

## SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

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*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.—JOHN iii. 14, 15.*

THE former part of this chapter is spent in a discourse with Nicodemus. (1.) About regeneration. That great pharisee needed to be catechised and taught the plainest principles of christianity. (2.) About salvation by Christ, the great secret which our Lord brought out of his Father's bosom. He instructed him in two things mainly—(1.) The manner of purchasing; (2.) The manner of applying, this salvation. As the whole context may be comprised under these two heads, so also the words read to you. The manner of purchasing is by Christ's coming into the world and dying for sinners; the way of applying is by faith in the Son of God. He instructeth him in the manner of purchasing; partly that he might not think light of sins, seeing he must die for them; partly that he might not be scandalised at his sufferings, as afterwards he buried Christ, and provided a mixture of myrrh and aloes for his funeral, John xix. 39. He instructeth him in the way of applying and obtaining the purchased benefits, partly that he might not be ashamed of professing himself one of Christ's followers and disciples; partly to engage his heart to own him as the Saviour of lost sinners, having sufficient virtue to cure the sinfulness and misery of such as fly to him by faith. These things are represented to him by a type, and that a notable one, the type of the brazen serpent. In the words take notice—

1. Of the *πρότασις*, or proposition, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.'

2. The *ἀπόδοσις*, or the reddition or explication of it, 'Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' In which—

[1.] The way of saving mankind, 'The Son of man must be lifted up.'

[2.] The means of applying it, 'That whosoever believeth in him.'

[3.] The benefit propounded, negatively, he 'Should not perish;' positively, 'But have eternal life.'

I shall open the words by a short illustration, and then come to the point.

1. For the protasis. 'As Moses,' by God's appointment, though the minister be only mentioned: Num. xxi. 8, 'The Lord said unto

Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent;’ it was not his device, but God’s ordinance; no invention and institution of his; he had God’s express command and warrant for it. ‘Lifted up;’ that is, set upon a perch or pole, as an object to be looked upon by the stung Israelites. ‘The serpent;’ that is, the brazen image and figure of a serpent. Signs are often called by the name of the thing represented and signified. ‘In the wilderness;’ a figure of this world, through which we have our passage to the heavenly Canaan. You may add, that the *πρότασις*, or proposition of the type, may be more full, ‘That the people might not perish, but be healed and live,’ for then the reddition or explication of the type will run more smoothly.

2. The apodosis. ‘Even so must the Son of man;’ that is, Christ, spoken of in the former verse; the Son of man that ascended and descended, that was in heaven, and knew the depths of God’s counsel, and came down to make them known to us. This Son of man must ‘be lifted up,’ believed on, or looked unto by faith, and then the guilty sinner is healed, and shall not perish, but have eternal life. The lifting up of the Son of man in the sound and first hearing seemeth to note his exaltation; but it doth not carry that notion here, but such a lifting up as is correspondent to the erection of the brazen serpent on a tree or pole. It signifieth the crucifixion of the Son of God, not his exaltation, but the lowest act of his humiliation. So in many other places: John viii. 28, ‘When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.’ He speaketh it to the wicked Jews; and how did the Jews lift him up but by crucifying him? Surely they intended no honour to him, yet there it is made their act. So John xii. 32, 33, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men after me. This he said, signifying what death he should die,’ as the evangelist there explaineth his meaning; so that there needeth no further scruple about the sense of the words. It followeth, ‘that whosoever;’ all persons are invited, without exclusion of any; that universal particle comprehendeth sinners of all sorts and sizes, of all ranks and conditions in the world. ‘Believeth in him;’ this answereth to looking upon the brazen serpent. Believing is a looking to Christ, a looking upon him by the eye of faith. ‘Shall not perish, but have eternal life.’ He shall escape the present danger which he feareth. Souls shall be healed, and delivered from hell, and life eternal is restored to them.

*Doct.* That we ought to consider salvation by Christ as prefigured and represented by the history of the brazen serpent.

‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.’ And Christ here propoundeth it to Nicodemus.

1. It is useful to consider the types, partly to confirm our faith, when we see the harmony between the testaments. There are historical types and prophetic types. Historical types are only patterns and examples: 1 Cor. x. 11, ‘All these things happened to them for τύποι,’ ensamples or types; so the providences of God to his ancient people: 1 Cor. x. 9, ‘Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.’ Prophetic types were instituted to prefigure a thing to come, as the ceremonies of the law were figures of better things to come. Now we see the gospel is not a novel inven-

tion, only hatched in that age when it was first set afoot. No; it was long since foretold, not only by words, but things; there was a preparation made for it. And partly to help our meditation; we reflect upon these things with more delight and sweetness, whilst we view the agreement between the truth and the type. When we know the person, yet we delight to see the picture; and so we may take a view of things with a grateful variety. We see them double when we consider both the shadow and the mystery. Partly to increase our thankfulness; we have not such dark and long prospects, through which they only could look to Christ; we may see him more clearly in the doctrines of the gospel, where he is evidently set forth unto us, and, as it were, 'crucified before our eyes,' Gal. iii. 1. Surely then we are more obliged to mind these things. The more clearly and convincingly Christ is represented to us, the more will our negligence be aggravated, and our contempt the greater, if we make light of these things.

2. Among other types, the brazen serpent must not be forgotten; partly because it doth in a most lively and full manner represent Christ. Here a word is a sermon; and we cannot think of the brazen serpent but the necessity, the remedy, the means of application, do presently offer themselves to our thoughts. And partly because this took off the great scandal and Jewish exception against Christ, which was the ignominy of the cross. Therefore to a doctor of the law he doth not produce the paschal lamb or other figures, but the brazen serpent, as clearly representing the cause, quality, and fruit of his sufferings.

3. To help you in this consideration, I shall—(1.) Give the history; (2.) The typical use of it.

First, The history, in Num. xxi. 6-9, 'And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came unto Moses, and said, We have sinned; for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us: and Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, he shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.' The sin occasioning the judgment was their murmuring at Moses and Aaron, and their loathing of manna; for this God sendeth fiery serpents. Observe how God suiteth the judgment to the sin; venomous tongues are plagued with venomous serpents. It is said, Eccles. x. 11, 'Surely the serpent shall bite without enchantment, and a babler is no better.' And again, Ps. cxl. 3, 'They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips.' They have a bag of water under their tongues, which is most poisonous and inflaming, which in biting is broken. But this was not the asp, but the *chersydrus*, a sort of serpent which abideth on land as well as in water; whilst it liveth in the water, it is not altogether so venomous as when it cometh to live on the dry land, and in this part of the thirsty howling wilderness these kind of serpents were most fiery and burning, and at that time of the year when the Israelites

were there, which was about the end of August; for 'Aaron died in the first day of the fifth month,' Num xxxiii. 38, which was about the 10th of July, and the children of Israel mourned thirty days before they journeyed, Num. xx. 29. And when they journeyed from Mount Hor, then we read of their murmuring and God's plaguing them with fiery serpents. Observe, again, that God, that bringeth manna from heaven, can also send serpents. God is not all honey; abused mercy is turned into fury, and when his favours are despised, he hath judgments to sting us; and if men will loathe their food, God will chastise them with poison.

But again to the history. These serpents which God sent are called 'fiery serpents,' partly for their colour, being of a shining glistering skin; the word in the original is *seraphim-burners*, a name given to the angels: Isa. vi. 2, 'Above it stood the seraphims,' which angels are called elsewhere 'flames of fire,' Ps. civ. 4; partly because their venomous stinging and biting did cause a raging heat and grievous burning in the bodies of the Israelites. And it seemeth they were a kind of serpents with wings, not of feathers, but of a cartilaginous substance, like the wings of a bat, and did here and there seize upon them and bite them; or at least they are said to fly because of their swift motion, where by suddenly jerking they shoot themselves forward, or dart themselves out of trees on men or beasts as they pass by them. There is a plain allusion to those flying serpents, Isa. xiv. 29, 'Out of the serpent's hole shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.' And indeed that wilderness through which the Israelites passed did abound with many sorts of these serpents; therefore it is said, Deut. viii. 15, 'Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions.' Well, then, they go to Moses, and said, 'We have sinned; for we have spoken against God, and against thee: pray to God for us, that he take away the fiery serpents.' In adversity men will own the faithful servants of God, against whom they have murmured when all is well. Moses forgetteth the injury, and prayeth to God for them; and God, though he doth not take away the serpents, yet he provideth a remedy unlikely in appearance, a brazen serpent to cure the bites of living serpents; but divine institution conveyeth a blessing. The word of command is that they should 'look upon the brazen serpent;' and the word of promise is 'that they should be healed:' Num. xxi. 8, 'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every one when he is bitten, that looketh upon it, shall live.' This is, in short, the history.

Secondly, The mystery, or typical use of the brazen serpent. The chief things represented in it are sin, Christ, and faith; the deadliness of sin, the manner of our deliverance by Christ, and the nature of faith.

1. The Israelites' deadly sin and misery occasioned the setting up of the brazen serpent; so the occasion of Christ's sending into the world was man's sin and misery, we being all bitten by the old serpent, and so liable to the curse. The devil is called 'the old serpent,' Rev. xii. 9; and in the appearance of a serpent he deceived our first parents; therefore we read that 'the serpent beguiled Eve,' 2 Cor. xi. 3. Human

nature was then stung to death by Satan, and the venom dispersed itself throughout the whole race of mankind. Among the Israelites there were but a few stung, here all; there their bodies, here the soul; there temporal death followed, here eternal. In the sting of these fiery serpents two things representeth our misery by sin—(1.) It is painful; (2.) Deadly.

[1.] This sting is painful. The bitings did presently cause pains, and an intolerable thirst and burning, which was very grievous to them; so the sting of sin is painful; not always felt, but soon awakened. In spiritual things we are more stupid, and are not so sensible of the maladies of the soul as they were of the pains of the body. We are 'subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. 14. Though we do not always feel actual horror, there is a fire smothering in our bosoms, though it be not blown up into a flame. One of our spiritual diseases is a lethargy, and it is a great part of our misery not to know our misery. If conscience were not lulled asleep we would be more sensible. Surely Satan's bites are more painful than those of these serpents. His darts are called 'fiery darts,' Eph. vi. 16. His darts are dipped in the gall of asps and vipers. Boiling lusts will in time awaken raging fears and despair. Oh! what horror and torment will sin procure to us if it be not speedily cured! Sin is an evil and a mischief, whether we feel it, yea or no; but we shall soon feel it an evil, as the stung Israelites felt the biting of the serpents. Sin in the life will make hell in the conscience; it seemeth a sweet draught while we are taking it down, but there is rank poison at the bottom. A wounded spirit findeth it now: Prov. xviii. 14, 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' Horror and anguish of conscience is insupportable. Ask any man whose heart is well awakened, and he will tell you that the sense of the guilt of sin is more bitter to the soul than the gall of asps; no terror comparable to the terror and sting of an accusing conscience. God's terrors are compared to a fire that drinketh up the blood and spirits: Job vi. 4, 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.' No poison more burning than sin in an awakened conscience. It may lie asleep till you come to die in sin, stupid and benumbed creatures; but then 'the sting of death is sin,' 1 Cor. xv. 56. Death is made terrible by those sad horrors and apprehensions which sin raiseth in us.

[2.] This sting is deadly. As the biting of the fiery serpents could not be cured, but was present death till God found out a remedy, so this sting of sin is deadly: Rom. v. 12, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;' Gen. ii. 17, 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' dying thou shalt die: Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death;' death temporal, eternal. Thou art a dead man, lost for ever, if thou art not cured. Those who were not solicitous about their cure are a figure of the impenitent, who obstinately continue in their sins though they bring destruction upon them. Not only death temporal, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body; but death spiritual, which consists in an estrangement from God as author of the life of grace; yea, death eternal, which consists in a separation

both of body and soul from the presence of God for evermore, and is a perpetual living to deadly pain and torment. This second death is set forth by two solemn notions, 'The worm that never dieth, and the fire that shall never be quenched,' Mark ix. 44; by which is meant the sting of conscience and the wrath of God: Prov. viii. 36, 'All they that hate me love death.'

2. Christ is set forth by the brazen serpent. Here I shall show you—(1.) The resemblances; (2.) The superexcellency of Christ above this, and all the shadows and types of him.

[1.] The resemblance between Christ and the brazen serpent.

(1.) The brazen serpent was a remedy of God's own prescribing out of his great mercy; so is this remedy for lost sinners the mere fruit of God's love: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.' The *causa προκαταρκτική*, the occasion or outward moving cause, was our misery; the *causa προηγουμένη*, the inward impulsive cause, was his own love and pity to lapsed mankind. God found out the remedy; we neither plotted it nor asked it; he saw the world of mankind was perishing, and involved in eternal ruin, and because there was no intercessor, therefore his own arm wrought out salvation. Herein the antitype differeth from the type. The stung Israelites, having death in their bosoms, go to Moses; Moses goeth to God, for he saw there could be no help elsewhere; then God said, 'Make thee a brazen serpent.' The motion came from them first, but here it is quite otherwise; God is the offended party, yet he maketh the first motion: 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him because he loved us first.' There God found out the remedy, but here his mere love began the whole business, and did set at work all the causes that did concur to our salvation; we neither minded our danger nor asked our remedy.

(2.) The conveniency of this type to set out the low estate and humiliation of Christ. The form of a serpent was chosen to show that he came in such mean estate as if he were a worm and no man: Ps. xxii. 6, 'I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people.' So also Isa. liii. 3, 'He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not;' as a vile and abominable creature, both 'despised and rejected,' scarce deemed worthy the name of a man, or to have any converse or communion with them. It is the leavings off of men, as we would say, the very list and fag-end of mankind; so low and mean, that the nature of man can hardly descend lower: Mark ix. 12, 'The Son of man must suffer many things, and be set at nought;' it is *ἐξουδενωθῆναι*, made nought worth, or nothing. Once more, the serpent, of all the beasts of the field, was the creature which was cursed by God: Gen. iii. 14, 'Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.' Yet by this form would he represent Christ to the ancient church. God chose this to be a type of Christ, which we would have thought a dishonour and disparagement to him. Yea, this serpent that was now set up was made of brass, not of gold, to show that Christ would not appear in glorious estate and majesty, but in the meanest and most abject form of any creature. All

together will help us to meditate upon the great abasement of the Son of God. *Quanto vilior, tanto clarior nobis esse debet.* The more he humbled himself, the higher estimation should we have of our crucified Lord. Never was any child of God before Christ under so much misery as Christ himself was. His own heaven, his own Father, his own Godhead, hid their face and consolation from him. God's wrath pressed the weight of punishment with the full power of justice both upon his soul and body; those for whom he died despised him, he himself being emptied of all things that make men respected in the world, and depressed lower than ever any man was, as a worm to be trod upon. He was made the matter of common talk and reproach in all men's mouths; condemned by the ruling part of the world, and set at nought by the basest of the people; derided and scorned in his most holy behaviour, his bitter sufferings made a matter of sport and laughter, malice feeding itself with pleasure upon his pain and misery, and expressing itself with the basest signs of mockage which disdain could devise, flouting at his saving doctrine, and insulting over him as if he had been neither the Son of God nor an honest man. And all this was counted little enough for satisfaction of justice, exacting of him the due punishment of our sins. We tenderly resent contempt, and cannot endure to be despised and thrust down, when the Sun of righteousness went back so many degrees in the dial of honour.

(3.) The brazen serpent had the shape and figure of the serpent, but not the sting and the poison. *Figuram habuit, non naturam*; it had the figure, not the nature of a serpent. Let us pause upon this a little. God would cure the bite of a serpent by a serpent; a serpent stung, and a serpent healed: 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh,' Rom. viii. 3; that is, by Jesus Christ in our nature, who was made a sin-offering, and therefore called sin there. The parties to be cured were men, therefore 'the Son of man must be lifted up;' that title is given him here in the text. Christ was debased by this title, by being called 'the Son of man,' but yet the sons of men are dignified by it; 'he came in the likeness of sinful flesh.' As the brazen serpent was in all things like the true serpent, but without any hurtful quality, so Christ in all points was like us, 'but without sin;' Heb. iv. 15. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet was 'holy, harmless, and separate from sinners.'

(4.) The precise place where the brazen serpent was lifted up. Moses doth not tell us in the story where this matter is recorded; but it may be collected from other places. Moses telleth us that the Israelites going from thence pitched their tents in Oboth, Num. xxi. 10; from whence it follows that the place was Punon, for from Punon they came to Oboth, Num. xxxiii. 42, 43. Now this Punon was a place belonging to Idumæa, very famous for mines of brass or copper, as is commonly known in ancient writings, the brass being called from thence 'the metal of Punon.' Eusebius in the eighth book of his Ecclesiastical History tells us that Sylvanus and thirty-nine more were beheaded for the faith's sake, *κατὰ τὰ ἐν Φύνω χάλκου μέταλλα*, near the mines of brass in Punon; and Eutychius speaketh of divers christians condemned to work in these mines. So also doth Epiphanius and Theodoret. So

that the brass out of which the serpent was made was taken out of the very place in which they were bitten; it was the brass of Punon, not without a mystery. That body which Christ assumed was not brought from elsewhere, but born there and formed there where he was manifested in the flesh for the salvation of the world; and where the mischief was, there was the remedy at hand.

(5.) The similitude chiefly holdeth in this, that as the brazen serpent was lifted up upon the perch or pole, so was Christ lifted up on the cross: 1 Peter ii. 24, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree.' The serpent first stung us by the fruit of a tree, and Christ saved us by suffering upon a tree. David had foretold that his hands and his feet should be pierced: Ps. xxii. 16, 'They pierced my hands and my feet.' And the curse of the law was to be borne: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,' Gal. iii. 13. The apostle obviates an objection; if the law do curse all men, how are any freed from the curse of the law? Even by Jesus Christ, who took upon him the curse due to us, while he was obedient to death, even the death of the cross; for that kind of death was pronounced to be accursed: Deut. xxi. 23, 'He that is hanged is accursed of God.' He came as a surety in the sinner's name, and would take our burden upon himself, and therefore chose a death of all others most cruel and painful and contemptible, ordained for the wickedest and vilest wretches, thereby to assure us of a full ransom and satisfaction to divine justice for our wrongs, and to imprint upon our minds the horrors of our sins. Well, then, here is the spectacle offered to our faith, Jesus Christ hanging upon a tree. We should look upon Christ crucified as if the thing were now a-doing before our eyes: Gal. iii. 1, 'Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified before you.' Though it be past long ago it is present to faith; for he is lifted up, that by the eye of faith we should look to him, and see not only the thing, but the end, use, and virtue of this mystery. The brazen serpent was a sufficient remedy for the stung Israelites; none that looked towards it perished, the cure never failed; and Jesus Christ lifted up, and being eyed, is sufficient to cure the guilt of sin, and pain of conscience through sin, and to heal our diseased souls, and free them from the power of corruption. For being made a curse for us, the blessing cometh freely upon the believing gentiles, even the gift of the Spirit: Isa. liii. 5, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.'

[2.] The superexcellency of Christ above this and all the shadows and types of him. The type doth express the thing signified, but yet the truth doth much exceed the shadow. The brazen serpent was but 'a sign of salvation;' so called in the Book of Wisdom, chap. xvi. 6. But Christ 'is the author of salvation,' Heb. v. 9. The serpent benefited only the Israelites, but Christ all nations, both Jew and gentile: Isa. xi. 10, 'In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.' It freed them from present death, but yet so that they might die by other means; but Christ hath freed us



not only from the death of the body, but of the soul, and this for ever, as in the text, 'That they should not perish, but have everlasting life.' So John xi. 26, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.' There natural life is preferred<sup>1</sup> but for a while, here eternal life obtained. This benefit might last for a day or two, but 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8. Christ ever retaineth his healing virtue. This was but a piece of brass while they lodged it in the temple, but Christ is a mediator to all eternity. It was a great wickedness to worship the brazen serpent, therefore Hezekiah broke it in pieces, when once he understood the people to be guilty of that idolatry: 2 Kings xviii. 4, 'He brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made, for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan,' or a piece of brass; but it is our duty to worship Christ: 'All men must honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John v. 23; and Heb. i. 6, 'Let all the angels of God worship him;' Phil. ii. 9, 10, 'Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' When the Israelites worshipped the brazen serpent, it was broken in pieces; but they shall be broken in pieces themselves that deny Christ his due worship: Ps. ii. 9, 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel;' Dan. ii. 44, 'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and shall stand for ever.' The kingdom that will not submit to him shall be broken in pieces: Luke xix. 27, 'Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.' Thus it sets forth Christ.

3. Faith is set forth, or the way and means how we come to have benefit by Christ. It is not enough to look to what Christ hath done, but what we must do that we may be partakers of him. The way of cure was by a look; so it is believing in him that bringeth home the blessing to our souls.

From this type we learn—

[1.] The necessity of faith. None had benefit by the brazen serpent but those that looked on it. The promise was made to those that observed the command: Num. xxi. 8, 'Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.' If a man turned away his eyes and refused God's remedy, the biting was mortal to him. As there is a necessity Christ should die, so there is a necessity you should believe; for besides impetration there must be application; and the work of the Spirit is as necessary to apply grace as the work of the Mediator to obtain grace for us. A deep well will do you no good without a bucket, nor the purchase of salvation unless you apply it.

[2.] An encouragement of faith.

(1.) To broken-hearted sinners; if you are stung with sin, you may look to Christ. It was ground enough for any bitten Israelite to look to this brazen serpent, because he had need; he found himself bitten, and thirsted for cure by this appointed means. A felt sense of sin is warrant enough to look to Christ as the offered remedy. Look not

<sup>1</sup> Qu. preserved' ?—ED.

altogether to your sore, to your sins, but to Christ as the means of healing. Indeed there must be a feeling and a sense of sin, or else there is no work for Christ to do; what should a hale Israelite do with the brazen serpent? Their looking began in a sense of pain; none troubled their thoughts about it till they were stung. Compunction goeth before faith. The Israelites cried out, Oh! what shall we do for these fiery serpents? So Acts ii. 37, 'When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' An empoisoned dagger was flung into their souls, and then, 'What shall we do?' The jailer 'came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Acts xvi. 29, 30; 'And they said,' ver. 31, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Only look upon the serpent. A sinner must first feel himself a sinner before he will or can come to Christ, but then come: 'The Son of man is lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.' Some that know not themselves believers have been welcome to Christ; but never any that know not themselves sinners.

(2.) To lapsed believers. The serpents were left to sting the Israelites while they were in that place, only the brazen serpent was lifted up. God did not presently take away the serpents, only he gave a remedy for such as were bitten. Sin is not abolished, but whilst we are in this station the remedy is still offered; we are never so cured but we may be bitten again. The disobedient Israelites needed this motive and chastisement to keep them in awe; we cannot imagine that any would provoke these serpents to sting him that he might be healed. So say I, as the apostle, 1 John ii. 1, 'These things I write unto you, that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' For the present, stings of conscience is one of God's rods over us, but when we fall, there is forgiveness by Jesus Christ; as Peter of Alexandria destroyed the idols, but only left one for a monument.

[3.] The nature of faith, which is a looking to Christ. It is usually said that faith is *ὀφθαλμος της ψυχης*, 'the eye of the soul.' Certain it is that the act of faith is often expressed by seeing or looking, and faith itself by an eye; as Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.' So Isa. xvii. 7, 'At that day a man shall look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.' So John vi. 40, 'This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life,' *ὁ θεωρῶν και πιστεύων*. And faith is described to be 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1. By faith 'Moses saw him that was invisible,' Heb. xi. 27; Heb. xii. 2, 'Looking to Jesus.' So faith itself is said to be the eye of the soul: Eph. i. 18, 'That the eyes of your understandings being opened,' Gal. iii. 1; 'Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you.' The mystery of Christ crucified was so evidently set forth as if he had been crucified before their eyes. So where the work of faith is impeded and hindered, it is said 'the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which

believe not,' 2 Cor. iv. 4; that is, hindered their faith. Therefore I shall here inquire—(1.) What sights are proper to faith; (2.) What kind of looking faith is.

(1.) The objects proper to faith are matters that lie out of the view of sense, *τα μὴ βλεπόμενα*, things that cannot be seen by any other faculty or discerning power. Some things are invisible in regard of their nature, and some things because of their distance from us, because either they are past or to come. Things invisible, because of their nature, are all spiritual things, which are not obvious to the eye of sense. Sense is only conversant about bodily things, which may be seen, heard, tasted, or felt; reason can only see things in their causes. Things invisible, by reason of their distance, are either things past, as the creation of the world, or the sufferings of Christ; or things to come, as the glory and happiness of the other world. Let us explain this by applying it to the matter in hand, the Son of man lifted up on the cross. This was sometimes a matter of sense, namely, at the time when Christ suffered; and therefore then if a man had seen him, or looked upon him, it had done him no good, as it did not to those that wagged their heads at him and mocked him, though it did to the centurion, who cried out, Mat. xxvii. 54, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' But in another regard this is always matter of faith, namely, if we consider his deity, and offices; as the Son of God dying and healing wounded consciences, this is a thing invisible in its nature. Therefore the soldiers that turned subjects to him, and confessors of his name, even then when he is hanging dead on the cross, they that could see his Godhead, and confess it in its deepest humiliation, were believers; they saw Christ not with the eye of sense, but of faith. Now go to the other things invisible, viz., by reason of their distance, because they are either to come or past. Christ crucified was sometimes a thing to come. The fathers had need of clear eyes, who could see salvation at such a distance, and represented under such dark figures and shadows; yet some had such an eagle-eye of faith: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad,' John viii. 56; and Heb. xi. 13, 'All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' To us now it is a thing past; there needeth faith both to believe the history and the mystery too. When we believe the history so clearly as if we saw it, Gal. iii. 1, that is faith; and the mystery: 1 Cor. ii. 2, 'For I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified;' and ver. 4, 'My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.' This *ἀπόδειξις πνεύματος*, this 'demonstration of the Spirit,' is the ground of faith, when the object is so represented that it maketh a powerful impression, and so affected as if we had seen him with our eyes. Well, then, it is some faith to believe the history, to see it as a thing now done. So John xx. 29, 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' But to believe the end and the use, that was always matter of faith, whether past, present, or to come. And herein all believers stand upon the same level. Christ is not now lifted up upon the cross, but it is our duty to lift him up, that poor sinners and wounded consciences may look on him with an eye of faith: Isa. xi. 10,

‘There shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the gentiles seek;’ Isa. xlix. 22, ‘Behold, I will lift up my hand to the gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.’ Christ is lifted up in the ministry of the word as a sign of salvation to draw people to him, so to see him as to follow him, and as to submit to him. If David prayed God to ‘open his eyes to see the wonders of his law,’ Ps. cxix. 18, we may much more pray to God to open our eyes to see Christ, and own him in the gospel, and to see him crucified in the symbols of bread and wine for our comfort.

(2.) We have showed you what is to be seen by faith, now what kind of sight faith is. Not a bare speculation, but such as was the look of the Israelites on the brazen serpent, serious, applicative, affectionate, engaging to thankfulness and obedience, when they went away and were healed.

(1st.) Serious; not a glance, but a fixed eye. A stung Israelite would not cast a careless glance on the sign of salvation and health, neither should we upon Christ. Ponderous thoughts take hold of the heart; musing maketh the fire to burn, and a steady sight hath the greatest influence upon us.

(2d.) Applicative. So Job v. 27, ‘Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.’ The Israelite came for the cure of his own wounds; so must we look upon Christ as our own Saviour, with application to ourselves: John xx. 28, ‘My Lord and my God.’

(3d.) Affectionate, with desire and trust. With desire longing for cure; there must be hearty groans and desires: ‘Our eyes are upon thee,’ 2 Chron. xx. 12. The having our eyes to anything noteth our desire: Ps. cxxi. 1, ‘I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.’ Earnestly desire to be partaker of these benefits by Christ: 1 Peter i. 7, ‘To them that believe he is precious;’ and with trust: Isa. xvii. 7, ‘At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel;’ that is, he shall seek to him, trust in him, depend upon him, because what men trust to they are wont frequently and wistly to look after, and to have their eyes fixed upon: Ps. cxxiii. 2, ‘Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, till he have mercy on us;’ Ps. xxxiv. 5, ‘They looked to him, and were lightened;’ that is, comforted in the midst of their darkness and trouble; Ps. cxli. 8, ‘Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord; in thee I trust.’

(4th.) Engaging; we need to get open eyes to see him and contemplate him, till we see beauty in him that may allure us to love him, and esteem him as the fairest of ten thousand, to renounce ourselves and the vanities of the world, and betake ourselves to his discipline, to see all is nothing in comparison of his excellency: Phil. iii. 8, ‘Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’ A true knowledge of Christ is called *ἐπιγνωσις*, Eph. i. 17, which is elsewhere rendered ‘acknowledging,’ so as to give due honour, respect, and reverence to him. We

may know strangers, and those whom we contemn and despise, but we do not acknowledge them.

*Use.* Let us look upon the Lord Jesus for cure. He calleth upon us in his word. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,' Isa. xlv. 12. It is little that we can afford Christ if we cannot afford him a serious look. It may be you will think that this is so slight a work that it will not produce any great effects in the soul; that a look should heal is strange. Surely, you will say, this is not a full notion of faith, nor an act that will do us any good. I answer—Indeed it will not if it be done slightly. Therefore let me tell you that there are several notions of faith, which all have their use. Some notions are fitted for soul-examination, as faith that worketh by love, that conquereth the world, that purifieth the heart; these do best for a deliberate search, and the stating of our interest. Some for anxious thoughts at the first awaking of the soul out of the sleep of sin, as coming, running, flying, and seeking. When the soul is under trouble, and hangeth off from the grace offered, we press them to come; as our necessities are great, we press them to run. A soul deeply pressed with a sense of its necessity and danger is always in haste, so we press them to fly for refuge. When comfort appeareth not presently, we press to seek, and to a diligent attendance on the appointed means. Some for agonies of conscience after some former manifestations of God's love; these we exhort to staying and resting: Isa. l. 10, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' We press recumbency and adherence: Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Some for agonies of death; and great and imminent dangers, when long debates are not so seasonable, these we press to committing: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;' 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.' Jesus Christ himself did so: Luke xxiii. 46, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;' and David: Ps. xxxi. 5, 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit.' Some for holy duties, as word, prayer, Lord's supper; we press to acceptance of Christ in the word, to coming to Christ, or to God by Christ in prayer; we accept him from God in the word of promise, we present him to God in prayer as the ground of our confidence and hope for the mercies prayed for. In the Lord's supper, as religion is made visible, and we are to make use of the help of sense, eye, taste, and hand, so we press you to take, eat, and look; this is a notion for this use when Christ is crucified as it were before our eyes. Well, then, this is one great work, to look to Jesus, the author and dedicator of our faith, to spy out Christ under his memorials; here he is set forth dying and hanging on a tree. Pilate, when he had scourged him, brought him forth and showed him to the Jews; he said, 'Behold the man!' John xix. 5. We say, to you in God's name, Behold your dearest Redeemer bleeding and dying.

Now he is evidently set forth to you, your business is to behold him. And that this look may be serious, remember—

1. This is supposed, that you come hither as stung with sin, and that your hearts are deeply affected with your malady. Alas! otherwise here is no work to do. If men are not sensible of their malady, why should they look after a remedy: Mat. ix. 12, 13, 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' None but the burdened will look out for ease, or the self-condemned for pardon. If sin be not sin indeed, grace will not be grace indeed. Christ was anointed 'to heal the broken-hearted,' Luke iv. 18.

2. Your sight of Christ must not merely be historical and literal, the work of the understanding and memory, but of faith. A few cold thoughts raised upon this occasion do not warm and comfort the heart. You are to look to him so as that the heart be affected with mourning, desire, and trust.

[1.] Mourning for sin. If you are sensible of your case you will do so. A slight glance of the thoughts leaveth no impression. Look, as the three Marys, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen, they were affected when they saw Christ dying, John xix. 25, 26; of one of them it is said, Luke ii. 35, 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also;' so do you: Acts ii. 37, 'When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.'

[2.] Desire. Would not the stung Israelite desire a cure? So must you: Mat. v. 6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' Saith the church, Lam. iii. 51, 'Mine eye affecteth my heart.'

[3.] Trust. You see nothing by the eye of sense but his memorials, which God hath instituted as helps of faith, yet to appearance as despicable and as unlikely to produce any great effect as a figure of brass to cure a raging wound. But things under an institution are under a blessing: 1 Cor. i. 21, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' You may think a crucifix a more lively representation. No; that is not under the blessing of an institution, as bread broken and wine poured forth is; that is too much a matter of sense, and begetteth bare thoughts, which stirreth up fond pity and gross and wrong thoughts. This conveyeth a blessing: You are to behold not only a dying man put to a cruel death, but the Son of God in his deep exinanition; not carnally to pity him, but to see his love and the wrath of God and the desert of sin, that you may abhor it; to see the great price paid for our ransom, the necessity of having the virtue of his cross, and finally our thankful subjection to God. Behold him that you may bless and praise God for your redeemer. The type had its effect, and shall not Christ? Oh! labour to feel the comfortable effects of his death.

3. Beg of God the Spirit to open your eyes. Christ crucified is only seen in the light and evidence of the Spirit: 1 Cor. ii. 4, 'My speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' The eyes of our minds are opened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, for our light is but darkness.

4. See him so as to expect not only comfort, but healing : Isa. liii. 5, 'With his stripes we are healed.' That heart is to be suspected that looks to comfort more than duty. Look to him that you may live by him : Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Look to him that you may be like him : 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'For we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Look to him that you may loathe sin : Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 'Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.'

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