthening of unbelief.

*Fourthly*, Enjoyments should be made use of, for strengthening of delight in duty. Whenever thou meets with a manifestation of Christ, study to get up thy heart with cheerfulness in duty and delight in obedience; as is clear, Psalm cxix. 32. 'When thou hast enlarged my heart, I shall run the way of thy commandments;' would he say, 'Whenever I am brought near Christ, and have gotten my bonds loosed, then will I take delight and cheerfulness in obedience.' Song i. 4. 'Draw me, and we shall run:' as she would say, 'If once thou wilt constrain me, or learn me, I would leap as a roe, or as a wild hart.'

*Fifthly*, A Christian should make use of enjoyments for the strengthening of his hatred against sin. When he meets with a sight of soul-refreshing love in the face of Christ, he breaketh forth in these expressions, 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.'

*Sixthly*, A Christian should make use of enjoyments for the strengthening of the grace of mortification to his idols: as is clear in Hosea xiv. 8. where Christ is taken up as a green fir-tree, Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' When thou gets a sight of Christ's refreshing presence, subscribe a divorce to all thy idols.

*Seventhly*, Enjoyments should be made use of for the strengthening of humility. That is one of the uses of enjoyments, even to strengthen the grace of humility; as is clear, Job xl. 4. and xlii. 6. 'Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' That is one of the greatest advantages to a Christian, to strengthen the grace of humility.

*Eighthly*, Enjoyments should be made use of, to strengthen the grace of desires: every enjoyment should make us long, and hunger, and thirst, and cry out for more. A Christian's desire should be as the grave, or as the barren womb, crying, 'give me, give me,' and never say, 'It is enough.' All our desires, while we are here, are rather to provoke Christ than to satiate our appetite.

Next we shall speak a word to some practical causes of souls, when they are near Christ.

*First*, Whether every thing borne in upon their spirits, when they are near Christ, ought to be looked upon by them as their duty?

To that I answer negatively, he ought not to look upon every thing borne in upon his spirit as his duty. I shall clear it from several places of Scripture. *1st*, It was borne in upon Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 29. to ask what was his name that wrestled with him. *2dly*, It was borne in upon Manoah's spirit, to ask the same question likewise, Judges xiii. 17. *3dly*, It was borne in upon the disciples spirit upon mount Tabor, saying, 'Let us build here three



tabernacles,' as in Mark ix. 5. And, 4thly, it was borne in upon Peter's spirit, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' Luke v. 8. And, 5thly, it was borne in upon John's spirit, Rev. xix. 10. 'I fell down at his feet to worship him;' which was not his duty. But to open up this a little further, I shall speak to two things.

*First*, Whether every thing borne in upon a Christian's spirit, when he is near God, ought to be obeyed by him or not.

*Secondly*, To some marks and evidences, what is his duty in these things; and that what is not his duty in these, we shall clear unto you in two or three considerations.

As for the *first* of them. Any thing that is borne in upon a Christian's spirit, if he be not conformed to the law and the testimony, he ought to reject it. It is not his duty, if he would compare his duty-light with the scriptures; and if your light be not agreeable to the scriptures, it is unsound. And if any thing, borne in upon a Christian's spirit, be attended with many outward advantages, he ought to beware of receiving it without narrow examination thereof. And as there are counterfeits in these in returns of prayer, so also in this.

There are three things that counterfeit returns in prayer. *First*, Erring light. *Secondly*, Erring conscience. *Thirdly*, Erring affections.

*First*, Erring light will say quite contrary to what really is the return of prayer. *Secondly*, Erring conscience, when one goeth hypocritically to clear his interest in Christ, will then say, Christ has spoken peace, when there is no such thing. Therefore it is the duty of a Christian to be sincere, that the returns of his prayers are from Christ only, and from none else, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee'. *Thirdly*, Sometimes erring and whorish affections, when greatly engaged to such a business, will apprehend the return of his prayers is from Christ, when there is no such thing, he would but have it so. Some were engaged after the name of their idols, Ezek. xiv. Some were accordingly engaged to Balaam; and Balaam is so far engaged with Balak, till at the third time the Lord permits him to go on in erring against light and affection, jointly together it is a difficulty to the Christian to be distinct in these two.

I shall propose four marks or evidences for a Christian to know what is his duty, in this which is borne in upon his spirit.

The *first* mark or evidence is, if a Christian, when he goeth to Christ, be endued with a divine neutrality and indifferency, whether such a thing be determined of Christ or not; and in his going to put a blank in Christ's hand, that is an evidence that this is his duty. As, suppose a person be engaged to two

places at once. In his light and affection he is engaged to none of them; he goes to Christ for clearness, which of them he should go to; and if at that time it be strongly borne in upon his spirit, that he must exercise himself about such a place, that is his duty.

The *second* mark or evidence is, if that duty, that is borne in upon his spirit, put him to much humble dependence upon Christ for strength to go about such a duty, that is a token that it is a duty borne in upon his spirit: and if it be the fruit of much wrestling with Christ; that is, if he be in the dark concerning such a thing, and wrestles with Christ for clearness into it, not to be in the dark concerning such a point: and we had need to respect it, if it be not so.

The *third* probable mark or evidence is, if the duty borne in upon our spirit hath not many outward advantages attending upon it; and yet, nevertheless, we are not the more disobedient, but willing it, notwithstanding all disappointments; and no other thing leads the man, but the will of Christ; that is an evidence that it is his duty.

The *fourth* mark and evidence is, if there be a majesty or divine lustre and power borne in with the duty, that is an undoubted evidence that the call is from Christ; which delusion cannot have, neither Satan or any of his temptations. Sometimes Christ will bear in high and majestic power and sweetness, so that the Christian will cry out, 'It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh.' There is ay somewhat in Christ's voice that is not in Satan's, nor any of his temptations.

The *second* thing I would speak to is this, Christians calling in question their enjoyments, and calling them all delusions, and cannot win to be established in their condition. I shall assign four or five reasons or grounds, why Christians call in question all their enjoyments.

*First*, If a Christian's enjoyments come not up that length or degree that formerly he hath had, he is ready to suspect them, as if he hath met with eminent enjoyments in his first engagement to Christ, and he cannot come up to that length again; he brings all in question, and calls it all delusion. We ordinarily judge more by the degree, than by the effect; whereas we ought rather to judge of them by the effect: for an enjoyment, eminent in degree, may be a delusion.

*Secondly*, When a Christian, in his nearness to Christ, meets with strange stirrings of corruption, he thinks, O! can such a sight or enjoyment be real? Oftentimes most real enjoyments have the strongest assaults on the back of them. Paul met with an eminent enjoyment, and yet he met with a buffeting temptation on the back of it.



*Thirdly*, If a Christian's delight in duty be not strengthened when he is in hazard, then he calls them all in question, and says, if such an enjoyment were real, would it not strengthen my delight in duty? But, I say, that after eminent enjoyments, duty may become tasteless unto thee, partly to stir thee up to the exercise of faith, partly to reprove thy laziness.

*Fourthly*, When after enjoyments, the Christian is overcome with the devil's temptations, he will say, it is but a dream. I confess, the Christian's sorest stroke comes after enjoyments, and the most discouraging, and most dishonourable one to Christ, which may make him go mourning to his grave. It is hard then (if not impossible) to keep up duty; and yet his enjoyments may be real.

The *fifth* and strongest of all is, when a Christian's thoughts of Christ are not more precious than they were before. All the rest can hold with real enjoyments of Christ, but this cannot hold. Only for caution, you would know, that there is a difference of Christ's being precious to faith, and his being precious to sense. A Christian may have high and excellent thoughts of Christ, and yet not know of it; and Christ may be precious to faith, and will be so, when sense hath not a good word to speak. Faith can speak more to Christ's praise in a day, than sense can do in a year.

*Thirdly*, I would propose some observations that I would have a Christian to carry alongst with him in his enjoyments, that he ought to communicate to none; as is clear, Matth. xvii. 9. 'Tell it to no man:' and it is a strange word that Paul saith, 2 Cor. xii. 4. 'I heard words which is not lawful for a man to utter.' There are some enjoyments that is not lawful to communicate them. And here I shall propose three reasons why they ought not to communicate them to others. And,

A *first* reason is, the communication of some rich enjoyments to others may beget a great envy, as we see in Joseph's brethren: and Christians would keep these to themselves; though, I confess, there are few of them in these days. And,

A *second* reason is, because it is the high way to beget pride and conceit in their own bosom. There is no surer way to grow proud of them, than to communicate them to others; though a humble and sober declaration of them may sometimes be for advantage. Yet there is no time when conceit will more readily creep in, than when the Christian can say, Come, and I will tell you what Christ hath done for my soul; it is much to tell our enjoyments, as if we told them not.

The *third* reason is, because it is the ready way to provoke to discouragement, and beget anxiety in others, when they hear

such a man caught up to the third heavens, and brought into the chambers of his presence, but they were not; whereupon they sit down in bitterness of spirit, as if all were gone, and all had been a delusion they had met with.

A *second* is, that a Christian may be disobedient to any thing borne in upon his spirit, in his immediate access to Christ, Acts x. 13. Peter is commanded *to kill and eat*, whereas he answers, *not so, Lord*: disobedience to duty, when a soul is near Christ, is most dangerous. *First*, It is against the command. And, *secondly*, against a Christian's own advantage. And, *thirdly*, disobedience to a duty, when a soul is near Christ, will cause and occasion the withdrawing of his enjoyments; as is clear, Acts x. 16. The sheet is thrice taken back again: therefore we should not be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

The *third* observation is, there are three duties that are ordinarily borne in upon souls. when they are near Christ, which can scarcely be obeyed, and yet obedience to them is most commendable, and does exceedingly commend a soul to Christ.

The *first* is, there are some that seem to contradict the promises, as when a command came forth to Abraham to kill Isaac his first-born, which scarcely could be obeyed; and yet obedience to it is most commendable.

The *second* is, there are some duties that seem to contradict other duties, or commandments; as is clear in that instance of Abraham, his killing of his son stood in opposition to the sixth commandment; it is very hard to give obedience to such a duty.

The *third* is, it is exceeding hard to give obedience to a duty that hath no more, but Christ bade me; yet it is exceeding commendable to give obedience to it; as is clear in Abraham's practice, Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 'To leave his native country, and his kindred, and go to a land which he should show him, which afterward he should give to his seed for a possession.' And is commended by the apostle, Heb. xi. 8. as a most excellent duty.

The *fourth* observation is, that a Christian would distinguish betwixt the light and the life of his enjoyments, exercise of the mind and affection. The life of his enjoyments may be gone, when the light is abiding.

The *fifth* observation is, that a Christian would not have his enjoyments the rule of his obedience and practice: a Christian may be walking in an approved way, and yet have less manifestation. And a Christian may be walking in an unapproved way, and get a word spoken to him, *touch me not*: as is clear, John xx. 17. And hence it is, that sense and an approved way go not together; they may have more sense, and less approbation; and more approbation, and less sense. There are some things in a Christian's



practice in the time of his enjoyments. *First*, He is more taken up with his public, than his private enjoyments: and that he will weep and lament more for the loss of his public, than his private enjoyments. *Secondly*, A Christian will be more anxious to be restrained once in company, than twice in secret. *Thirdly*, That it is easier to be denied to his surprising enjoyments, than to his expected enjoyments: for in his unexpected and surprising enjoyments, his humility hath more ground to vent itself. *Fourthly*, That it is easier to be denied to his private than his public enjoyments. *Fifthly*, That it is the fault of too many, oftentimes to be more taken up with pursuit by sense, than by faith: many make sense their idol, and care not for Christ.

The *sixth* observation is, a Christian should guard against these three evils, pride, sloth, and contempt, which flow upon the back of enjoyments; 'oftentimes wealth makes wit waver.'

The *seventh* observation is, a Christian should observe, that all the sights of Christ here, are but sights of his back parts. These immediate and near sights of him, are reserved to the life that is above the clouds.

The *eighth* observation is, that it is very hard to take up Christ's mind in enjoyments; as is clear, Acts x. 17. Peter doubted in himself what the vision might turn to. And there is nothing more incident for a Christian, than to be in the dark under such a dispensation: in the time of such a dispensation they are put to three questions. *First*, whether they shall weep or rejoice. and praise? But they will do both. *Secondly*, Whether they shall speak or wonder? And they will do well to leave off speaking, and begin and wonder. *Thirdly*, How they shall get such an enjoyment guided? And this is a good and useful question. It is a great difficulty to guide wealth; it is also a great difficulty to keep and to guide Christ, when present, as to find him, when absent.

I shall not proceed further in this discourse, we are like barbarians to ourselves, the most part of us. However it be, it is gain to them that are exercised unto godliness.

I shall make three uses of this, and I shall take in the meanest of them.

*Use 1.* Strangers to Christ, and the word, what think ye of religion, and that it is heard to reach to it? There is more art in his book, than in all the writings of men in the world. O come, and discern into the deeps and wonderful works of the Lord. This book is sealed with seven seals, but our hearts with seventy-seven. O Christian! comfort thyself against that day, when there is not a line in all this book, but thou shalt know and understand it, and read it; when thou shalt learn all thy divinity off the face of Jesus Christ, which will be thy Bible



through all eternity. Think on that day. Do not your hearts flighter within you, when you look up to these clouds above, and cry out, O! when shall I come there, and appear before Christ? We should be breathing out that desire, in Psalm. cvi. 4. ‘Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou hearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation.’ And that, Psalm ci. 2. O, when wilt thou come unto me?’ And we not look enough here? There is a word, 1 Kings xi. 21, 22. ‘Hadad said to Pharaoh, let me depart, that I may go to mine own country. Then Pharaoh said unto him, but what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, nothing: howbeit, let me go in any wise.’

*Use 2.* To reprove the most part of us for laziness and stupidity, that when there is so much to be found in Christ, such an inexhaustible treasure and treasures, and we improve them not. There is much talking of Christ, O! that we would fall in love with him, that ye might bring up a good report ‘of that noble Plant of renown.’ We are oft-times deprived of bidding you take Christ: for when the glad tidings of the gospel are often told over, people are ready to despise them, and care not for a sight of him. But the substance of our preaching is, come and close with Christ.

*Use 3.* I know that there are many that are taken up with a pursuit after the things of the world: but it is a poor design. I may compare these wells of created contentment and consolation, to these wells which Isaac and his servants digged, Gen. xxvi. 20. I say, all these wells of created contentment may be called Esek; for they are gotten with much strife, labour, and contention: and they are kept so, and left with much sorrow. They may also be compared with these two wells that were called hatred: and the day is coming, and now is, that we shall hate, and be hated for them: and these wells will run dry, when these living and everlasting springs of delight shall overflow. There is room for me and you, we shall have abundance, when all these narrow springs are run dry; say then with the Psalmist, ‘all my springs are in thee.’ Mind me to take this resolution, None but Christ, none but Christ, none but Christ, will satiate my soul? O that there were none within these doors, but who would cry out, ‘None but Christ!’ Ye would have as much joy and satisfaction in Christ, as if none did enjoy him but yourselves. The day is coming, that you that sorrow now for Christ’s absence, shall have joy without sorrow, light without darkness, sight without interruption of fellowship, and all your desires satisfied, and your hope overcome. ‘For Christ is gone up with a shout, and is to come again:’ he is gone to take possession in our name; ‘sing

praise to our king, sing praise;' and let us put to our high *Amen*, Selah, to all these excellent songs that sound upon the harp, on the sea of glass, when all our harps shall be put to sing that melodious song. *Amen.*

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## SERMON VI.

ISA. lxv. 1.—*I said, Behold me, Behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.*

WE told you that Christ was presenting a great desire to you; and is there none of you presenting a desire to Christ? I shall tell you two great desires to present to Christ.

The *first* great desire that ye ought to present to him, should be this, 'Lord Jesus, help me to receive my sight? That the eyes of him that is blind may behold him.' And there is,

A *second* great desire that ye ought to present to him, and that is in Psalm xiii. 3. 'Enlighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.' I would give you the advice that Abimelech gave to Abraham, 'let Christ be the covering of your eyes, amongst whom you converse,' I would say but this one thing, Christ is willing to satisfy all your senses: will ye come? Will ye have the sense of sight satisfied? Does not Christ invite you in the text, *Behold me?* Would you have the sense of tasting satisfied? Is not this commanded in Psalm xxxiv. 8. 'O taste and see that the Lord is good?' Would ye have the sense of hearing satisfied? Is it not his command, 'Hear my Son and his gospel?' Would ye have the sense of touching satisfied? Is it not his great command to Thomas, John xx. 27. 'Come and reach thy hand into my side?' And would ye have the sense of smelling satisfied? 'Come to him that is perfumed with all the powders of the merchants.' I do think, the most part of us shall die strangers to Christ. I think, if we would ask the angels, what is Christ? They would say this, they could not tell. All the saints about the throne would say so. And all that have tasted of the sweetness of Christ, ask all of them, what is his sweetness worth? They would say, they could not tell. Would ye ask at the depth, as Job xxviii. 14. it would say, the price of Christ *is not in me*. Yea, let all the gold that lies in the bowels of the earth, say, it could not buy Christ, and all the depth say so. Wherewith then could ye buy him? I say, with one look ye shall get Christ.

Now, in the forenoon, we spake a little to the first thing in the words, which is that great command given to the Gentiles, which is this, *Behold me*. O wonder that ever there should have been such a word! What would ye have thought, if all that is