

SERMON XVI.¹

*“Then answered Jesus, and said unto her, O woman,
great is thy faith: be it unto thee as thou wilt.”*

Matthew 15:28

THESE words, as we have heard before, contain the result and conclusion of the business that passed between Christ and this woman. He commends her faith and grants her her errand to the full, and gives her the word she was waiting for. Ye have heard from these words that the more and greater difficulties that faith honestly wrestles through, the more it is esteemed by the Lord, and well pleasing in His sight. Her faith is called great upon this account, that she wrestled honestly through great difficulties. Ye have heard also that sometimes the Lord bears testimony to grace in His people. Here ye see He gives testimony to this woman's faith: “O woman, great is thy faith.”

I proposed lastly, this third DOCTRINE, *That of all the graces in God's people, faith still proves most victorious, and attains its errand best.*

Faith is still victorious with regard to what it is depending upon God for. It is upon this account that He calls this woman's faith a great faith, because she had so absolutely hung upon Him till she obtained it.

In prosecuting this doctrine, we told you what this faith was: that it was a resolute depending upon God for necessary mercies in His own way, and that this faith was joined with prayer, with diligence, with patience, and with courage, in and under occurring difficulties, and with hope in God in and beyond all these; and what it was this faith overcame; and how it overcomes these things by setting prayer on foot, by engaging the glory of God in the business; by setting former experiences of His thankfulness and kindness against new threatenings; by engaging Christ in

the business; by aiming at glorious ends, and so making the mercy that they got redound to the glory of God, and by turning all disadvantages into encouragement. It cannot be other than victorious when it keeps this way and method. The last thing that we left off at in the doctrine was this, the time when it attains and carries its errand, or is victorious. How it is victorious we have already spoken unto; and that it prevails with omnipotency and how it prevails has been shown you. But though that be true that it overcomes and carries its errand, yet ye must understand that it never carries its errand until the time of the decree. Ye must not be so foolish as to think that the strongest faith in the world can carry its errand before the appointed time come, even the time appointed by the Lord. For faith is but the instrument that brings the decreed thing into the man's hand. Indeed, when God works faith in a soul, it is a good instrument for doing such things as you have heard, and which ye may hear of afterwards. But I say, it doth not carry its errand until the time of the decree. But now ye may be all ready to think with yourselves, "Since faith carries not its errand till the time of the decree, truly we will never wait on it. It may be a long term day." For preventing this, I would put you in mind of these two or three things:

1. Everything is beautiful in its season, as saith the Scripture. And I hope ye will not think that the Lord moves unjustly and imprudently in His purposes. He who had all time in His own hand could not fail to take that time which would be the most proper time. Never think that the time of the decree is an unfit time, since God has made everything beautiful in its season. He has pitched upon the right season of everything, and of the outletting of every mercy. Ye cannot think otherwise of God, unless ye think dishonestly of Him. He who was before all time, and had all times in His eye and option, saw what would be the most fit time and season for the outletting of every mercy. Our time and the timing of our mercies are in His hand, where they are

better than in the hands of any other. There would have been a cold work amongst the saints ere now, if their time and the timing of their mercies had been in their own hand. I hope ye will give credit to God in the works He has done, that they are all beautiful, according to that word, "God will help her, and that right early." This is still a good word at all times, and in all places, "The Lord will help, and that right early." If He let out His mercies right early, then they will still come in season to His people. The mercy will be with you in as good a time as if ye had been watching all night for it. It will be with you ere ye get on your clothes, so to speak. It will be at your hand ere ever ye be ready. So I say, faith carries still its errand in the time of God's decree. All things are "beautiful in their season." "The Lord will be an helper, and that right early." And,

2. When things appear to be for the glory of God, then faith carries its errand. Faith does not carry its errand at every time. No, nor till the thing appears to the praise of God; as Peter expresses it, "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." This woman got an answer, but when was it? Not until she had buckled a while with the trial: not until she came unto this with it, "Be what I will, I shall have that mercy." Then He declares she had faith, and then it was to His praise to grant faith its errand. Whenever faith begins to grow, as it were, unreasonable and ill-mannered, and resolves that no difficulty shall stand in its way, which shall not through God's help be brought about to His praise, then there is hope of obtaining the mercy. "Send her away," said the disciples, "she will affront us all, if she get not somewhat." Then was the time for faith to carry its errand; for then it appeared to the praise of Him who gave it. Ye have been wrestling for the Church these two or three years past, and ye cannot get a good answer; but ye must wrestle better yet ere a delivery

come. If once it were for the praise of God then it will come. Ye must once come to this with it, that if God should drag us through hell, so to speak, we will be at Him; whatever difficulties occur in the way we will be at Him, then readily it will be for His praise to answer your petition. There is a

3. Third thing that speaks forth the time, and that is, patience. "Let patience have its perfect work," and then readily faith will carry its errand. Indeed, I must confess, some folk have been right well exercised this good while, still waiting some chance of it. But patience must come to a perfect work. Folk must resolve to be made what He pleases; and then they will be made something of by God. But truly there are not many of us at this with it. Yet truly the most part of us are but, as it were, binding and lowing with it, yet in somethings; but this must be laid by before faith have its perfect work. Faith's work is to be content to be made anything He will. This woman was content to be made anything He would, provided she could gain her errand. When the person is content He should do anything He will with it; that He should try better try; that He should afflict more afflict—then the person has resolved if all should go to all, still to hang upon Him for the mercy, and is ready to receive every impression but the wrong impression, that he will by no means receive. Faith is content to receive any impression He will; but a refusal of the mercy it will not admit of. There are many things the Lord has upon the wheels yet to be done; and if all these things were done and ready, then faith would carry its errand for the Church of God in her delivery. Ye must not think it long till the number of your brethren have suffered, and several things be done that God hath to do, then faith will carry its business. Ye must let God alone. I mean ye must not peremptorily limit Him to any time for working what He has to do. Ye know not how much He has to do yet ere He deliver the Church. Ye see not all the irons He hath in the fire, so to

Speak; for truly if ye saw them all ye would not speak as sometimes ye do. Though He be coming for the deliverance of the Church, yet there are many things withstanding Him in the way. The prince of Persia must stand in the way till Michael come. The work of God may be retarded for many days till Michael your prince come, and then it will be let no longer. Ye know not but it may be working in America, and going to come down by France and Germany.² That will do our turn. Yet the prince of the kingdom of Persia must withstand the work of the kingdom of God for many days. Would ye take patience till these days be over, the prince of the kingdom of Persia must withstand the work of God till Michael your prince come. But ye shall be no losers by this, for he will come at the set time; and ye shall see good reason to bless God that He chose out the time for the Church's deliverance.

Now for USE of this doctrine: It is no wonder that many folk lie in the mire with regard to many things that they have depending before God. Why, they never set faith on foot to help them. Faith is a victorious grace. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" "All things are possible to him that believeth;" "And they could not enter in because of their unbelief." I say, it is no marvel many folk's business lies low, because they do not set faith on foot to carry its errand. Would ye have anything that ye have to do with God to come good speed with you, then set faith on foot and make it move in the business. Now, I know as soon as I speak this, it will raise this objection in many (for I know it is the thought of many of your hearts) that the thing that ye have depending on God is what ye cannot get faith acted about. Ye cannot make faith move, nor yourselves believe it. I am pressing you to set faith on work for doing anything that ye have to do. Now ye object to this that ye cannot get faith acted anent anything ye have ado. Now that I may speak to this, there are several things that I shall tell you of that hinder faith from going out, from acting and moving

as to such and such a business. Now ye must either remove these, or else ye will never believe anything that ye have depending upon God, so as faith may move, act, and carry its errand in the business. And,

1st, The first thing that ye would remove out of the way is, your delight in known iniquity; for wherever there is any regard to any known iniquity, faith cannot move. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Whenever a man is condemned in his own heart for cleaving to any known iniquity, faith, so to speak, will never go out at that man’s door for the bringing of anything from God to him, for it never expects to see him more. Remove this then ere you send out faith. Ye that are still saying that ye cannot act faith as to such and such a business, ye should know that if your heart condemns you for any known iniquity, without a resolution to quit it, all the world will never cause you to act faith as to any business that ye have to do with God.

2ndly, Ye should understand this, that unless a necessity be both pressed and received, ye do not act faith as to any business. Faith moves best on a clear ground. Faith is such a grace as cannot move but upon serious and necessary things. That which this woman has to do here is serious and necessary business. Faith always moves best when it is distressed with wants. The children of Israel, ye know, were under distresses and want, and their faith moves (Judges 10.). So if ye would have faith move anent anything ye have dependent on God, ye must remove indifference anent that matter out of the way, for faith moves not but in serious and necessary business.

3rdly, Faith moves only when folk are diligent in duty. It is but a fancy to think that faith will move without diligence in duty and uprightness in your walk. Faith has still hopes of meeting God, when the person is diligent in duty; but so

to speak, faith has neither hand nor heart to move in matters that it has dependent upon God, unless there be diligence in duty, for “the hand of the diligent maketh rich.” Faith is made to move, and look for good, when the soul is diligent in duty, working righteousness, and walking uprightly before God. And,

4thly, Faith has no skill in moving, when it cannot say that the thing that it would have shall someway redound to the praise of God. Says James, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” Faith moves always best, and can believe most, when it can say, “If God give such a thing, it shall redound to His praise.” This is an argument the Psalmist makes use of for the Lord to arise and deliver His Church. “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.” And that a generation unknown should serve Him. In this case, the thing redounds to the Lord’s glory. “Spare me, and I shall shew forth thy loving-kindness to this generation.” Therefore, it were still best to send out faith with a vow in its right hand; for faith never moves well but when it has a vow in its right hand. When such a particular receipt of mercy shall be in such a particular way for God’s glory, then faith moves well. And I tell you ye should put some argument in faith’s hand, for it is not good enough for us to hold at generals. No, truly, we are not well known by generals; we must come to particulars with it, or else faith will never move when God gives you such a mercy as ye are interceding for. Then say that such a particular mercy shall redound to the Lord’s praise. Lay on the vow, and say that it shall be for the glory of God. Promise that at such a time ye will do such a thing. Will ye say this, and lay on the vow? Will ye say, “Unto thee shall vows be performed, O Lord”? I would have the people of God specifying some particular way for the attaining such a particular mercy as they are seeking, in

which it shall be for the glory of God. Once come to particulars with it this way, and then faith will move. Think ye that Scripture useless, "Thy vows are upon me, O God"? And ye know that when Jacob went to Padanaram, and left his own country, says he, "If thou wilt be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, then shall the Lord be my God, and of all that thou shalt give me, I shall surely give the tenth unto thee." So, I say, faith moves always best when it has a particular aim and a vow in its right hand, and that particular aim must be to the glory of God. Ye remember that which I spake to you not long ago: "If I deliver you," says Jephthah, "then shall I be your head." If Christ shall deliver us, He shall be our head; He shall be the Head of the Church Himself; there shall not be a rival that shall get a part of it. It is true He shall be our head whether He delivers us or not. But I would have you to come to some particulars with it, that if He shall help you through this evil time, ye shall do such a particular thing that shall be for His glory. The last thing I would say is this, that faith never loves but to go upon known grounds. The thing I mean is this, faith would still know what to say; it would still have its mouth filled with arguments when it has anything to do, and then it will move and go boldly on. I am persuaded the great reason why our faith in this generation never gets out fairly for anything we have to do with the Lord is, that we are never at the pains to fill its mouth with arguments. I grant that true faith is the evidence of things not seen, yet it is as true it desires not to go upon unknown grounds; for ye must understand faith is no fancy; it doth not move without some grounds, therefore ye should fill its mouth with arguments that ye may move the more boldly. For all that we are intending is this, to see if we can get faith to carry its errand for matters that it has depending upon God (as ye heard the last day), so that it may prove victorious at last.

And there are only these three cases I would condescend

upon; and I believe a great part of you would gladly have faith moving as to all the three, in bringing you a good answer from the Lord concerning them all. I believe ye will think them cases of importance and conscience. And faith is to be waited on and employed in all these three cases. But unless ye fill faith's mouth with arguments, it will not move nor bring you a good answer from the Lord as to any of these; therefore we shall endeavour to let you see what arguments will be fit to put in its mouth, so that it may the more confidently move and bring you a good answer anent them all. The

1. Is the case of your souls. I am sure some of you would know amidst the revolution of the times what will become of your souls. I am sure there are some of you have been waiting a long time to hear what God will do or say anent your souls. Well, we shall tell you what arguments you should put in faith's hands, that faith may bring you a good answer as to your souls.

2. Another case is as to your through-bearing in this evil time. I warrant there are some of you would gladly know if they shall be carried honestly through in this evil time. Ye cannot make faith take footing well in this business. Well, we shall tell you what arguments ye should put in faith's mouth that it may take footing, and move on these arguments if it move at all. The

3. Case is anent the Church of God. I am sure some of you would gladly have a good answer from the Lord for His poor Church; therefore we shall tell you what arguments ye should put in faith's hand for this, that we may expect some good thing from the Lord's hand to the poor Church, notwithstanding all these sad things that our eyes do behold. I think these three comprehend the substance of the great work that now we have to do concerning ecclesiastical affairs and matters of religion. Now, these three are the

most important cases under the sun. Well, then, if ye would have faith moving and bringing you a good answer from the Lord, as we have said, there is a necessity of filling its mouth with arguments. Let us then see what arguments are proper, that we may the more confidently believe and look for good from God concerning all these three things.

I now return to the first of these—the case of your souls. Ye would gladly have that perfected which concerns your souls. It may be ye have been labouring to set faith on foot; but it would never move that way yet. Well, we would now press you to take trial of faith further. There are very many arguments that we would have you to put in faith's hand as to this. If faith move not with these arguments, truly, if we may so speak, faith is far in the wrong to you. And on the other hand, if ye have bidden faith move and have not put these arguments in faith's hand, truly ye are far in the wrong to faith. And if ye cannot appropriate these to yourselves when ye hear me pronounce them, I have the worse notion of you, and so may continue to have this twelve-month for anything I know. Now the

1st Argument I would have you to put in faith's hand is this, "I have even been one of those to whom the Lord hath discovered his lost condition." Have ye this to say, "I wot well, I saw myself lost upon a thousand accounts? I have seen myself verily guilty and liable to wrath." I am sure that must be a good argument for you, since "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." It is likely ye may think little of this argument, but truly I'll tell you, you will put many arguments in faith's mouth ere it move if ye put not this in it. "Let God do with me what He will; I am liable to death on a thousand accounts." And then,

2ndly, Have ye this to say, "Well I wot I feel my lost condition, and mourn for it and the causes of it as one mourneth for his first born." In a word, this has come nearer your

heart than anything ye ever met with in the world. Have ye this to say, that you have been made to mourn over your lost condition, as one for an only son; and that it has gone nearer your heart than anything that ever you met with in the world? This indeed is a great argument when ye dare take the Lord to witness, that now and then, though seldom, this business has gone nearer your heart than anything ye ever met with. Indeed if ye can say so, ye look like one of those to whom that promise of washing is made by that fountain “that is opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” It was opened for them that mourn for this, as “one mourns for his first born, or an only child.”

3rdly, Have ye any more to say? Yes, I have this to say, “I have lost all hope of relief in myself.” Well ye are then like those folk that have no confidence in the flesh, whose rejoicing is in Jesus Christ. I would not wish for a better argument than that; take heed to these arguments, and remember them, and gather, and keep them well together: you are one of them to whom God has discovered their lost condition; and when ye were made to see it, it went so near your heart, that ye never found anything go so near it before. Ye saw there was nothing in yourself self. Ye might well make the plea worse, but ye could never make it better, and therefore you cast off all hope in yourself. Very well said indeed, these three agree very well together. But,

4thly, A fourth argument, Have ye any more to say? Can ye say this further? that your eyes have been thus far opened, though ye wot not well how, that you now see where your help lies, so that ye are not afraid to say this, “I wot well, my help is in Christ if I could attain it; I would seek no other thing from God, as miserable as I am, but what that ransom Christ paid did procure. I will have no more, and I will have no less. I will tell you more, if I had a thousand souls in one, I would venture them all that way

upon that purchase. I would not venture one of them upon another way.” A very good argument, truly! I cannot see ye can be well refused. Ye see ye want help in yourself, and ye see where your help lies if you could have it; and ye will not go another way for it. Ye grant God has made you see where your help lies both suitably and satisfyingly for your state and condition. Ye say ye dare venture upon it for all need, both for the present and for the time to come. Indeed it is very likely ye hear of something promising-like concerning your soul. For “he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” There is good in that argument: it is much to believe that He that suffered without the gates of Jerusalem is the Son of God, and to be content to take what He has purchased by that suffering for their help. To believe that is no small matter indeed.

5thly, A fifth argument, What more can ye say? Can ye say any more to faith ere it go? Yes, I can say this farther: That he is happy that gets this though he were burnt at a stake; I have such an esteem of it, that I think if God would uphold me I would be content to be burnt at once myself for it. Truly that is very well said. Indeed Christ is the pearl of great price, and that treasure hid in the field to you. And I think you are the merchant that would sell all he hath to make that your own. I will assure you that is a valid argument if ye hold on. Such faith could not be long till it brought you a good answer, believe it, if ye follow on in that way. And,

6thly, But have ye any more for faith to say before a throne of grace? Yes, I have this to say, that in such a way as I could get it done, I closed with Christ with complacency and satisfaction, my heart bended towards Him, and acquiesced in Him, and rested on Him, so that I thought I was content to close with Him as my Prophet, Priest, and King. I was content as I thought to have Him with all the crosses that follow Him. Truly that says more yet, and is a

very strong argument. Indeed, there is much strength in it. I warrant you, if ye hold on, such faith would betake itself to its feet very soon. I dare not well say that I have the thing you call closing with Christ; but I wot well in the way I thought I was to close with Christ I closed with Him. I wot well I thought my heart was content to take Him in all His offices, as well as King to rule me, as Prophet to teach me, and Priest to intercede for me.

7thly, Have ye any more to say, or add to these? Yes, I have this to say more, that of all these my heart condemns me not for the contrary. I wot well for ought I know I closed with Him this way; and my heart condemns me not for the contrary. Oh, good argument indeed! For if ye have not a mind to beguile yourselves, God will not beguile you. And what more have ye to say? Are we parted? Have ye any more to say that ye think will do any good in this case?

8thly, Yes; I have this to say, that from that time forth, I know not how it was, the fear of God fell upon my heart; from that time forth, I have felt it otherways than ever before, and ever since, I have had a respect to all His commandments. Indeed that is a very good argument for a poor man or woman that has not many high school terms. But have ye any more to say to faith, that it may go the better about this business?

9thly, Yes; I have this to say, that in all the business that I thought passed betwixt Christ and me, I was still afraid that I had been deceived, and therefore with what I thought to be seriousness as far as I could attain to it, I appealed to the God of heaven and earth, that according to His verity and faithfulness, as He was a just and a faithful God, He would not only prevent a poor thing from beguiling itself, but that He would let me know whether I was right or wrong. I appealed unto Him and bade Him try me, and let me know whether I was in the right or wrong way. Well

said; truly there is much good in that argument. I assure you, there is as much in it as in other two. Light draws still to light and darkness to darkness. The wicked with their evil deeds draw still to darkness. Oh but I love this well! It is always promising-like, when man dare appeal to the God of heaven, that He would “search and try them, and see if there be any wicked way in them.” There is good hope in that, when folk have cordially and seriously appealed to God that He would let them know whether they are right or wrong. Then ye can say this, that ye appealed to God the Lord and desired Him as He was faithful and just, and delighted not in the death of sinners, not to suffer a poor creature to deceive itself unwittingly and unwillingly. Have you this to say further, that the answer that came back from His word to you came as an answer of peace, at some solemn and supplicating time when ye have put it upon God to give you a return, you found the return come from His word though by the mouth of a stranger ye knew not? But there came an answer of peace to you, and it came in such a strain and on such a Scripture ground that ye knew well from whence it came. A good argument indeed! Ye put yourself into the hand of the Lord, and having appealed to Him in the thing, the answer from Him to you was peace, and ye thought yourselves more happy than ye were wise. But,

10thly, Have ye any more, for in my mind ye that have that have more to say? Yes, I have this to say to prove that this answer took effect on my heart, when it came; I mean, as I said before, in all this my heart condemns me not. Indeed that is far said. I marvel, then, if ye have not confidence in God; if it were not for your ignorance I wot well ye would have it. If it were not for your ignorance I assure you ye would not be without it. But indeed ignorance will mar this; for if there be any challenge for sin in the conscience, it will not be; for there are many folk who take challenges off the conscience for heart-condemning. But of a truth I

take it not so. But when ye have this to say, “My heart doth not condemn me” — that is, “I hold not nor allow myself in any known iniquity, nor do I desire or allow myself to omit or shift any known duty competent to me in my place and station.” Oh, but that be a strong argument to put in faith’s hand! That is not the question. I may be free of heart-condemning in that case, for heart-condemning is when my heart condemns me for allowing myself in some known sin of commission, or in some known sin of omission of duty; but without I know this, I shall be condemned of my own heart for no judicatory in the world can condemn a man by law without they can instance some capital crime they have to lay to his charge. Law will not condemn a man before it hear him. Think ye that the greatest rebel against God at this time will condemn a man upon suspicion that he is a rebel, because he went under the name of a fanatic, while they could not instance wherein he was treasonable, but only because he was called a “Remonstrator.” Well, shall I be condemned of my own heart while it cannot instance or inform myself of a particular wherein I am dealing deceitfully before God. This were the greatest ignorance in the world, I would not be condemned of my own heart unless it can instance some particular for which it condemns me, as I said before. Ye ought not to receive from your own heart a sentence of this kind; but when ye know a particular sin ye are given to and ye will not have deliverance from it, or some known duty that ye slight and do not go about it, in that case I am heart-condemned; but I am not so if my heart cannot charge me with a particular that I am guilty of as to any known sin, or slighting known duty. It is a strong argument if ye can truly say ye allow yourself in no known sin, nor shift any known duty.

11th, Have ye any more to say? Ye have said right well since ye began; but have ye any more to say? Yes; I have this to say, that the business I have been speaking of is not a new start got up with me, but I have been labouring on

therein this long time. Indeed, that is a very good token too. Ye have not been hypocritical. Job's friend thought very wisely, that a hypocrite will not always call upon God; indeed it is well said, and I would that many had this to say. But,

12th, Can ye say any more? Why, I have this to say, that I have been labouring or drawing at this business a long season—seven years and more—and I dare even say another word too, to conclude all with. Truly I would love you much worse for all you said, if you would not say this; and it is even this, and see if ye can say it: “I dare say that God has determined my heart at this time to join with Him, and to continue on His side, and to win and lose with Christ and His people.” Dare ye say that God has at this time, determined thy heart with Moses, to choose affliction with the people of God? Have ye this to say, that ye have looked through all the business with deliberation, and closed with Christ and His cross? Indeed this is a very good closing argument, that these long seven years or more ye have been following religion, and have had these blessed transactions forementioned as signs betwixt God and you; and now ye have even this word to close all with, ye will choose affliction with the people of God. I daresay that there is many a soul of you here that has never been at these things with it. There are many of you that have been hurling after religion these long seven years, and more, too, that never knew things; and I put it to you this day, What have ye to prove your interest in God, or what arguments can ye make use of at this time to prove that it will be made perfect that concerns your souls. If ye cannot make use of one of these I have told you of, I wot well ye are far in the wrong; for I have told of a considerable number of arguments that the people of God have to make use of, and they are all very significant, full and clear in their exercise. Now judge with your own hearts whether or not ye have done your duty to faith, and have bidden it move and fetch you a good answer

from the Lord concerning your souls when ye could not put this into faith's hands. I believe this is a thing ye have been looking to these many years past, what would become of your souls? Now, if ye would have that made perfect which concerns your souls, put these arguments in faith's hand, and see what answer faith will bring you back from the Lord.

Now dare ye hold by them all? Can ye say that God has made you see your lost condition, and has brought it so near your heart that He has made it bitter to you, and made you mourn for it as one mourns for his first-born? Has He emptied you of all hope of helping yourselves, and made you see where suitable help lies, even in the blessed Jesus, whose name was as ointment poured forth unto you? Did He deal with you in such a way that ye bended your course towards Christ, and closed with that help that is in Him and was well content with it and all the inconveniences that follow it? And in all this does not your heart condemn you? From that time forth did the fear of God so fall upon you as made you have a respect to all His commandments? Again, after that time, and in all this business were ye afraid that ye had been deceived? Ye appeal to Him that He would make you know whether ye were in the right or wrong way; and did you get a good answer and a return back from the Lord? Does your heart not condemn you for any known sin you have committed, or any known duty that ye have omitted? Have you been following on these long seven years after religion? and to conclude, Have you now chosen affliction with the people of God, and resolved to win and lose with them, to stay at home or be banished with them, being contented to take your lot with them? If they should never rise again, are you content never to have a joyful day in this world again? Truly there is a good stock of all these, each of them speaking much good, and much more when they are all together. Now, I am sure, if ye have put this furniture in faith's hand, faith will run and bring you a

good answer concerning your souls.

The second case I promised to speak to was this: If ye would have faith going to bring some good tidings concerning your being honestly carried through in this evil time, believe that God will bear you honestly through in this evil time. Truly this is a great and comprehensive case. But I will not promise to give you such sure grounds for this as for the other. I could infallibly say of the other, that if ye would put them in faith's hand that faith should be made perfect as to what concerns your souls. But I cannot give you such sure grounds for this. But I shall give or advise you to put arguments in faith's hands, that if it move at all and bring you a good answer, it will be upon these grounds or arguments, and I think, faith being your friend, ye may come to receive that good from God amongst the rest. Then that bodes good yet; therefore put some good argument in faith's hand, and see what it can do in order to your being honestly borne through in this evil time. If it move at all it will be upon arguments. And as we said of the other, look if ye can say this from the bottom of your heart.

(1.) And first have you this to say that the Lord has called you by His name? that is, "I am a professor of godliness; His glory and my good name are interwoven together." Ye are content to give out yourself for one of His; and ye cannot, will not, dare not deny this; though I confess folk should not make too much noise about this. For it is a great disadvantage to that man that has had such a name, if he hath not been real, or if he lose his feet in a day of trial. But it is a great advantage to him and to others that look on, if he has not been dealing deceitfully with God, but has been professing God in reality and has had the inward coming up to his outward profession. Oh, but he has a great plea in law when he has this to say, "I am one of those who professed thy name." This was an argument that the servant of the Lord, David, had. "Put not away thy servant in

anger; thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” Wherefore that? why they will say, there is one who would still be called the servant of God go where he would; but see how he owns Him now and look and see if thou wilt have much credit by it; if you are likely to lose a step in the day of trial when there are so many on-lookers; put in this word in faith’s mouth, His name and your name go together, His glory and your glory go together; and His credit and honour will suffer with yours. Make this go, and ye will get the belief of this; “for to the pure He will show himself pure.” He will deal faithfully when He finds honesty. But,

(2.) In the next place have ye this to say, “I have no confidence in the flesh?” Truly, if ye be not come this length I fear very much that you give but a foul testimony. But if ye are got this length ye are far forward. Ye have left Peter a step behind you already. It is true, indeed, it is very good to resolve well, “If I should die with thee I will not deny thee;” a good resolution! But I doubt that perhaps you will make two of that ere a year or little more come about. But if ye can say ye have no confidence in the flesh; but, in your own mind will or would be a poor apostate if God helped you not; indeed that is a very good argument, and my mind is, that ye that think so your confidence is upon surer grounds than ye imagine.

(3.) Well, can ye say any more? Have ye this argument also? That ye are losing every weight that presses you downward? Truly ye will sail the better for that if you are going to Barbadoes.³ Truly if ye be for this ye must be loosing the ties betwixt wife and children, houses and land, and whatever more ye may have, putting your affairs in order. But if you have not these ties loosed, but your heart and eye will be in them (for it is even that which they would have, and if they cannot get a hair in your neck, as we commonly say, they will even do it for your means), I say if ye loose not

yourselves from these, ye will come foul off some way or other; therefore loose yourselves from these things that tie you to them. If you do not I am persuaded there will be a rack amongst you. Lay aside every weight that presses you downward. Either you must have that argument to use, that your heart is fully loosed from these things, or ye will get no answer about your being honestly carried through in this evil time. You must loose your hearts from your estates and farms, otherwise, there will be news of it. The house and the land have been long called by one name, and ye are loath that it should go out of that. No, truly, you must loose that weight and let it go. Now have ye that argument to use, that every weight that ye know that presses you downward ye are laying aside and ye are loosing the ties where ye find them fastest? This is a good argument indeed, as good as some two that I know, so that if ye would have faith moving as I said, then ye would

(4.) In the fourth place have this to say, that there is nothing now that ye are afraid of at this day of trial; but what to do and what to say ye know not if Christ help you not. This is no bad argument; ye are not vexed what will become of this and the other thing; what will become of wife, children, house, and estate, portion, and all the rest of it. But this is your anxiety: "What will I do or say, for a subtle enemy will accuse me; and if I, a poor ignorant creature, speak a wrong word they will take occasion from that to reproach religion and the name of God, and much more." If I am even vexed what to do or say, lest His name or religion be injured by me, this is a good argument; and I think ye will get an answer for good with that same argument. It seems that that special promise hath a relation to you, when ye shall be brought before kings and governors. "And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall

speak.” I trow that promise is made for your mouth; for truly that promise is made for that party who is careful for nothing, but what to do and what to say for the glory of God and religion. To such it shall be given in that hour what they shall do and say lest they should wrong the glory of God and deny His truth. They are careful for nothing but that they get not a word to say for the glorious name of Jesus Christ. They are only careful how to debate the cause for the glory of God, and how to do answerably to what they say. For such, says Christ, I pass my royal word upon it that it shall be given them in that hour what to speak or say. And,

(5.) Then ye would have this argument to make use of, if ye would have the faith of being honestly carried through in this evil time, that all the hope and expectation of your soul is only upon the account of free grace in Christ—not because ye have done this or that, not because ye have cast away every weight that presses you downward—I look not to be carried honestly through because of that, but I look only and solely to free grace in Christ Jesus.

(6.) And then ye would have this further to say, if ye would have a good answer from the Lord concerning this, that as far as ye can ye are dealing faithfully in the little that God is putting into your hand. That is also a good argument; better than two friends up at court yonder. It is better than the favour of a Lord of the Seal up at Edinburgh. It is good to be still faithful as to anything God hath put into your hand. It is very likely that when ye are faithful in the little that God has put in your hand, that God will make you faithful in that which is much also. But let me tell you, if ye keep to the last with those that still defer, saying, “We will keep our testimony to the last and great shock,” I fear ye may come foul off; for if ye be not faithful in little, I am afraid ye will never be faithful in much.

(7.) Have ye any more to say? Can ye make use of this argument, that as you are able you are helping them that are foremost in giving a testimony for Christ? Help is good in all places, and “with what measure ye mete, it shall be meted unto you again.” It is no small matter to have so many thousand honest folks’ prayers to light at your door, so to express it, for your good every day. This is no small business indeed.

Now, these are the arguments ye are to put into faith’s hands. If ye can make use of them, it is well—though I cannot say these are infallible grounds for faith to move on, for bringing you a good answer from the Lord for your being honestly carried through, as I have said of the other, concerning your soul; but if ye have not these arguments to use, ye are far behind, and if ye have them, ye are far forward. For,

1. It is a great thing to have it to say, “My name and thy glory are interwoven together.”
2. “I have no confidence in my flesh, nor anything that I have received, but only in Christ.”
3. “I am loosing all weights that press downward, and letting them go.”
4. “The great matter that vexes me is not these things I have let go; but the thing that troubles me is, what to do and what to say.”
5. “The hope I have as to the business is, even free grace in Jesus Christ.”
6. “As I can, so as I am called, so I resolve to give a testimony even in little things.”
7. “As I am able to lend them a lift that are called to give a greater testimony than I am yet called to give.”

But I go no further. If ye dwell much upon these things, I am assured that very soon faith will bring you an answer

of good from the Lord, that ye shall be honestly carried through in these evil times.

N.B. There is another sermon upon this text, wherein Mr. Guthrie begins upon the third particular here not spoken to, viz., church deliverance.

Footnotes:

1. There are other two sermons (in manuscript) preached before on this text, and also some following which could not now be published.

2. If we apply this to the Revolution and what followed upon it, it may be considered as respecting the coming of the Prince of Orange from Holland, and the accession of the Prince of Hanover, one of the principalities of Germany, to the British throne; or perhaps it may apply to the present commotions in Britain, France, Germany, and America—commotions which may perhaps bring about much good to the Church of Christ.

3. Here it is to be remarked that in this instance Mr. Guthrie seemed to be a true prophet in regard that several years afterward a number of his hearers were banished to Barbadoes for the cause of Christ, although there was no appearance at this time of their being exposed to such hardships.