

SERMON X.¹

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

Isaiah 55:1-2

THERE is in this chapter a proclaimed market, such as was never heard of, even the most pleasant, most substantial, and most glorious market that ever was; the most glorious wares; the most precious wares; the dearest bought and cheapest sold that ever any wares were. Here we have the most free and lawful invitation to all sorts of persons to come and have them. They shall get them and pay nothing for them. Now there is in this chapter

1st, An invitation to all persons in all places, to come and receive Jesus Christ, the King of kings, Lord of lords, and Prince of peace, who is even among our hands in the gospel, wherein He manifests Himself. Now that He offers Himself, take Him, and you are welcome to Him. Any person who hath anything ado with Him, come; for He is now seeking employment to be given Him. He hath balms for all wounds, salves for all sores, and cures for all sorts of diseases. And,

2ndly, There are some objections against this coming, and these He solves, and uses various motives and invitations to encourage souls to come unto Him and buy. Such are the following:

1. The market is free. He is seeking nothing from you, but hath all glorious things to give you. Therefore, ye are fools if ye will not come and take when ye have nothing to give.

2. If ye will not come, your well-doing is over. Your doom is, “Depart for ever;” and do what ye can, ye shall not prosper, nor get any soul-satisfaction any other way. And,

3. If ye will come, ye need not be afraid of wrath and justice. Ye shall not have that to say that ye dare not come for fear He execute justice upon you. The Father took Christ Jesus to be your Cautioner or Surety. Christ shall stand for you and manage in your room or stead. He will manage all that concerns you, both with regard to the guilt and the pollution of sin; for the punishment of sin, if ye will but accept of Him to be your Cautioner or Surety, He shall answer for all your wrongs, as if they had been done in His own person, and He shall stand for them, and ye shall go free. And,

4. Ye may think it a great honour and prerogative that ever the like of you is allowed to come near Christ, instead of saying ye will not come unto Him. For God hath a mind to make Him unspeakably honourable in His kingdom, think ye of Him what ye will. For many shall come out of all kindreds, kingdoms, and nations, like flocks of sheep, and shall cast down their crowns at His footstool, even those that have never yet heard of Him; and what a shame will it be for you to be the last of all in paying your respects to Him?

5. If ye will not come and close with Him now in the offers of the gospel, wherein He is offered unto you, take care that ye sit not your time of the market; for there is but a set time of His offers, wherein He will be found of you.

But there are two formidable objections, which are these:

Objection 1. We are so abominable, and have provoked God so often, that we think it cannot stand with His justice to accept of such traitors, though we should come. But God

answers, "Away with such chat; for my thoughts are not like your thoughts, saith the Lord; they are as far above them as the heavens are above the earth."

Objection 2. Say some, "Ye may promise us fair words enough; but in the mean time, we get nothing in our hands, but bare words." "That is true," says God, "but I think My word effectual enough to perform anything I can promise; for I am both powerful enough, and willing enough to perform it. Besides My word must prove itself effectual, for it must be for a name, and for a praise unto Me in all generations." And then He hints at the deliverance of the people of the Jews from their bondage. So much for the meaning of this chapter. We now return, to make some improvement of it in the way of comparing it with the former chapter, in which ye heard many a precious promise made to the Church and her children. And now God will have them apply and bring home all these to their own souls, in closing with Christ; wherein we observe,

That whatever promise was made to the Church, all the members of it should believe, and apply them to themselves in the way of closing with Christ. And now we enter upon the words, wherein there are:

1. The King's proclamation making way for our coming to the market, in the words, "Ho, every one."
2. A public intimation of the goods that are to be had at this market, and these are "water," "wine," and "milk."
3. The manner in which these goods are to be viewed.
4. The duty of the party to come, and a dehoration from any other way in these words, "Wherefore do ye spend your labour for that which is nought?"

5. An exclusion from salvation in any other way than by coming unto Christ, and receiving Him as He offereth Himself in the gospel.

I return,

I. To the first, which is the proclamation openly made for coming unto Christ. "Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Now Christ is crying this day, who will come unto Him? He is crying to deaf folk who never heard, "Will ye hear, and believe the word preached? I will make you see, ye blind folk, who are running upon imminent hazard, Ho! are there any folk who have wounds to heal? here is balm for you. Is there any man here who desires to be made clean? here is water to cleanse you. Is there any who have sores to heal? come, here is salve for you. Are there any fractured bones amongst you? here is healing for you. Are there any hard hearts amongst you? here is repentance for you. Are there any confused with darkness amongst you? come, here is light for you. Do any desire to be taught? here is teaching for you. Do you desire to be made friends with God? here is reconciliation for you. Would any be borne up under their crosses? here is strength for them. Is there any person who judges himself, though they suppose they are beguiling themselves? here is counsel for you. Come unto me and I will tell you where you are, and what ye are doing." But oh! what is the matter that we have to say unto you, that few of you will come to Christ, though ye know yourselves to be far from Him? The reason why a proclamation must be made before we come to this market, is,

1. That the King may declare publicly what goodwill He bears to the commonwealth of Israel. He would much rather have folk to be converted and live, than die and perish.

2. He makes it public, that He may evidence His power and sovereignty over all things.
3. He makes it public, that the mouth of all objectors to the contrary may be stopped.
4. That all his enemies may come to a rendezvous and see whether they are able to stop Him.
5. He proclaims it publicly, that all may know that the market has but a set time, wherein Jesus Christ is offered to souls; and therefore they should bestir themselves in the time of the market. Go not away, then, ere ye get the wares secured to yourselves, seeing the great God of heaven has made an open proclamation for all sorts of persons to come to Christ. Let no person be so foolish as to despise the King's proclamation.

He makes an open proclamation, that you may know that there is a reality in closing with Christ in the Gospel. Consider this, all ye who never knew anything of your guilt, nor had the sense of it, nor had ever had any debate about your closing with Christ for your recovery out of your lost state and condition. I say, such are to look upon themselves as the most vile and the maddest creatures that ever were known. They even savour of the earth. Any person that is truly acquainted with the exercises of closing with Christ, and dare say that they have Him for their portion, their countenance shall be made to shine in heavenly glory. As to any person who supposes he has any hatred of his sins, and yet, through a sense of guilt, dares not venture upon closing with Christ, I say, as long as he stands on this side of Christ, he shall have no true peace of mind.

Now we shall give you some motives that we think may put you upon a peremptory closing with Christ. And consider:

1. That these offers are threatened to be removed. God knows how long you may have them. Now, while you have your day of the Gospel, improve and make use of Christ for your salvation, by closing your interest with Him.

2. Though it should please Him to continue the same day of the standing of the Gospel, it will not stand long without a storm and many a winter blast blowing against it and its professors. Since the winter is approaching, ye have need to look that your clothes be provided for you, lest ye go with the storms and dint of the weather.

3. And is not God now plaguing all the land? We conceive it is for no other reason but because people will not flee from their idols, and cleave to Christ, and close with Him for their alone portion. But,

II. We come to the wares of this market, and these are of three sorts: (1) Water, (2) wine, (3) milk.

With regard to water, He is called “the water of life;” with regard to wine, the spouse compares Him to “flagons of wine;” and with regard to milk, He bids His people suck out the “sincere milk of the word (which is Himself), that they may grow thereby.” The reasons will be taken from the properties of each of these, which we shall consider separately for your better understanding of the point. And,

Firstly, (1.) Water, ye know, is good for washing and cleaning away of all filthiness. (2.) Water is good for the softening of any hard thing. (3.) Water is good for refreshing, or quenching of thirst. (4.) Water is good for curing hot and fiery humours. All these properties are to be found in Christ. Art thou one of the most filthy creatures upon the earth? Then Christ is that fountain opened for washing away your sin and uncleanness. Is the wrath of God burning in thy conscience for thy sin and uncleanness? Then

Christ broke down the partition wall, and quenched justice and wrath, and became a curse for us. Hast thou an old hard heart, harder than anything thou ever sawest? I say, Christ can soften it, and pour out the spirit of repentance, and make one mourn for sin that never mourned for it before. Is thy conscience galled for sin that thou canst get no rest? Christ is a Prince for that end, to make peace in a soul that is out of peace. Hast thou a desire after Christ, and are all things nothing to thee for want of Him? Then come and venture upon Christ, and thou shalt be satisfied and filled with Him in such a manner that out of "thy belly shall flow living waters;" that is, thou shalt have full satisfaction in Him. Is thy case one of the most strange and wonderful in the world? Then Christ's name is also the Wonderful, Counsellor. Art thou afraid of the removal of the gospel, which would oblige thee to flee to the mountains, where thy soul would be famished for want of this water? Christ can be a little sanctuary, and preach to thee there Himself. "But I fear," says one, "for all that, I shall fall into some error or other for want of instruction." I say, Christ will feed thee, lead thee, and teach thee. "But," say you, "what will I have there to live upon, on the top of a bare mountain!" Why? Christ can feed thee there, according to His prophetic office? "But," say ye, "what if the gospel be not totally removed, but is tainted with some mixture that will prove poison to me?" I say, Christ will "lead thee by the way that thou shouldst go," even up unto His own bosom, which is the ocean from which the whole gospel flows, where thou shalt drink pure and clear water without any mixture at all. And if thou thinkest thou canst not get Him served there, He can write His law in thy inward parts, circumcise thy heart, and cause thee to serve Him.

Secondly, As for wine, ye know it is good for comforting a weak and heavy spirit. It is also good for reviving one that falls into fainting fits. It is likewise good for fitting a man for more than ordinary pieces of work. All these properties,

and more, are to be found in Christ. Then look what case thou hast to propose; there is still something in Christ to answer it. Is thy case a dead case? Then Christ revives the dead and dry bones of Zion. Art thou not only dead, but so very dead that thou art past hopes of recovery? Then Christ can say to these dry and withered bones, Live. Is thy strength quite gone? Then come to Christ, and He will be thy strength and portion for ever. Thinkest thou thyself one of the most needy creatures in the world? Then Christ is that noble plant of renown, that puts life, and holds life, in all His branches. Hast thou no strength to resist an enemy? Then say, "When I am weak, then am I strong in the Lord." Art thou oppressed and borne down with an enemy, and hast thou lost all strength to resist? Then they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and make them to face their enemy again. Is all thy strength so far spent that thou art sighing and going backward? Then Christ is that green fir-tree that holds in the spark of life in all the branches that are withered. And as for growth; hast thou such a case that for all the pains that have been taken upon thee thou hast never grown anything better? Then Christ is the choice builder who makes all the stones of the house cement compactly together. Besides, He is that Sun of righteousness who arises with healing under His wings for all sorts of maladies and diseases, or kinds of diseases.

There are other reasons why Christ and all that believers have in Him, are compared to water, wine, and milk. And Christ represents Himself under these similitudes to hold out the variety of cures that are in Him, suited to the variety of diseases in His people.

Then, all polluted people, come away to Christ; He has cleansing for you. All that are languishing under diseases, come away; He has cleansing for you. Here is a cure for all your diseases; strength for all your weaknesses; comfort under all your crosses and trials; growth under all your

backwardness. He takes away the guilt of sin, and the filth of sin, and the punishment of it. He makes the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk and go forward. He feeds the hungry with good things, binds up the broken-hearted, and dandles them upon His knees, and tenderly lays them in His bosom. We will say no more of that ocean of fulness that is in Christ, but this, "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it," nor is tongue able to express the bottomless fulness that is to be had in Christ. Oh, that He were made use of and got employment at our hands! How much more cheerful in this case would many souls be than they are! There would not be so many complaints amongst you; but we think all would be stirring up one another to speak unto His commendation; and that would be a sweet and comfortable life for you.

III. We come to the manner in which the party is desired to come and accept of Christ in this market of free grace. And, First, They are desired to come that are thirsty.

Secondly, Those that have no money. These are the only objects of Christ's free offers. For thirsty folk, it is clear from the fore-cited text: "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And for those who have no money: "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed," Now,

1st, For the first of these, viz., the thirsty. I shall speak to so many sorts of them that are invited to come.

1. Some are afraid of hell, and thirst principally for heaven, that they may be kept in life. These, perhaps, have no thoughts of Christ. I say to those who are afraid of hell, and would gladly be at heaven, ye must come to Christ for that, for Christ hath both the keys of heaven and hell at

His side; it is He that must open heaven's gates, if ever ye get there. Therefore close with Christ for salvation, and ye need not be afraid that ye will not get heaven; but without Him heaven ye shall never see.

2. There is a sort that thirst principally after Christ; and give them all the world, they count it but loss and dung if they get not Christ. Give them evidences of their interest in Him, it will make up all their other losses. I say, I wot well ye should come and close with Christ; for He cries unto all, who have any desire after Him to come, and He will fulfil and satisfy all their desires. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

3. There is another sort that thirst after holiness; and these also are bidden come. But although this be good in itself, yet take care that ye thirst not more to be holy than to come unto Christ Himself, who must sanctify you, and make you holy by His Holy Spirit. And,

(1.) Beware of seeking holiness in order to make it a positive qualification, whereby ye may have it to say that ye have something in your hands to buy with, by which ye will spoil all the market; for the market is "without money, and without price."

(2.) I say, think ye ever to get the grace of holiness wrought within you until first ye venture your salvation on Christ, and take Him to be a righteousness unto you. Take Christ in the first place, and then seek holiness from Him. According to His own word, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek first righteousness, and then holiness. Ye would think him a foolish man that would look for apples on a tree that is not yet planted. So people are foolish to think that ever Christ will make one grow in holiness as long as they dare not venture their salvation upon Him.

How can ye believe He will make you holy, as long as ye cannot believe in Him, or trust your salvation unto Him. But,

(3.) In the third place, Think not that we discommend holiness, or those who are seeking after it. No, God forbid; “for without holiness, no man shall see God.” Our meaning here is, that people should think nothing of their holiness. For anything that they can do is but as “an unclean thing,” which needs mercy for the imperfection of it. However, they must be earnest in following after commanded duties, for fear of offending God; and the due honour of their Maker should be the reason of holy duties. And,

(4.) I say, if once ye were well interested in Christ for salvation, then He would put a principle of holiness within you that would not let you take a liberty to sin, and would make you so walk in duties, that for a thousand worlds ye durst not do such things as the multitude do, who know nothing of Christ by closing with Him. Know ye what the apostle Paul, with all his holiness, says? “I count all things but loss and dung, that I may win Christ.”

(5.) I say, every thought that puts Christ out of His place, is as much as to say, ye will shift for yourselves without Him. I say, that is even the conflict betwixt Christ and souls: they would still have something in themselves; and Christ will have all flesh as grass, still abasing themselves as nothing, and seeing there is a daily need of Him, and a daily hazard without Him.

4. A fourth sort that have a thirst, that lets them have no rest, and yet they are so stupid that they cannot tell what it is. But oh how glad would they be to have some person’s counsel, that could tell them the right way; and how ready would they be to do anything that would relieve them. I say, let such wait on Christ for counsel, and close with

Him, according to that word, "He that hath no light, and walks in darkness, and sees himself to be in that case, let him stay himself upon God, and come to Christ, and he shall give him light," Seek light from Him who, I am certain, will not deceive you.

5. A fifth sort are those who have some desire after Christ, and yet spend their strength upon the world, and its vanities. I say, these may also come to Christ, and close with Him in the way of forsaking their idols. "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, and I will have compassion upon thee, saith the Lord."

2ndly, The second sort of people invited to come to this market, are those who have no money. And,

1. Is there any man that has no money in his purse, and yet knows not where to get any, let him come to this market, and close with Christ.

2. Those who have nothing in their purses, and yet know where to get it, but dare not come to take it, I say, here is your warrant to come holden out to you, subscribed and sealed with the King's seal.

3. There are a sort of poor folk, poor indeed, while they know not that they are poor, but imagine that they are rich enough; they think that nothing is wanting to them. I say unto you, Atheists of this kind, if ye were once brought so far as to suspect yourselves, and were but afraid of beguiling yourselves, ye might make it an errand to come to Christ, and close with Him, that ye might get a better sight of yourselves, according to that third chapter of the Revelation before-cited. So that if thirsters, and those who have no money, are to be the only party at Christ's banquet this day, and the only persons who are to taste of these fat things, then anyone that sees his need, and has any desire

of Christ and these things; and sees that he has nothing in himself to help him; and sees any worth in a Christ to do him good; let such a one come away to Him; here is your market. Here is a rich supply of all your wants.

We know that there will be some objections to this, proposed by some; but it will not be by those that are convinced they have no money. We know few that can boast of their duties or works at this time; we think all may be ashamed of their naughtiness. But we know of some that will say, that they are not of those who are thirsty, and therefore they should not come. Their objection will be this:

(1.) A thirsty man is pained and troubled under his thirst; but this I am not. I have neither pain nor thirst.

(2.) We say that a thirsty man is not only troubled, but is impatient under his thirst; but this I am not; I have neither trouble nor pain for want of Christ; neither am I seeking after Him, or at pains to find Him.

(3.) A thirsty man is not only pained, and gets no rest under thirst; but even so much pained that he cannot forget it. But it is not so with me; I have no trouble for want of Christ; nor am I in pain to get Him; and besides, any thought or desire I have is soon forgotten. And how can any person in this case be said to thirst for Christ, and be among those that should close with Him this day?

1st, In answer to this: Dare you say that Jesus Christ, in this text, excludes any person that has the least desire to be interested in Him? Here is a word for that. Boaz, who was a type of Christ, said to Ruth, "When thou art athirst, go unto the vessel and drink of that which the young men have drawn." So I say unto you, If ye have any desire after Christ, He is here offered unto you. Go, take Him, and

close with Him. "And any man who will come, let him come, and drink of the water of life freely." But who dare put another qualification upon their closing with Christ, than what He has set down here in His word?

2ndly, I say, ye must consider that everyone gets not a like degree of thirst after Christ. To some the King measures with larger measure; and to some with less, according to His absolute sovereignty. How dare you be so bold as to make any qualification necessary that He has not set down Himself? Dost thou see any need of closing with Him? Seest thou any need of the pardon of sin, or any need of strength to be borne through, or any diseases thou hast to be cured? Seest thou that thou art not able to make any help to thyself? and that thou canst not remedy thy case? Seest thou any merit in Christ? Come then, and close with Him for salvation, in order to be freed from the punishment of sin, and to be cured of all your diseases, and to have strength for all your weakness. For, think ye ever to get a constant dependence on Him, adherence to Him, hunger after Him, and thirsting for strength to cleave to Him, if ye close not with Him first for salvation? But,

3rdly, I say it may be ye have resolved upon it beforehand never to close with Him till He give you such a measure of holiness, and then ye would venture your soul's salvation on Him if invited to it. But when ye would think that Christ is bound to you by your holiness, and ye would think salvation, so to speak, to be out of Christ's common. And,

Lastly, I say that the text excludes none living, whether they have any good desires or not. If they have any need of Him, let them come, be what they will. If ye be so self-witted that ye will not come, stand your hazard. If you can provide for yourselves without Him, never come near Him. If ye will not come till ye get something in your hands to put you out of His common, then ye shall not come unto Him, for that

ye shall never get. And if ye remain as ignorant as stocks and stones of the knowledge of God, ye may not come unto His table; but if ye see your need of Christ, and are under the sense of sin, and behold anything in Him that will do you good, then ye may come forward to the table of the Lord, in the way of closing with Him as your Saviour, and receiving His wine and milk without money and without price.

Footnotes:

1. This sermon seems to have been preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

SERMON XI.¹

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

Isaiah 55:1-2

WE spake,

1. Of the proclamation making way for our coming to this gospel market in the words, “Ho, every one.”
2. We spake of the intimation of the goods to be had in this market, which were “water,” “wine,” and “milk,” which hold forth Christ and all that is in Him.
3. We spake of the party that were invited to come and close with Jesus Christ. Now we come to speak,
4. Of the fourth particular in the method, which is to speak of our closing with Christ, which lies in these three things: (1.) Coming; (2.) Buying; and (3.) Eating.

All these hold forth people’s closing with Christ, and their receiving and embracing of Him.

Observe, that the soul’s right closing with Christ is a coming to Him, a buying and eating of Him, and an obeying of Him. Believing on Him is called coming. “Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “And him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” So that coming unto Him is a believing on Him, and

a closing with Him for salvation. And so is buying of Christ, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." And in like manner eating, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.... For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

The reason why a closing with Christ is compared to these things will be taken from the properties of them.

We will speak of the properties of each, and what each of them severally holds forth. And,

First, In a man's coming, ye know, there are three things.

1. He must come *from* such a place.
2. He must come *to* another place.
3. There must be some *certain way by which* he comes from the one place to another.

In like manner, in closing with Christ there must be,

1. A coming from the kingdom of darkness, where persons were ruled by the power of Satan, and the delight of sin. They must come from these principles that the multitude of the world walk by. They must come from their own self-righteousness, that once they thought to win heaven by. They must come from all the principles of their former walk and conversation. And they must come,

2. To a new King that they never had before. Their life must be a new life, wherein all things are new. So that it is a life hid with Christ in God, which is a mystery to the multitude of a dark world. They now see themselves blind fools that have need of daily teaching and direction, or else they would soon destroy themselves. They now see God to be infinitely wise in all He doth. They now see the principles of a vain world, by which they walked before, to be stark nought. They account any mercy they receive a free mercy,

if it were but a drink of cold water. They see all the power of hell and wicked men as nothing in respect of the Lord. They see God in Christ to be a holy God, and one that heals all sin. They see that there is nothing in themselves that can make any help for their salvation, because of their insensibility; but they see God unchangeable in His love, though He correct them many times for their sins. They see all these things in a world as what are with us to-day, and away to-morrow; and therefore they make light of them, and are loosed from them in their affections. But they see that the counsel of the Lord stands to-day, yesterday, and for ever.

3. For the way that He brings on souls to close with Christ, I say, He may have many ways for converting them. For example, some may be brought in by some heavy rod of affliction laid upon them; some by great and horrible checks of conscience; others may get, at first, a calm view of the love of God, but God's ordinary way is by the preaching of the gospel. If any have got good by this, they have these marks following, to know or discern it by,

As first, The Spirit of God, by the authority of the word, hath circumcised their heart; and made them greedily attend on every word preached; so that as soon as ever the minister speaks a word, they will be waiting for the next word, and still as they get it they will apply it and make it their own. And,

1. The first thing that the word, accompanied with the authority of the Spirit, does to them, is to discover the man's sin and guilt to him, and upon that discovery to make him apply all the cures and threatenings of the law unto himself, as particularly as if there were no more than he, so that he is bound hand and foot, like one condemned to the gibbet. He condemns himself as liable to the wrath of God, and to all the threatenings against sin contained in the Scriptures.

2. Upon this, the Spirit of God, in the word preached, discovers to the man One who is exhibited as a Surety for him. And then he is made willing to embrace the free offer of Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures. By these folk may try themselves, whether or not they have got any benefit by the preaching of the gospel and by the free offers of Jesus Christ. I say, Was ever any of you determined greedily to take heed to the preaching of the word till it discovered to you your lost state and condition, and upon that made you apply every curse in the Bible as belonging to you in particular; so that ye were thereby bound hand and foot, not knowing of any help ye could make to yourselves, but on the contrary, obliged in everything to condemn yourselves? And after that, Was there any cautioner or surety discovered unto you? And were you made with gladness to embrace Jesus Christ in the offers of the gospel, according to Scripture promises?

Secondly, In buying, there is something that resembles a closing with Christ.

1. There must be in buying a sight of some valuable goods.
2. Ye must see that these goods are not your own.
3. Ye must see them to be such commodities as ye stand in need of, otherwise ye will not buy them at all.
4. Ye must commune with the merchant about, the price of the goods, and agree with him the best way ye can, to get them out of his hand.

And, in like manner, I say, all these must be in a closing with Christ.

1. There must be an apprehension of the worth of Jesus Christ.
2. There must be also a conviction of your want of

Christ, otherwise ye will never seek after Him.

3. You must also have a sense of your need of Him, otherwise ye will never receive Him. And,
4. There must be some exercise in the soul, in order to get a grip of Him. You must go about the clearest way that you can to get Him, and to get a union with Him, so that ye may have boldness to call Him, as the gospel warrants you to do, your Lord and Master.

Have you such a sense of your need of Him as makes you cry out, "What shall I do to be saved? I must have Thee; I cannot want Thee; nay, say what Thou wilt, I shall not want Thee. Bid me do what Thou wilt, I shall be content, provided I may find Thee; for it is by Thee alone that I must be saved; and what is the matter what become of me if I want salvation." Then try yourselves, whether or not there has been any transaction between you and Christ, about the matter of your closing with Him? Did ye never miss Christ? Saw you ever such a worth in Him as made you long to be in His company? Did you ever see that ye could not live without Him? And did it ever put you to your wits' end what ye should do to get Him made your own, to subdue your corruptions, and to pay your debts for you, while ye saw yourselves able to do nothing. And,

Thirdly, In eating there are these things:

1. There must be an appetite for meat.
2. There must be a judgment that the meat is good.
3. In eating there must be chewing of it in the mouth, to prepare it for the stomach.
4. In eating it must be swallowed, whereby its substance becomes incorporated with the body. So in closing with Christ there will be a sense of need, to excite in the soul an appetite or desire after Christ; or if they dare not say they have an appetite, yet

there will be clear convictions in their judgments, that Christ is good for any person that dare make use of Him; and they say, that they are all blessed that dare call Him their own; and that they are all cursed that know nothing of Him. There is, too, a love in the soul, that is still acting in the way of trying to get Christ. Sometimes they see their sins, and have severe checks for them. Sometimes some beams of light calm their conscience again. They are sometimes essaying to grip at a promise; and sometimes they think that such a promise belongs not to them. At last they venture upon a way in which they may best get Him, and make Him their own; and in which they may feed upon Him, and have Him for their King and Lord, ruling, reigning, governing, and setting up laws within them, against all the powers of sin and Satan, that they are troubled with. And after they have closed with Christ, and made Him a King within them to subdue their corruptions, and regard Him as their own, both for sanctification and redemption; then they become one in an embodied communion with Him, so that they live no more, as it were, but Christ lives in them, and the life that they now live “is a life by faith upon the Son of God.”

Now, the reasons why Christ useth these three words together to express one’s closing with Him, are:

1. Because He must let His people see, that there are different experiences in closing with Him. Some may get a sensible change from the power of darkness within them, and through the sense of sin occasioned by the great thunderings of the law-work upon them, may have a more piercing desire and lively appetite after communion with Him. Again, some may have got such a sight of the excellency of Christ, that they cannot think to have it said that they will

want Him. No, the need of Him, and the value they see in Him, make them both supplicate and cry about Him, so that they can both name time and place when they met Him; and can relate what transactions passed betwixt Him and them ere they got Him laid hold of, so that they durst call Him their own Lord and Master.

2. He useth many words in closing with Him, that He may declare how willing He is that they should not stand at a distance from Him.

3. He useth all these words on purpose to let people see that there should be such exercise in His people that should not let them be satisfied about their closing with Him on slight grounds. And,

4. He uses all these words on purpose that folk may trace all their steps over again—both before and after their closing with Christ—and be convinced of their sin, and flee to Christ to intercede for the pardon of it.

Now for the clearing up of people's closing with Christ, let us mark out so many sorts of people as have been at this market of free grace yesterday.

First, There is one sort of natural folk that have been bold enough to come to Christ in His Supper, that, we daresay, have never yet known anything of closing with Him.

Secondly, There is another sort who dare boldly say that they have closed with Him, and are bold to tell of all the actions and motions of agreement that passed betwixt Him and them.

Thirdly, There is a sort that are halting betwixt these two, that dare neither say boldly that they have closed with Christ, nor dare they say boldly to the contrary. And,

1. For the first of these, we would say to you that are natural folk and atheists, and yet have made bold to meddle with these holy ordinances, I say unto you, acknowledge it, and mourn for your presumption in being so bold as to meddle with these holy things, and to profane this holy Sacrament; be ye assured that ye have drunk your own condemnation. But, I say, if it shall please God to make any of you sensible of that sin, we do not bid you call away your hope hereafter, as if ye had done that which could never be pardoned. Christ's market of His free offer is yet to be had for the salvation of any poor sinner who will have it. Oh, what a joyful sight would it be to see atheist ministers, atheist scholars, all the haughty and high-minded men in the land, gentlemen and commoners, only suspecting and judging themselves as a people living without God in the world and without Christ, then there would be some hopes; but as long as ye never want God, and think ye had Him, and believed in Him all your days, and never once missed your faith in Him, we say we have sufficient evidence, in that case, that ye never knew what Christ was nor what it was to believe in Him.

2. With regard to you that dare say ye have closed with Christ, and are sure of it, I say this unto you, For as sure as ye are, if ye have been so bold as to come to this ordinance without examination of your sin and guilt, and of your need of new pardon for it; and without any exercises of that kind, ye have done that which may bring sad judgment upon your bodies, and great hardness of heart upon your souls. If it be so, that ye have not been engaged in exercises of that kind before you came, we allow you now to mourn for the abuse of these holy things, as well as others. Cry down yourselves as loathsome and abominable; but beware of limiting to free grace any of your exercises. I say to you, though ye be sure, yet beware of being careless or secure. This feast, at such a time, says that God has some difficult

work to put you upon—work that will try all your evidences of being in Christ; therefore dream not of ease, but prepare yourselves for trials of all sorts. And we think that though there were no more, it may even bind you to the diligent performance of duty that God has given you that feast in this place, before many other places that were longing for it, and has not left you disputing about that matter, like many a poor thing in the land.² I say, ye may bear the better with any piece of trial that it shall please God to tryste you with, and ye should stick closely to your duty, that ye may be examples to others of a stedfast adherence to Christ.

3. With regard to you who cannot tell whether ye have closed with Christ or not, we will: (1) Speak to some grounds of hope, that ye may have as to your closing with Christ; (2) speak also to some grounds of fear that may hinder your closing with Him, and are ready to kill you, when you would venture upon Christ. And,

(1.) For the ground of your hope, ye dare not deny but that ye have real conviction of sin, and of your guiltiness by sin, and that ye cannot help yourselves by anything that ye can do, although you should perish. Ye dare not deny but that ye have fled from any righteousness in yourselves. Ye dare not say but that ye see some difference betwixt our principles and the principles of the multitude, so that, for a world, ye dare not do many things that ye see them do. Ye dare not deny but that ye are fled from many of those principles ye once walked by, and now, for a thousand worlds, ye dare not do that which once ye thought it no sin to do. You dare not deny but that ye look for salvation from no other airth, but from Christ. Ye dare not deny but that ye hear the Gospel preached with another ear than ye were wont to do. You dare not deny but that ye think yourselves liable to the curses of the broken law, and apply these particularly to yourselves, and therefore ye would gladly be in

hands with Christ. Ye dare not deny, though ye dare not say ye have really closed with Christ, that ye would not for a thousand worlds give up your part of Him. Ye dare not deny but that they are blessed folk in your esteem that have Christ and dare call Him their own, and that ye account them all a parcel of poor beggarly creatures that have nothing of Him. Ye dare not deny (though ye dare not say that there is true grace in you) that ye are convinced of what ye understand of the marks of grace that we speak of, and find them to be matter of exercise with you; hence it is your good day when ye hear the most of these preached and cleared up. Ye dare not say (though ye get not all your idols brought down that are within you) but that at sometimes ye get such access to God that ye get liberty to curse your idols, and to hate them and to wage war against them. Ye dare not deny but that ye get some tastes and motions of light within you even such as ye would be at. Ye dare not deny that according to these motions ye apprehend some great worth to be in Christ, so that ye cannot think to want Him. Besides, if ye durst say that ye claim your interest in Christ, it would soon make up any other want; and though one should give you all the world, it would yield no contentment unto you as long as ye could not claim clearly your interest in Him. In fine, ye cannot say but that there is some exercise in your soul about finding Him, and that you essay in the appointed way to lay hold of Him.

Now, I say all these are evidences of your closing with Christ, and serve to keep the spark of life within you, and to preserve you from giving over your endeavour to close with Him, and are preludes to your further success in this matter. And,

(2.) For the grounds of that fear which hinders you from closing with Christ; [a.] Ye are afraid that you have never got such a deep sense of your sin and guiltiness as your closing with Christ requires. [b.] Ye fear that ye have never

had such a lively spiritual exercise in you as the nature of closing with Christ requires. [c.] Ye cannot think that ye have closed with Him, because ye think that for all that is threatened against you, and for all that ye can do, there still remains some old predominate sin within you which ye think is still unkilld, and which you think inconsistent with the grace of faith. Now,

For answer to these doubts, consider,

1. That with respect to your sense of sin, God gives not every one a like measure of exercises for their sin that closes with Him. To some He gives more sense of sin, and to others less, according to the several employments He has to call them unto. Some He has to call to the work of the ministry, and these have need of a more deep exercise than others, for they have the charge of many souls to look to and to give account of; they have the doubts of the people to clear up to them, and they must be exercised in order to fit them for their calling.

2. Some, I say, have but small exercise about their sin on account of the company among whom their lot is cast. Were some exercised as deeply as others, the people who dwell with them would think them perfectly mad; they would never bear with them, and God's name would be profaned by these atheists. But for the sense of sin, I ask if ever ye found so much of it as to be brought to a loathing and abasing of yourselves? Have you been brought to think none in all the world so vile as yourselves? Have you been brought to loathe and abhor yourselves because of your filthiness? Have you been made to acknowledge that there is hardly a sin in all the world but what ye have been guilty of, at least that there is no sin but ye find the root of it to be in you, and that there has been nothing that kept sin in you from breaking out into the vilest of all outbreaks in the world but only the good hand of God that prevented

it? And now thou art made to bless God that thou art not such a man and such a woman as many are this day. No thanks to thee that thou art not one of the vilest of out-breakers that ever lived, for such thou wouldst have been if God had given thee over to thyself as many are. Many professors were never brought this length of loathing themselves. The high heads of many, their shaking and tinkling bravery which they prance with, makes us fear that they have never known what it was to loathe themselves for sin. After that conviction of sin and loathing of thyself for it, did it work up thy heart to a high esteem of Jesus Christ; and wast thou made to yield to Him any way He pleased, provided He would be a King within thee, and subdue thy lust and corruptions? And now thou art made to esteem the holy law of God, and to account it holy, just, and good, yea, worthy to be observed; and thou now standest in awe to offend God, by breaking of His holy law.

I say, all these are evidences of a soul's closing with Christ:

- (1.) To be convinced that really by the breach of the law, you are guilty of sin, and so liable to be condemned unto the wrath of God. Then,
- (2.) Fleeing from that unto Christ for a refuge. And,
- (3.) After all, making the law a rule of your life, and whole conversation.

But now ye want the knowledge of that incorporating union with Him, which we spoke of as imported in the third word, "eating," when the soul comes to Christ, which is a making of Christ your own by a union with Him. And,

1st, The first way in which God gives them this privilege, is by the Spirit of discerning, whereby they can understand all the actions and motions within them, in order to their closing with Christ; while a divine command also holds out

to them their warrant of closing with Christ. And,

2ndly, Some attain to the knowledge of this union with Christ, by the clearing up to themselves what marks of grace they find in life and vigour within them. Though the soul cannot clear up all the marks of grace as what are within them, yet they may not for that deny their interest in Christ; for if thou canst only evidence one mark of grace to be in vigour within thee, and if thou art sure that the Spirit of God calls it a real mark of grace, I say, by that one mark, thou mayest claim thy interest in Christ. Suppose it were but a love to the brethren, let that be cleared well, and by it thou art proved to be one who is passed from death to life. However, we wish that people were clearing to themselves all the marks of grace in them.

3rdly, A third way by which souls may attain to the knowledge of their interest in Christ, and union with Him, and dare most confidently say that Christ is their God, is by the zeal and testimony of the Spirit bearing witness in and with and upon their spirits. Now the Spirit of God hath many ways of working. It is the Spirit that both convinceth folk of sin, and maketh them mourn for it, and bears testimony to the spirits of His people, that they are the children of God. And besides, He clears His people's judgment, so that He makes them know and discern what marks of grace they have within them that speak forth their union with Christ. And then He brings a promise to their hand that is suitable to their union with Him; and He Himself opens and unfolds that promise, and makes it look pleasant to them. He bears in the promise in a lively manner upon them, and will not let it admit of any objection. The Spirit rouses the soul, and makes it stir, and flutter, and run, and embrace the promise, and welcome it home. He makes them believe the truth of it, and apply it to themselves. On which marriage the soul is wrought up to a sort of heavenly and unspeakable joy; the greatest pitch of joy a soul can

attain to on this side of time.

Now, to conclude, there are but few that can attain to such noble testimonies as these; and yet everyone that comes not that length may not deny his interest in Christ. I say, if thou canst discern any motions or acts in thy soul that lead thee to comply with the command to believe in Him, and if thou canst clear up to thyself any mark of grace which the Spirit of God calls a mark of grace, by which an union with Him is evidenced. As for your saying that ye cannot think there is any union between you and Christ, so long as your predominate sin is unmortified, I leave you with recommending to your consideration the apostle Paul, who got not all sin borne down within him; yet as it was his burthen, he was an enemy to it, and waged war against it, accordingly pleaded his integrity and interest in Jesus Christ; and so may you do. If that sin be your burthen, and if ye can say that ye are mourning for it, and using means against it, and daily representing it to the King to be taken order with; in this case, though it still remains as a strong fort within you, ye may both plead your integrity and interest in Jesus Christ.

But we add no more, but leave you to the Spirit of God alone, to whom it solely belongs, to confirm and establish you in all your waverings. Be earnest with the Spirit of God; and beware of doing anything to grieve Him. But by all means entertain the motions of the Spirit; for it is He alone, that can clear all your objections.

N.B. Whether Mr. Guthrie's preaching on the Monday after the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in his own parish, was owing to the paucity of the ministers, or the custom of the times, which is more probable, is

not now certainly known. However, these sermons, with the most part of those which follow, seem to have been preached betwixt the year 1660, and 1665, in which all the rest of the Presbyterian ministers, except one or two, were cast out of their parishes.

Footnotes:

1. The second sermon on this text.
2. This sermon seems to have been preached soon after the restoration of Charles II., when most of the faithful ministers were ejected.