

SERMON UPON ROMANS IV. 18-21.

Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.—ROM. iv. 18-21.

WE are now come to handle the other branch of Abraham's faith. A believer hath but two works to do—to open the eye of faith, and to shut that of sense. I shall speak of this latter now. This instance deserveth to be considered by us—(1.) Because he is called once and again, 'The father of the faithful,' ver. 11, 16, meaning thereby that his faith is the pattern according to which our faith is to be cut out, or the copy to be transcribed by us; or, as the apostle's expression is, ver. 12, 'That we should walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham.' (2.) Because this was great and grown faith. It is negatively expressed, ver. 19, 'He was not weak in faith;' and affirmatively, ver. 20, 'That he was strong in faith, giving glory to God.'

Now in Abraham's faith we shall consider three things—

First, The ground of it.

Secondly, The excellency and strength of it, set forth by four expressions—

1. That 'he believed in hope against hope,' ver. 18.
2. That he considered not the difficulties, ver. 19, 'He considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.'
3. That 'he staggered not at the promise through unbelief,' ver. 20.
4. That he had a full persuasion of God's power, 'Being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform,' ver. 21.

Thirdly, The fruit and effect of it, an exact, ready, and self-denying obedience to God, not spoken of in the text, but to be supplied from other scriptures, especially in those two eminent acts of self-denial, his leaving his country, and offering his son. Thus was Abraham's faith tried, by promises of things strange and incredible, and by commands of the hardest duties.

First, The ground of his faith was the promise of God, as is often implied in the text; for it is said, ver. 18, 'That he might become the

father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be ;' and ver. 20, 'He staggered not at the promise of God ;' and ver. 21, 'Being fully persuaded that what he had promised,' &c. There were many promises made to Abraham, but those to which the apostle alludeth are contained in Gen. xv., as appeareth by his dispute all along, and the comparing the two chapters. Now the promise was either general or particular.

1. The general promise: Gen. xv. 1, 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' That God would take him into his protection, and abundantly reward his obedience. The like promise is made to all the faithful: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' The only one and true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will exercise all his wisdom, power, and goodness to protect us, and deliver us from all evil, and to give us all those blessings which are necessarily required to make us fully and eternally happy. He will be a shield to save us and protect us, either by way of prevention or removal of all evil, both temporal and spiritual, and he will be a reward to give us all good things, yea, 'a great reward,' yea, again 'an exceeding great reward,' which cannot come short of heaven's glory and eternal happiness, which is the aggregation of all blessings. It is implied also in the metaphor of being a sun to us. Here he is as a sun at its first rising, shining upon us with his morning beams of favour and compassion, which are very cherishing and comfortable; but then our sun shall be in its meridian, when he shall directly, fully, and for ever shine upon the saints.

2. The other promise was particular, and thus occasioned: When God had told Abraham that he would be his shield and exceeding great reward, he replied, 'Lord what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?' and again, 'Behold thou hast given to me no seed; and lo, one born in my house is mine heir,' Gen. xv. 2, 3. These words of Abraham imply some diffidence, or conflict with unbelief, or a weakness of faith at least; though they also may be conceived to represent his condition to God, and revive the remembrance of an old promise made to him some time before: Gen. xii. 3, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' And they in effect speak to this sense: Lord, how can I take comfort in the promised reward, since I do not see the fulfilling of thy promise touching my seed? But now mark the Lord's reply: ver. 4, 'This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir;' that is, thou shalt have posterity, the promised seed shall at length come of thy loins. And then God led him forth: ver. 5, 'And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them.' Ocular demonstration leaveth a stronger impression upon the mind: 'And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be;' upon this 'Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness,' ver. 6; that is, upon this he began to grow stronger in the faith, more and more overcoming the doubts of the flesh, and embracing the great promises which God had made him. He was a believer before, but now he commenceth a strong believer; this is

that which is said, ver. 18, 'He believed in hope against hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.'

Secondly, The excellency of his faith, in four expressions—

I. 'He believed in hope against hope.' Abraham was still childless, and so remained for some years after this assurance from God, and in the course of nature he had little reason to expect a child; but he hoped in the word of God, when according to the order of nature all hope of issue was cut off. We learn, then, that spiritual hope can take place when natural hope faileth; as Abraham had a strong hope in God when all appearances seemed to forbid hope. Most men's faith is borne up by outward likelihoods and probabilities, and when they fail, their faith faileth; they can trust God no further than they can see him; but true faith dependeth upon him when his way is in the dark, and there is little appearance of the things we wait for; as Paul could assure them not a man should be lost, when all hope that any should be saved was taken away, Acts xxvii. 20-22. I prove this—

1. From the genius and nature of faith. There must be some difficulty in the thing to be believed, or else it is not an object of faith: Rom. viii. 24, 'But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' The nature of faith and hope is so that it is not of things presently enjoyed; for vision and possession exclude hope, and what is easy and next at hand, it is as if it were already enjoyed; therefore it is no trial of your faith to wait for probable things, and such as are within the view of sense or reason; but to hope against hope, when God disappointeth our confidence, and seemeth to beat us off from believing, yet to adhere to him, this is the disposition of faith.

2. From the warrant of faith, which is the word of God. Now we must believe God upon his bare word, though we know not what time or way he will take, or by what means the things promised may be accomplished. In things future and invisible, we believe against sense. To say with Thomas, 'Except I see, I will not believe,' John xx. 25, this maketh way for atheism. In things incredible we believe against reason: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is *ἐλεγχὸς τῶν μὴ βλεπομένων*, the evidence of things not seen;' provided they be revealed by God. We must not be false prophets to ourselves, and make promises which God never made; that is to interest his glory in our vain conceits: Jer. iv. 10, 'Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace;' meaning the false prophets using his name. And it is a snare to ourselves; we dream of deliverance when God intendeth a further trial: 1 Thes. v. 3, 'For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.' But when the promise is clear, then we must believe in hope against hope. Sense, nature, and human reason must not be heard against faith: Ps. xxvii. 3, 'Though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident;' whatever the danger was, for he had a particular promise of coming to the throne. It must not be, saith sense: It cannot be, saith natural reason: It both can and will be, saith faith. Though what God had promised to do, do far exceed the power of nature, his word is enough to faith.

But if we have no express promise, may we not believe in hope against hope?

Ans. If believing be meant only of a confidence in God's power, not determining the certainty of the event. Many times we are cast upon God's providence, all human refuge and help faileth, there is no possibility of escape; yet God forbiddeth despair, and thus driveth us to himself: 2 Cor. i. 9, 'But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.' He means, when the furious multitude at Ephesus was let loose upon him for his adherence to his way: Ps. xlv. 19, 20, 'Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death, we have not forgotten the name of our God.' We have sometimes that which is equivalent to a promise, even the usual practice of God: Deut. xxxii. 36, 'For the Lord will judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left;' Gen. xxii. 14, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.'

3. The object of faith, God all-sufficient. We must neither measure his goodness nor power by our scantling and module. Not his goodness: Isa. lv. 8, 9, 'For my thoughts, are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts;' Hosea xi. 9, 'I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man.' We sin as men, but he pardoneth like a God. Nor his power: Zech. viii. 6, 'If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts.' The promises then made seemed impossible or improbable to be performed; for the Jews were a despicable remnant, and the times full of dangers and fears. Reason and probability is not our support, but faith, which looketh to God, to whom nothing is impossible. Nothing can be laid in opposition to his power, or can overbalance his promises. We are at a loss many times, but God is never at a loss. You would think that man ridiculous that should say an horse cannot carry him upon his back because a fly cannot. It is more ridiculous to confine God to human likelihoods and probabilities. We cannot do this, therefore God cannot: Ps. lxxviii. 41, 'They limited the Holy One of Israel;' that is, straitened his power, as if their wants were so great God was not able to supply them; or their miseries so grievous, that he were not able to remove them; or their enemies so strong, that he were not able to vanquish them. If there be any difficulty in the case, it is the fitter for an almighty power. Certainly we have no strong faith, if any faith, when we cannot see the truth of God's promises, unless we see the possibility of their accomplishment by natural means. If it pass the power of the creature, we say, How can these things be? Alas! you do not know God's infinite power. Can you say, Thus far God can go and no further; this much God can do, and no more?

II. He considered not the difficulties: ver. 19, 'And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' Here

we learn that we must not oppose natural impediments to the power and truth of God. Unbelief will stir up many objections, great reasonings within ourselves against the promise. To hearken to these is to tempt ourselves, and choke our own faith. As in other sins, to pore upon the temptation is to parley with the devil, and suffer the evil to fasten itself upon our spirits; so, in point of believing, Abraham considered not how dead and unmeet he and his wife were as to proflification.

First, I shall examine how we are, or are not to consider difficulties.

1. In some sense it is our duty to consider them, that we may not go about the most serious work hand-over-head. Christ bids us sit down and count the charges: Luke xiv. 28, 'For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?' The saints are wont to put hard cases to themselves: Ps. iii. 6, 'I will not be afraid of ten thousand of people that have set themselves against me round about;' and Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'

2. Therefore the ends must be observed. We must consider them to prevent slightness, and to weaken our security, but not to weaken our confidence in the promise. When they are urged against the promise, they impeach the truth of God; but when we consider them to prevent slightness, it is good. The difficulties of salvation must be sufficiently understood, otherwise we think to do the work of an age in a breath: Luke xiii. 24, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;' Josh. xxiv. 19, 'And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.' It is not so easy a matter as you take it to be.

3. Difficulties must be thought on to quicken faith, not to weaken it. If they be pleaded against the promise, they weaken faith; if they be pleaded to drive us to the promise, they quicken faith. What greater arguments are there to press us to dependence than to consider our impotency, the looseness of our hearts, and the strength of temptations? 2 Chron. xx. 12, 'For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee.' But to plead against the promise is to consult with the wisdom of the flesh, and it hath ever fared ill with the saints: Luke i. 18, 'And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.' Therefore for a while he was struck dumb. So Moses: Num. xx. 12, 'Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of the rock?' God had bidden him smite the rock, and assured him the water should flow; but he pleadeth the natural impossibility, therefore he was shut out of Canaan. So that nobleman, 2 Kings vii. 2, 'Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.' But he that will not believe the truth of a promise, shall not partake of the benefit of it. Well, then, as Abraham regarded not the great difficulties that might be pleaded to his faith from his own and his wife's age, so must not we.

Secondly, I shall show you the inconveniences of this sinful considering the difficulties in all the parts of faith, assent, consent, and affiance.

1. As to assent. There are many difficulties which may be objected against the truths propounded in the word; but it is enough to a believer that God hath revealed them in his word, and propounded them to his faith. Reason is apt to reply, as Nicodemus, when Christ spake to him of regeneration: John iii. 9, 'How can these things be?' Carnal reason keepeth men from simple believing, or resting on what is revealed, till they see a reason for everything. Now we see a reason why we do believe, and that is the word of God or divine revelation, though we do not see a reason of everything which we do believe, for many things are mysteries. In such cases we must receive truths as we do pills, not chew, but swallow them, take them upon the credit of the revealer. To chew produceth a loathsome ejection; to swallow a wholesome remedy. Believing in the common notion of it is a receiving of truths upon trust from another, so it differeth from knowing; and divine faith is a receiving such things as God hath revealed, because he hath revealed them. Therefore our first inquiry is, whether these things be so or no? Not, how they can be so? There we begin at the wrong end. In many cases, *constat de re*; the thing is evident in scripture whereby it is revealed, but how it can be is beyond our reach; the *modus* is not certain. Now, when we should believe, we dispute, and so cavil rather than inquire. If it be not plainly revealed by God, you may reject it without sin and danger; but if it be, you must not contradict all that you cannot comprehend, otherwise dangerous mischiefs will ensue. The true God will be no God to you, because you cannot comprehend the trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence. Christ will be no Christ, because you cannot comprehend how a virgin should conceive, or how a God should become man. It is sufficient that it is revealed in scripture, which carrieth its own evidence in its forehead, shining by its own light, hath the seal and stamp of God upon it; and moreover is confirmed by miracles, and handed and brought down to us by the universal tradition of the church through the successions of all ages, in whose experience God hath blessed it to the converting, comforting, and sanctifying of many souls. In short, to see a thing in its evidence is not to believe, but to receive it on the credit of the testifier. If you will not credit it unless the thing be evident in itself without his word, you do not believe Christ, but your own reason; and instead of being thankful for the revelation, you quarrel with his truth, because it is in some things above your capacity. You should be satisfied with the bare word of God, and captivate your understandings to the obedience of it.

2. As to consent and acceptance. There are many things may be objected against entering into covenant with Christ, as our unworthiness, the fickleness and looseness of our hearts; how unable we are to keep covenant with him; but these things must not be alleged against our duty and the free offers of the Lord's grace.

[1.] Our great unworthiness. This is one reason why the instance of Abraham is produced by Paul as a pattern of faith to the gentiles. As Abraham considered not his natural incapacity to have children,

so they not their unworthiness to be adopted into God's covenant. The gentiles were not a people unto God, but were overlooked in the dispensations of his grace; but, Hosea ii. 23, 'I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say unto them that were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.' Our condition is not so desperate that the mercy of the new covenant cannot reach us and recover us. So for particular christians, they exclude and repel comfort, because they are so vile and unworthy and such sinners. If you be such a sinner, the more need of a saviour. You would laugh at him that would argue thus: I am too cold to go to the fire, too sick to send for the physician, too poor to take alms, too filthy to go to the water to be washed. You must not consider what you have been, but what you would be. Christ doth not invite us because we are holy, but that we may be holy. The objection were of weight if we did only advise you to be eased of your smart, but not to be rid of your burden; if this consent were only a claim of privileges, and not an obligation to duties, or a submission to Christ's healing methods. Celsus objected against christianity, that it was a sanctuary for naughty persons and men of a licentious life. Origen answereth him that it was not a sanctuary to shelter them only, but an hospital to cure them. It is not the worthy are invited, but the thirsty and the needy; you are unworthy to the very last, but are you hungry? You are unworthy to receive Christ, but God is worthy to be obeyed. It is not a matter of privilege only, but duty.

[2.] Your hearts are so loose and changeable, you are afraid to bind yourselves to God. The truth is, this consent implieth a delivery over of yourselves to Christ, to seek happiness in the way that he hath appointed; it is the first egress of the soul towards the execution of the duty of a christian, our entry into the practice of the holy life, and an entry withal into a resolved war with the devil, the world, and the flesh, who will resist us herein; and you must consider difficulties so as to fortify your resolution: Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' He will surprise no man: Mat. xx. 22, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of? and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' And not to consider is to discourage your consent.

Object. You will say you cannot do it by your own strength, and you are uncertain of God's assistance.

Ans. Do not foretell the event, but charge yourselves with your duty. It is your duty to engage your hearts to God, though you cannot lay wagers upon your own strength. You must resolve, but continually depend upon Christ for the performing of your resolutions. He will maintain you in your way to heaven: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'For I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' In a sense of your own insufficiency and deceitfulness of heart, you must still rely upon his grace and spirit, who hath made many promises to support and to keep you by his power, through faith unto salvation.

3. For affiancing in the great promise of the gospel, or offer of pardon and life by Christ. There seemeth to be an impossibility to sense and reason from first to last. If the difficulties of salvation were suffi-

ciently understood, we should see, from the beginning to the end, from the first step to its last period in everlasting glory, it is the mere grace and power of God that carrieth it on, in despite of men and devils; and therefore it is said, Eph. i. 19, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power?' As for instance, the reconciling of a guilty soul to God: Eph. ii. 3, 'Among whom also we had our conversation in time past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as others.' The changing of a naughty and obstinate heart: Jer. xvii. 9, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?' And the giving us an holy nature and life: Job xiv. 4, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' Or to quicken us that were dead in trespasses and sins: Eph. ii. 1, 'You also hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' To strengthen a feeble and weak creature: 2 Cor. iii. 5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.' That things meet with so much opposition by the way: Eph. vi. 12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' What can maintain us in the midst of so many temptations? We at length die and rot in the grave as others do; now the raising of our bodies after it is eaten by worms and turned to dust is a thing incredible, and to flesh and blood wholly impossible; it is wholly within the reach of God's power. Now since we have ground to hope for all this from the word of God, even to pardon our many sins: Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;' to change this sinful nature, that we may become an holy people to God: Titus iii. 5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;' to overcome our obstinacy, perverseness in evil, fickleness in good; to maintain grace in the midst of temptations: Jude 24, 'To him that is able to keep you from falling;' and finally to raise us up out of the grave, we must not consider and plead the difficulties to damp faith, but to quicken it, going on with our duty, and wait for his salvation.

III. 'He staggered not at the promise through unbelief.' Strong faith is so satisfied with God's promise, that it leaveth no place for considerable doubtings; as Abraham here admitted no doubts or questionings touching the promise of God, but, without disputing or arguing to the contrary, depended fully upon the Lord, being persuaded he could do what he had promised. There are two reasons hereof—the immutability of his nature: Heb. vi. 18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation;' and his tenderness of his word: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' Both these breed this assured persuasion of God's faithfulness and steadfastness, and make his promise the great prop and support of faith. Now this staggering or not staggering at the promise, and so the weakness and strength of our faith, may refer to three acts or parts of faith—

1. A strong assent or clear sight of the evidence of the truth. If we have the word and promise of God, we should believe anything as surely as if we had the greatest evidence in the world. Thus some of the disciples doubted of the truth of Christ's resurrection: Mat. xxviii. 27, 'And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted;' Luke xxiv. 21, 'But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.' This argueth a weak faith, not vigorous and active; but faith is strong as it overcomes our speculative doubts, and so doth settle and establish our souls in the truth: Acts ii. 36, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

2. There is a doubting or staggering, as faith is a consent; when the consent is weak and wavering, faith is weak: Heb. x. 23, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.' But such a confirmed resolution as leaveth no room for wavering and looking back argueth a strong faith: Acts xxi. 13, 'Then Paul answered, What! mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'

3. As faith implieth a dependence and trust: James i. 6-8, 'But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; for let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord: a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' Divided between God and other confidences: 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;' Mat. xiv. 31, 'O thou of little faith! why didst thou doubt?' Well, then, it is a strong faith that causeth such a fortitude, that we pass through all difficulties and trials without distrust or anxiety of mind. It is opposite to fainting: Ps. xxvii. 13, 'I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' To fears and troubles: Mat. viii. 26, 'Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!' Strength of assent doth exclude speculative doubts and errors; strength of resolution doth fortify us against worldly temptations, which beget uncertainty; temptations of profit, pleasure, or vainglory, if the heart be secretly biassed with these, it is opposite to faith: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?' And strength of confidence doth exclude those doubts which arise from fears of danger and terrors of sense; in such cases we dispute away the comfort of the promises.

IV. 'He was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform.' A strong, steady, and full persuasion of the power of God argueth a great faith.

1. There is no doubt of his will when we have his promise; but the ability of the promiser is that which is usually questioned. Unbelief stumbleth at his *can*: 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?' Ps. lxxviii. 19; and, 'How can these things be?' Luke i. 34. So 2 Kings vii. 2, 'If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?' Nay; and the children of God themselves. Sarah was rebuked when she laughed: Gen. xviii. 12-14, 'Therefore Sarah, laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham,

Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?' Her laughter was not the laughter of exultation, but dubitation. Moses: Num. xi. 13, 'Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat.' The case is clear; we doubt not but in case of danger, then we are full of fears and suspicions; if of his will, it is because we are so vile and unworthy; but we are vile and unworthy out of danger as well as in danger, therefore it is of his power.

2. God's power and all-sufficiency is to the saints the great support of faith in their greatest extremities. They are relieved by fixing their eye on God's almightiness; as Abraham here. So Heb. xi. 19, λογισάμενος, 'Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.' So for perseverance: Jude 24, 'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.' And for the resurrection: Phil. iii. 21, 'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.' His power reacheth to the grave and beyond the grave. So for the calling the Jews: Rom. xi. 23, 'And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.' In short, to question his power is to put him out of the throne, to deny him to be God, as if he were not able to help his friends, and to be a terror to his enemies. Well, then, in matters absolutely promised we have nothing to do but to exalt his power; therefore you may reason thus: He will do it, for he is able to do it: Rom. ii. 23, 'They shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.' In matters conditionally promised we must magnify his power, and refer the event to his will: Mat. viii. 2, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'

3. There are two things enlarge our thoughts and apprehensions about the power of God; they are mentioned ver. 17, 'Whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were.' We have to do with a God that can say to the dead, Live. God's power can bring life out of death, something out of nothing; resurrection and creation are easy to him. He that can quicken the dead can quicken those that are dead in trespasses and sins. By the word of his power he maketh all things to be that are not; 'Let there be light,' and there was light; 'Lazarus, come forth,' and he came forth. He causeth things to appear and exist that had no being before.

Thirdly, The fruit and effect of his faith; an exact and constant obedience: Isa. xli. 2, 'Who raised up the righteous man from the east, and called him to his foot.' The righteous man is supposed to be Abraham, often designed by that character; and he was called to his foot, to go to and fro at God's command; as the centurion said, Mat. viii. 9, 'I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.' There are two great instances of Abraham's obedience—

1. His self-denial in leaving his country: Heb. xi. 8, 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should

after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out not knowing whither he went.' It was a sore trial to forsake kindred, friends, lands, father's house and inheritance, and to seek an abode he knew not where. Such a total resignation there must be of ourselves to the will of God. This was done by him, and must be done by all that will be saved. We know where the land of promise is, and the way to it, but it lieth in an unknown world.

2. Another trial was, Heb. xi. 17, 18, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promise offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.' Because God would make Abraham an example of faith to all future generations, therefore he puts him to this trial, to see whether he loved his Isaac more than God. Now Abraham gave him up wholly to God's disposal, even Isaac, on whom the promise was settled; being assured of God power, he made all things ready for the sacrifice.

Use. Let us get such a faith, even such a sincere, hearty, giving up ourselves to Christ, firmly to rely upon the promises, and faithfully to obey all his commands delivered in the gospel. The gospel is a summary of what we are to believe and do: Ps. cxix. 166, 'I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.' Stick to this whatever trial is made of you, and you have the faith of Abraham.
