

SERMON UPON ROMANS X. 5-9.

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.—
ROM. x. 5-9.

THESE words which I have now read need both vindication and explanation. My first work shall be—

First, Vindication, or reconciling Paul with Moses. That seemeth difficult, because in the allegation some things are changed, some things added, some things omitted, as appeareth by the collation of the places, the text and Deut. xxx. 12-14, 'It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'

To avoid the difficulty, some say these words are alleged *sensu transumptivo*, only by way of allusion and accommodation; not as interpreting Moses, but as fitting them to his own purpose. But this I cannot yield to, for these reasons—

1. From the scope of the apostle, which is to draw off the Jews and Judaising brethren from sticking to the law of Moses as necessary to justification. To do it thoroughly, he bringeth an argument from Moses himself, who doth in his writings give a clear distinction between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith, and so, by consequence, between the tenor of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Now, if it were an allusion only, the apostle would produce a bare illustration, not a cogent argument, and so would rather explain than convince.

2. The exposition itself is so clear, that we need not make it an

allusion, if we consider the place whence these passages are taken, Deut. xxx. The whole chapter is a sermon of evangelical repentance; see the 1st and 2d verses, 'And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart and with all thy soul.' This was spoken of a time which the Jews themselves confess to belong to the kingdom of the Messiah; and reason showeth it. For the words were spoken by Moses as referring to such a time when the Israelites were dispersed among all nations, which happened not till after Christ's ascension and the preaching of the gospel, and doth yet remain, and will remain until the conversion of the Jews, of which the apostle will speak in the next chapter. So that Moses' words are applicable to them when the gospel dispensation was set on foot; that was 'the word which was nigh them.' The great prejudice of the Jews against Christ's being the Messiah was, because he came not in a way agreeable to their carnal conceits, or with such pomp and visible demonstration of authority as to satisfy all his own countrymen; therefore they were prejudiced, and would not own him, nor receive the grace tendered by him, but looked for that as afar off which was nigh them and among them; and therefore the apostle doth apply the words of Moses to them, to bring them to embrace the new covenant.

3. From the nature of the thing.

[1.] Certain it is to us christians that Moses wrote of Christ; for our Lord saith, John v. 46, 'Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me; for he wrote of me.'

[2.] If he wrote more obscurely, we must consider he was a prophet, not an apostle.

[3.] That he wrote of Christ in this place, the apostle's authority is sufficient, for he was a good interpreter. If he, being infallibly assisted, saw more in it than we do, we are not to cavil at his authority, but with reverence to receive this light; not vex the citation by nice disputes, but humbly receive the interpretation he giveth of it.

You will say the words are altered.

But the apostles usually in quoting minded the sense rather than the words. And Moses' drift was to persuade them to take notice of the divine revelation made to them at that time when these things befell them, the destroying of the temple and city, and these dispersions among the nations.

Secondly, For explication. The words show us two things—(1.) What is the tenor of the legal covenant; (2.) What is the tenor of the righteousness of faith.

First, What is the tenor of the legal covenant? Ver. 5, 'For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.' For, understanding his drift, you must consider this, that at the first promulgation of the gospel, both Jews and gentiles were rivals for the favour and mercy of God. They did both at the same time start and set forth as two racers,

striving who should win the goal or carry away the prize of justification. So the apostle represents them, Rom. ix. 30-32, 'What shall we say then? that the gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.' It is agreed among the learned that the terms there used are agonistical, and that there is an allusion to racers. The approbation or mercy of God was the prize that all ran for, both Jews and gentiles; these were the two competitors. And as in all racing, they had a law prescribed which they were to observe, so both took their several ways. Now, who got the goal? The Jews strained themselves all that they could to get it by their law, and the gentiles by the law of faith. The business is, who would soonest come to the goal, or be accounted favourites of God?—the gentiles, upon faith and repentance, though formerly they had been idolators; or the Jews, that would be justified by the observances of their law, rejecting christianity? The apostle determineth that the Jews, though they did most earnestly contend to be justified by the law, yet did not outrun the gentiles, so as to get to the goal, or obtain the prize of justification from them. Why? Because they sought it not by the evangelical way, and could not endure it when it was revealed to them, but thought their legal observances would commend them to God, and so stumbled in the very midst of their race, out of impatience that their law should be abolished, and they levelled with the gentiles, and required to believe in a Messiah who lived and died in a mean condition; and so they utterly miscarried in their pursuit of justification and acceptance with God. These were the two litigant parties, and the case in debate at that time. Now, to take off the Jews from this vain and dangerous attempt, the apostle bringeth the two ways to a fair hearing, and proveth that the law can be no way to justify sinners, even from Moses himself, whose authority they so much cried up. He proveth it from his description of the righteousness which is by the law. The sum of his argument is this, there is no justification but either by the law or by faith; you must forego the one, and cleave to the other, for you cannot hold by both. Now you are left to your choice, which way you will take to run to the goal and obtain the prize. If you will hearken to Moses, he himself propoundeth two ways of justification—by the law and by faith. What he saith of the righteousness of faith we shall see by-and-by; but what he saith of the righteousness of the law is evident: 'The man that doeth these things shall live by them.' The law is no way to justify sinners, for by the law you are accursed if you sin; we cannot live if we do not all that is required of us and contained in the law. Now, we that are conscious to so many frailties have no reason to be fond of justification by the law, which exacteth such a strict, rigid obedience in all moral duties, even to the least tittle, and addeth so many burdensome ceremonies. The law promiseth life on doing all that was required of them to do, and threatened a curse on them that did it not, without allowing repentance; but in the law of faith, sure mercy and pardon is provided for the penitent believer.

And therefore justification is not put upon such impossible and difficult terms. It dependeth upon what Christ did for us, as he died, and rose again; and what we are to do ourselves is plain and easy: plain to be understood, and easy by grace to perform.

Secondly, What is the tenor of the righteousness of faith? This is set forth negatively and positively; what it saith not, and what it saith.

1. Negatively, what it saith not: ver. 6, 7, 'But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead).'

Here two questions are removed, as inconsistent with or improper to the righteousness of faith—

[1.] The first question, 'Who shall ascend into heaven?' that is, to fetch the knowledge thence of heavenly mysteries, or to bring down Christ from above; as if he had never been on earth to make known the doctrine of salvation, but were as yet to be called from heaven for this purpose. No; that is sufficiently done already: John iii. 13, 'No man hath ascended up into heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.' To comprehend heavenly mysteries is Christ's prerogative, who came from the bosom of the Father in our nature to communicate this knowledge to us, and to show us upon what terms we may be justified before God, and enjoy his grace and favour.

[2.] The second question is in the 7th verse, 'or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead).' In Moses it is, Deut. xxx. 13, 'Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it?' But the sea is sometimes considered for its latitude and breadth, and sometimes for its profundity and depth; and so is often put in scripture for the bottomless pit, as opposite to heaven, heaven being highest, and the bottom of the sea lowest; and is frequently used for the bottomless pit, or the state of the dead. The meaning is, You need not say, Who shall bring up Christ again from the dead? as if he were yet in the grave, and all hopes of salvation were buried with him, since long ago he is risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and hath sent abroad his messengers to proselytise the world, endowing them with power from on high for this work.

2. Positively, 'But what saith it?' Where take notice of—(1.) The words; (2.) The sense.

[1.] What words are put into the mouth of the righteousness which is by faith: ver. 8, 'The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.' It is 'in thy mouth,' to know it and speak of it; it is 'in thy heart,' as written there by the Spirit, that we may do the duty it requireth of us with ease and sweetness. It is 'in thy mouth' to confess, and 'in thy heart' to believe and practise. When the new covenant is spoken of as opposite to the covenant made with them when they came out of Egypt, it is said sometimes to be put into the mouth, and sometimes in the heart. The words are, Isa. lix. 21, 'As for me,

This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' Meaning thereby that his Spirit and word shall continue with them as a church, to direct them in all necessary things. This for 'the mouth.' Now for 'the heart.' See another promise: Jer. xxxi. 33, 'And this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' Well, then, the excellency of the gospel dispensation is set forth by two things—

(1.) It is more easy to be known and understood, and carried in the memory; for 'the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth.' The drift of Moses' speech tendeth to show that they should have a new covenant, the tenor of which was known, and easy to be expressed by all those who were acquainted with it.

(2.) It is more easy to be practised. It is not in our mouths only, but 'in our hearts;' which are inclined by the Holy Spirit to obey it; so that the new creature may undertake the duty it requireth of us by the assistance of God, and do it sincerely, though not exactly.

[2.] The sense of what it saith. It is explained and exemplified.

(1.) Explained: ver. 8, 'This is the word which we preach;' namely, the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins by Jesus Christ.

(2.) Exemplified: ver. 9, 'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Confession with the mouth there answers to 'the word is in thy mouth:' 'believe with thine heart,' that implieth faith; and Christ's being raised from the dead is instanced in, rather than any other article of faith, because that proveth all the rest, and is the great evidence of the truth of christianity.

Doct. That the way of acceptance with God, or obtaining salvation, is so clearly stated in the gospel, that we need not be in doubtful suspense, or seek out another religion wherein to find it, or other satisfaction than God hath given us in his word.

The sense of this point I shall give you in these propositions—

First, That it is the weightiest matter in the world to know how to be accepted with God as to pardon and life. Man, being a guilty creature, needeth pardon; and the soul dying not with the body, we desire to know the way of life, or what shall become of us when this frail life is at an end. Certain it is that we are haunted with guilty fears; for we are 'through the fear of death all our lifetime subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. 15. There are some troubles of mind in all of us about our acceptance with God; not always felt indeed, but soon awakened. Trembling souls, who know what God is, and what themselves are, and are conscious to former guilt and present unworthiness, cannot easily settle in a confidence of God's mercy to them, especially when they come to die. The fear of death raised our trouble before, but when death cometh indeed, these stings are increased: 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin;' and these stings

of conscience are justified by the highest reason, which is the law of God; not occasioned by our melancholy conceits only. It is an amazing consideration to us to think of entering into an unknown world, and to stand before the righteous bar of an impartial judge. That it is very hard to undergo death with a steady confidence, and to encourage our fearful and doubtful minds to launch out into eternity, common experience verifieth. I pray, consider, christians, that our present condition is a state of darkness and fear; and these fears are caused by sin, and justified by the law of God, and revived by death and the thoughts of the other world. And therefore there is not a weightier business than to establish our fearful and doubtful minds in peace, that we may comfortably wait for the mercy of God unto eternal life.

Secondly, That is the best religion which doth most provide for this peace and rest of soul. So that if a man were at liberty to choose, and were consulting what religion he should choose, this consideration must guide him where he can find true peace and rest for his anxious soul. So the prophet directeth them: Jer. vi. 16, 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way? and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls.' And by this argument Christ inviteth us to himself: Mat. xi. 28, 29, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' And the apostle commendeth the gospel upon this account: Rom. v. 1, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus.' It is easy to lull conscience asleep for a while; either—(1.) By carnal pleasures: Prov. ix. 17, 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.' For a while they seem so, but the virtue of that opium is soon spent. Or (2.) By a false religion; but within a while we shall soon find that is so far from being our cure, that it is a great part of our disease; no false religion is consistent with right thoughts of God. Therefore the woman of Samaria, as soon as she began to have an awakened conscience, inquires after the true religion: John iv. 20, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' An awakened conscience will be careful to lay the groundwork of religion sure. A false way of religion always breedeth scruples, and is accompanied with no sound peace. Or (3.) In the superficial observances of a true religion: Mat. xix. 20, 'All these things have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?' A false righteousness will not give true quietness to the conscience; there is something lacking, and the soul sits uneasy. Therefore nothing but coming under the power of the true religion will give rest and quiet to the soul.

Thirdly, That the christian religion doth abundantly provide for true peace of conscience and ease of mind—(1.) Because it discovereth the matter of true peace; (2.) The way how it may be attained.

1. The matter of true peace is pardon and life, or sufficient provision to appease our guilty fears and satisfy our desires of happiness.

[1.] Man being God's creature, and therefore his subject, and having faulted in his obedience and subjection to him, and knowing the

judgment of God, counteth himself 'worthy of death,' Rom. i. 32. And this fear of death and vengeance that ensueth is so engrained and implanted in the conscience, that unless some fit course of pardon and justification be propounded, and that with good authority, man is always restless and troubled, and knoweth not what to do to get rid of the sin of his soul: Micah vi. 7, 'Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Now the great design which the scriptures travail with is, to set forth a grant of pardon upon gracious and commodious terms, if sinners will but accept of it. It is the excellency of the christian religion above all other religions: Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' If the question were put to you, which was put to the spouse, Cant. v. 9, 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved?' what is there in Christ above other gods of the nations, that you make so much ado about him? what is it draweth your hearts, so to love him, and cleave to him, in the greatest hazards and extremities?—this you might answer, He hath set afoot a pardoning covenant, so suited to the necessities of man and the nature of God, that all the world cannot show the like.

[2.] For the other matter of our peace, a fit happiness to satisfy our desires. Man, having an immortal spirit, gropeth about for an immortal and eternal good, Acts xvii. 27, or such an estate in the other world as may comfort him against the labours and sorrows and the frailty and shortness of the present life. All nations have a conceit of the immortality of the soul; if at any time they doubt of it, they cannot wholly blot the sense of it out of their hearts. Surely all desire it, and it would give much ease to their mind if it might be indubitably made out to them that there is such an immortal estate. They that fully knew it not were pleased with the shadow of it, and sought it in fame; they would not have their memory die with them. As those that want children take pleasure in little dogs and cats, so did they embrace a poor shadow for the substance. To be sure, most men die anxious, and when they leap into eternity, they know not where their feet shall light; but now it is said, 2 Tim. i. 10, that 'Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' He hath made a clear revelation of that which was not so certainly known before. The heathens guessed at it; sometimes they seemed to see it, and sometimes doubted of it; as men travelling sometimes see a spire of a steeple before them at a distance, and anon they lose the sight of it again, and so cannot tell certainly whether they see it, yea or no. The law, like a dumb man, made many signs, and set forth eternity by long life, and heaven by Canaan; but now the gospel clearly speaketh it out, and scattereth all the mists and clouds about eternity.

2. The way how we surely may be made partakers of pardon and life; and there it telleth us—(1.) What Christ hath done; (2.) What we must do. Christ hath sufficiently laid the foundation, and all that we must do is but to apply what he hath purchased and provided for us.

[1.] What Christ hath done. 'The word that is nigh thee' referreth to things already done for us—Christ's death and resurrection.

(1.) His incarnation and death; for Christ needeth not to be brought down from heaven any more. He once descended from heaven, and was made flesh, and dwelt among us, for a double end—partly to reveal these things to us, and the way how to obtain them, with sufficient evidence and certainty. One great errand that he had in the world was to reveal the will of God to lost mankind for their recovery, and to bring them to the fuller knowledge of God, and the pardon of sins, and the truth of the unseen world, and the way thereunto: Luke i. 77, 'To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins.' And not only so, but partly also to be a mediator and reconciler between God and man, and lay down his life as a sacrifice for sin and a ransom for souls: Eph. v. 2, 'Who hath given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God;' Mat. xx. 28, 'He gave his life a ransom for many.' We have both, Heb. iii. 1, 'Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.' Well, then, herein lay the advantage of the gospel above the law; that required all to be done by us, but the gospel referreth us to things already done for us by another, who was sent from God to reveal his Father's will to us, and to redeem us to God. He suffered the penalty due for our breach of the law; there is nothing required of us but our thankful acceptance and hearty consent to follow Christ's conduct and direction. Well, then, he needeth not to be brought down from heaven any more, or descend to help and redeem the world.

(2.) His resurrection and ascension; for that is the second question: 'Who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ again from the dead?' No; that needeth not. He is risen already, and gone again to heaven, to assure us of the truth of his doctrine, and the value of his sacrifice, and the reality of the other world; for he himself is entered into the glory he spake of, and so giveth us a visible demonstration of the truth and reality of it; and also he is set down at the right hand of God, that he might apply salvation to us by his powerful and all-conquering Spirit. But it is the resurrection we must chiefly insist upon; for God by raising him from the dead hath declared him to be a sufficiently authorised messenger, and set him forth to be the person to be believed in, heard, and obeyed in his name. When Christ was crucified and buried, though a gravestone was sealed, and a guard of soldiers set to watch it, yet angels appeared and rolled away the stone, and spake to those that inquired after him. Yea, Christ himself often appeared to his disciples, conversed with them forty days, instructed them in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and then went to heaven, and poured out the Spirit; and for an hansom to the new gospel, by Peter's exhortation three thousand were converted at once, and afterwards evidenced the truth of their doctrine by miracles. There is no need that Christ should rise again in the eye and view of all those that would believe in him. Here is ground enough in that which was once already done.

[2.] What we must do: ver. 9, 'Confess with the mouth, and believe with the heart;' that is, be really persuaded of the truth of

what is done for us, and thankfully own it and acknowledge it to the world, resigning up ourselves to the discipline of his Spirit, whatever it costs us. This is all that is required of us. But though these two only be mentioned, we must understand those things which belong to either of them.

(1.) To begin with that first mentioned: 'If thou wilt confess with thy mouth.' There is a confession both in word and deed; the one must not contradict the other. The apostle telleth us of some that 'profess they know God, but in works they deny him,' Titus i. 16. So it is true of confessing Christ, or holiness of life. Works are a part of profession or confession; as also invocation is a branch of this confession, as appeareth by the 13th verse, 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Confession, then, implieth all visible godliness and holiness of life, for the holy, thankful life is a constant hymn to God, or a practical acknowledgment of the benefits we have by Christ; and so all christianity is a confession. It is necessary also that this confession be made in spite of all persecutions and danger: Heb. iv. 14, 'Let us hold fast our profession.' In those days, believing with the heart was not so costly as confession with the mouth. It exposed them to great troubles; yet a christian must be resolute, and trust Christ with all: Dan. vi. 10, 'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his window being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.'

(2.) So for the other. 'Believing with the heart' implieth not a dead faith, but operative: James ii. 20, 'Faith without works is dead.' Not a cold opinion, but such as 'worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6. Not a general assent, but an applicative faith: Gal. ii. 20, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' Owing him as our Lord and Saviour. Do this, and then you believe with the heart to righteousness, and confess with the mouth to salvation; that is, you are so pardoned that at length you are saved. They that could thus take Christ, and venture all upon the security of his word, and wholly resign up themselves to God upon these hopes, were in a safe condition, or a state of peace.

Fourthly, The gospel so clearly stating these things, there is no reason of doubtful suspense. All demurring must be upon one of these two reasons—either the difficulty of the thing, or want of certainty; but neither of them is just in this case.

1. Not the difficulty of the conditions; for believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth are easy to be understood and easy to be observed, by the power of the Spirit; for 'the gospel is the power of God to salvation,' Rom. i. 16. If God will put this into our heart and mouth, and give what he requireth, why should we snuff at these conditions as unreasonable and troublesome? What more reasonable than to own him with the greatest hazard from whom we expect such benefits as pardon and life, and to consent to follow his direction, who will bring us out of our misery to perfect happiness? and to venture all for him who, by a condescending act of astonishing love, stooped so low

for us? It is true, confession may be costly, but it is not an impossible thing. We should be willing to suffer the loss of all things for his sake; especially when God is ready powerfully to assist and help us: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.'

2. Want of certainty. We do not know whether this be the way of God, yea or no? I answer—

[1.] There is no doubt that reasonably can be urged. Either this is the way of God, or none. The way of heathenism is sottish and fabulous: 1 Cor. viii. 5, 'They have lords many and gods many.' And the way of the Jews yieldeth no relief, if the gospel be excluded. The way of the Mahometans is ridiculous and beareth no dispute. Therefore this is the way, or none.

Object. But why do you hesitate? You did not see Christ in the flesh.

Ans. But we may love him for all that, and believe in him, though we never saw him: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom, having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice.' He must not be fetched out of heaven again, nor raised from the dead again. It is not necessary to our faith that we should see Christ with bodily eyes, when we have most certain and firm arguments by which his resurrection may be proved.

Object. But we live not in the age of miracles, oracles, and visions, which people had in former times.

Ans. Man is apt to indent with God, and to prescribe to God that he may believe upon terms of his own making: 'Let him now come down from the cross, then we will believe him,' Mat. xxvii. 42; 'Can he prepare a table in the wilderness?' Ps. lxxviii. 19; 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,' Mat. iv. 3. We are not to think that God should be at our beck, and do what we require. Many require new apostles and miracles; that maketh them turn sceptics and atheists. We must not prescribe to God how he shall reveal his mind to men, but submit to the way he seeth best and fittest for us.

[2.] There lie more prejudices by far against any way of our own devising than the course God hath taken. The people slighted Moses, and would hear God himself speak; but when it thundered upon the mount, they cried out, Exod. xx. 19, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' We would have miracles, but thereby the simplicity of christianity is lost, and it would lay us open to the juggling tricks of wonder-mongers, and that would be little for our safety. We would have one from the dead, Luke xvi. 30; but they are out of the sphere of our commerce; that is no familiar way, nor so fit to instil faith and reduce men to obedience to God. And if we should learn our religion from ghosts and apparitions, we should never be free from delusion: Gal. i. 8, 'But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.'

[3.] Extraordinary means will do no good where ordinary prevail not. But man is never satisfied with the present dispensation: Ps. lxxviii. 22, 23, 'But they believed not in God, and trusted not in his

salvation, though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven.' Whatever means God useth, man is man still. There were carnal wretches when there were miracles, and so there will be still. When the heart is out of order, bare means will not set it in frame.

[4.] Though we live not in the age of miracles and oracles, yet if we have valuable testimony of them, it is enough to beget faith: Ps. lxxviii. 5-7, 'He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God.' It were endless to attest former miracles with a new supportation of miracles; report is enough to convey them to us; and if we cannot contradict them, why do we not believe?

Use 1. To check the dream of the efficacy of extraordinary means above the ordinary, which God seeth fit to give us. Our Lord impersonateth our thoughts: Luke xvi. 30, 31, 'If one went unto them from the dead they would repent. And he said unto them, They have Moses and the prophets; if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' We think the word is an antiquated, stale dispensation, that hath lost all its force. If God would assure us and invite us to faith and repentance some other way, it would be more successful; as if one came from the other world, or an extraordinary messenger from heaven or hell. Let us argue the case. It must be either because he is supposed to bring a more necessary doctrine to work men to faith and repentance, or can urge better arguments, or with more persuasiveness, or propound these truths with more certainty, or convey a power greater than is ordinarily dispensed by the word. It must be one of these four things, but neither the one nor the other can be.

1. Not a doctrine more necessary to convince men of their misery and remedy, sin and duty. The Son of God is a sufficient teacher of all divine things, for he lay 'in the bosom of God,' John i. 18; and he came on purpose to reveal what was necessary to man's salvation.

2. Not better arguments to enforce it. What! would we have an hotter hell or a better heaven, more direful threatenings, or sweeter promises, or more powerful motives? Surely nothing can be added. What is beyond eternal misery or eternal happiness?

3. Not propound these things with more certainty; for these things are offered to our understandings by a full and fair credibility. Christ being fore-described by prophecies, authorised by miracles, mightily declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, requiring nothing of us but what is suited to God's nature and our necessity. What certainty would a spectre, or ghost, or an angel, or apparition give above this?

4. Nor convey a greater power and force to affect the heart of man. What is of greater efficacy than the Spirit of God? Surely he is able to change the heart of man when nothing else can. Now the gospel is 'the ministration of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 8. [See these heads more enlarged in the Sermon on Luke xvi. 30, 31.]

Use 2. If God hath so settled the way of salvation in the new cove-

nant as to leave no cause or occasion of doubting, or suspecting of the truth or certainty of these blessings he hath promised to us, then we should not live in jealousies and doubtfulness, as if we were not upon sure terms with God. If we transact with another about certain benefits, the transaction may prove to no purpose if the matter about which we contract with them hath no being, or the terms be impossible, or the conveyance be not so firm and strong as to hold good in law. Now none of these can be imagined in our entering into covenant with God. For—

1. Eternal life is not a chimera, or a thing that hath no being: then you might 'run uncertainly,' 1 Cor. ix. 26, if it were a dream, or a well-devised fable. No; it is the greatest reality that can be thought of: John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.' Christ would not flatter us into a fool's paradise.

2. It is not upon impossible terms, but such as are performable by the grace of God; as faith: Eph. ii. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' And the apostle telleth us, Rom. iv. 16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.' Consider the conditions that concern either the making or keeping covenant. The conditions for making covenant: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart;' and Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.' Then for keeping covenant; for this is a covenant that keepeth us, as well as we keep it: Jer. xxxii. 40, 41, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.' So there is a promise of influences, to prevent danger of discovenanting: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.'

3. If the conveyance be not so strong and firm to make a plea in law; but this is conveyed by God's word, and confirmed by his oath: Heb. vi. 17, 18, 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' It is assured to us by his own Son: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;' and sealed to us by Christ's Spirit: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' Therefore the conveyance will bear a plea, both now in prayer and before the tribunal of God. If there be any room of doubting, it must be as to our qualification, and therefore that you must make more explicit; but as to that, remember that all the qualifications of the gospel must be evangelically interpreted,

not legally ; not in absolute perfection, but in a prevalent degree : our graces must be tried by the touchstone, not by the balance ; that they be of the right kind, though they are not full weight.

Use 3. If the christian religion be true, then we must love Christ and live to him, obey his precepts and depend on his promises. Salvation is brought home to our doors. God hath left it to our choice. 'The word is nigh thee ;' the way is plain, clear, and open. Do you therefore choose it.
