

The Worth and Excellence of the Gospel.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."—2 COR. X. 4, 5.¹



THE most part of the world, beloved in our Lord, there are but few of them who put that price upon the gospel of Christ that is meet to be put upon it, and so did some of thir² false apostles. They called the gospel foolishness, daffing.³ They thought it to be but baseness itself. But men's thoughts are not the measure whereby this gospel is to be measured, for the Word of God and the gospel of Christ, is not of the less worth in itself that men put a small price upon it. But our Lord He knows best what is the worth and excellence of this gospel of Christ. He who kens the vanity and daffing³ of the vain thoughts of the heart of man, He kens⁴ that albeit all the world should count light of His gospel, esteeming it but foolishness and daffing,³ and a weak thing; yet He

¹ In MS. this sermon has no date, but simply "A sermon by M. S. R.," but from some of its allusions it seems to have been preached on Aug., 1640, see note page 1.

² These.

³ Folly.

⁴ Knows.

knows that the weapons of that warfare are not carnal and fleshly, but mighty through the power of God to the pulling down of strongholds. I say nothing now of what I spake before, but only I say this :

Be no party in the world. Make the gospel and Christ your party, and take not the gospel for your enemy ; for resist the gospel who will, and, whoever they be that stand out against it, it shall aye at last overmaster them, and ding¹ them down, and tread them under foot, whether they will or no. How many have there been who have been setting their shoulders and their wits together to thrust this gospel out of the world. They thought it to be a cumbersome guest, and would fain [have] been quit of it, and so pressed to blow out Christ's candle. But they have been like drunken men, who in their drunken humour would run up to the top of a hill to blow out the light of the sun ; but instead of blowing out the light thereof, they have only kythed² their own foolishness. Even so do men in the world, climb up, upon the top of their worldly pomp and ambition, to blow out this candle of the gospel. But the more they blow at it to get it out, they only kythe³ their witlessness the more. It has evermore proved itself to be master, and more, against all who oppose it.

A second *use* that we are to make of this, that the weapons of the gospel are mighty, is : Wherever this gospel cometh, whether it be to a congregation, to a nation, or to a particular person, it will evermore be master. We may not think to make a servant thereof, because it is mighty through the power of God. It is

¹ Throw.

² Shown.

³ Show.

the arm of the Lord, as it is in Isa. liii. 1 ; the prophet says there, " Who hath believed our report, or to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? " And so never think to bruike ¹ the gospel and make a servant of it ; for ye can no more make the gospel a servant to serve you than ye are able to break the Lord's arm. And, indeed, he is a strong party who will make the Lord's arm either to bow or to break. And, therefore, wherever the message of the gospel comes, let it have its own proper place ; make it master. Let it prove to be the power of God to lay down those high and strong turrets of pride, of self-love, of worldly-mindedness, &c., under the foot of Christ, that so He may be known thereby to be mighty. The gospel will not be a servant and drudge to any. It will not be a post-horse to run our errands for us. It will not be a servant to the greatest upon earth. If it be mighty, through the power of God it will keep its own place, who will, who will not.

Moreover, if the gospel be not the arm and power of God to bring us home to Christ and to salvation, it shall then be the blackest news that ever we heard in our time. It is not for nought that our Lord, who is mercy itself, pronounced such a woe against Chorazin and Bethsaida, even a more heavy woe than against Tyre and Sidon. Woe ! to you for evermore to whom Christ and the gospel come, and yet mend ye not. And He also pronounces a woe and a curse against these who bring not out the fruits of the gospel where it comes. And, therefore, it were best for you to bring out the fruits of the gospel timeously ; ² for ye will not be quit

¹ Enjoy.

² Early.

of the gospel so easily and so lightly as ye trow¹ to be quit of it. It will either mend you or end you. If it do no more, it will leave a summons at your door declaring that mercy and salvation were offered to you, and ye would not accept of it.

If ministers cannot be means to save people's souls, they will yet leave a summons at the door of your souls, and will take the sun, the moon, stars, the stones, and timber of the kirk, in witness that we did our duty, and told our Master's message to you, but ye would not obey. And, therefore, for Christ's sake, seeing the gospel is come to you, take heed that ye despise it not, as ye will be answerable to Him who is the Master thereof. In Revelation xiv. 9, 10 there is a woe and an everlasting curse pronounced against these who receive not the gospel when it is sent to them. And, 2 Thess. i. 9, 10, the apostle says the Lord will come in flaming fire and take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of Christ. There is no less doom pronounced against those who are disobedient to the gospel of Christ nor² the vengeance and the heavy curse of God. His word and gospel have not another word to say to the despiser of the gospel nor² the vengeance of Christ to light upon them. That is a heavy burden to light upon any. And therefore I beseech you, in God's name and in Christ's name, let the gospel have the one work, which is the proper work thereof. Let it be master, and think not to make a servant of it. Bow unto the gospel, least if ye bow not willingly unto it, it break you all in pieces.

¹ Believe.

² Than.

Our weapons of our warfare, they have might and power from heaven and from God to ding¹ down strong-holds. Then it is so. It is but a daft² question and a foolish conceit of those who are enemies of the Lord's grace to say, that for all that might and power that is in the gospel, that yet, notwithstanding, the free-will of these to whom it is sent with that power, may say³ or no to it, Take it, or reject the offer thereof, as your free-will pleases. This is nothing else but a conceit of those who never kent⁴ the power of the gospel. And we may know the gospel to be mighty through the power of God if we will look either to Him who is the author of this gospel, or if we will look to the matter that is contained in the gospel, or if we will look into the manner of the working thereof.

For the author of this gospel, it is no other but God Himself. Indeed, if this gospel were the word of a man only, albeit it were spoken unto the soul of a man, then I think man's free-will might say or no to it,³ as it pleased. But the gospel is not the word of man to man, but it is a love-letter that is written to us by our Lord Himself, and is dited⁵ by His Spirit. And why may it not command our will to yield unto it, seeing the Lord Himself is the author thereof? It is a great indignity offered to our Lord to say, Let Him speak as He will, albeit it were never so pithily; and let Him work with His word as He pleases, that yet, notwithstanding, to say or no, to accept or not accept as He pleases, that albeit our Lord shoot His arrows at man, yet He may either resist or jouk,⁶ and let the fire go by him. He that framed the

¹ Cast.

² Unwise.

³ Say Yes or say No to it.

⁴ Know.

⁵ Dictated.

⁶ Evade.

arrow He has put might and power in it, He has put steel in the point thereof, that it may pierce where it lights. And, when He intends to bring in a soul to Himself, He shoots not as it were at the rivers and so to shoot at it begess,¹ but He shoots as it were at a mark; and He aims and sets right on before He shoots, and so cannot but light into the mark, and His arrow it will pierce where it lights.

Again, if we will look unto the matter that is contained in the gospel, we will see that it is mighty through the power of God, for all the world cannot frame and make up such logic as is contained in the gospel. All the wits in the world cannot pen such a glorious description of the New Jerusalem as is contained in the two last chapters of the Revelation. Nor can all the wits of men and angels make such a description of the Son as there is made of Him (Heb. i.) All the world cannot come out with such a description of the power of the gospel as that which is here. And, therefore, albeit hell and all the powers had said that the gospel shall not prevail, yet seeing He said that it shall prevail, they shall not be able to resist it, but it shall prove to be mighty through the power of God, who is the author thereof.

Third: if we will look unto the manner of the working of the gospel, we will also see it to be mighty to ding² down all our strongholds. If God were not omnipotent, there might be some show for this, to say that man's free-will might say aye or no to the gospel of Christ. But He who knows all the several parts and

¹ At random, by guess.

² Throw.

the turnings of the heart of man, shall not He know how to win in into it? How can He make any creature by His power but He maun¹ also know by His power how to move it as He thinks meet? He who when He backs His word with power can win into [the] heart where there are seven devils and speak to it, can He not win into any man's heart how backward soever it be? I am sure there was never a man who had more hurtful thoughts of the Son of man, Jesus Christ, than the Apostle Paul had, for he dought² not endure to hear of His name, nor to hear of any who professed His name, but persecuted them all most cruelly. And yet our Lord, He did no more but speak a word or two to him; and with these same few words He spake to him, He cast him off his high horse whereupon he rode so triumphantly, and lays him laigh³ down upon his back and under His feet. And whereas he was going of purpose to persecute the members of Jesus Christ, he says to Him, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" To hear our Lord casting down, at an instant, such a strong and cruel opposer of the gospel of Christ, and presently to make him say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" that is a cast of the power of our Lord's right arm. And so they are but fools to say that nature, or free-will, or man's heart is able to decline from the straik⁴ of God's Word when He resolves to work upon them by it.

Now Lord be thanked that it is so, that we are not able to resist it but that it is mighty and powerful to overcome us. There is a trim⁵ place for proving of this point,

¹ Must.

² Could.

³ Low.

⁴ Stroke.

⁵ Fine.

Cant. ii., where the spouse, which is the Kirk, is telling the manner of her well-beloved's working. He worketh by love. Now love, it cannot be ravished or hindered any way, albeit the lover may be ravished, or tane¹ away, or kept away from the thing beloved; yet love cannot be so, for if it can be ravished or hindered, then it is not true love. In ver. 4, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." And when the banner of love is holden up by Christ over the Kirk, is she able to resist then, and to hold Him out, as she pleases? No; for the next verse says when this banner of love was holden over her she fell a sound² [Authorized Version, "sick of love"], and therefore she says in the next verse, "Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." This is our Lord's gate³ of working upon the hearts of those whom He is minded to turn to Himself, He casts a lump of love over them, and when He does that, He can gar⁴ the rebel fall a sound of love.² When a soul is running fra⁵ God and fra⁵ the consolations of His Spirit; when Jesus once sets His love upon you, and speaks to thy soul, it shall not be in thy power to resist, or to win out of His hand again. Let men make a principle of free-will, or determine whereupon it is that the word sets first. But when the Lord speaks to any, and backs His word with power, it makes them to set their heart upon Jesus; and the soul that Christ loves, He looks upon it in love, and, when the Lord does so, the soul is far fra⁵ indifferent then, whether it receive Christ and His word or not; but there is a necessity laid upon them that they must yield.

¹ Taken. ² Into a swoon from love. ³ Way. ⁴ Cause. ⁵ From.

And the Lord also, He is far fra¹ that, that He counts whether these to whom He speaks give obedience to Him or not. He speaks not so. But whoever they be to whom He speaks, if they submit not willingly He treads them under foot, and makes them pliable, and so makes good that word spoken, Deut. xxx. 6 : “ And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” Take with² your rebellion to God all of you, not [only] with that natural power of resisting the grace of God, but take with that wickedness and sweariness³ that is in the soul, and that opposition that nature makes to Christ till He subdue it by His power. And Ezek. xxxvi. 26, where a new heart is promised by the Lord, and He promises to take away the old and stony heart.

But say they there, “ That new heart that is promised to us there, it is promised upon condition that we resist it not.” But look to the text, and ye will see that it mentions no such thing as “ I will give unto you a new heart *if you oppose it not* ; ” but the text says absolutely, “ A new heart also 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 a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes to do them.” There our Lord He meets with the wits of men and opposes Himself to all objections that they can make of this kind, while He promises to take away the stoniness of the old heart, and then to give a new heart also, and to cause those

¹ From.

² Acknowledge, own.

³ Unwillingness.

whom He takes in hand to walk in His statutes. This in effect is our Christ's gospel. Even the power and the mighty arm of God to bring in the rebel soul to Christ and to make it Christ's own captive, and to make all of us say, "I find there is more life and power in His word than ever I could have believed there was to bring me into grace whether I will or not."

And, in effect, who are those who oppose this power of the grace of God? and it has been very well observed by learned men, that there was never any who opposed themselves unto it, but those who kent¹ nothing of the grace of God themselves. And thus the grace of God it revenges itself upon them. Because they resist and oppose the power of it they shall never get profit or benefit thereby. And, indeed, few—few whoever kent¹ what the power of the grace of God meant—durst take upon them to be an Arminian, or to speak against the power of the grace of God; but if any know rightly the power of the grace of God, it were the way to make souls fall in love with it, and to make them loath to say anything against it.

Now if this word and weapons of our warfare be mighty through the power of God, pulling down strongholds, &c., we have sweet *uses* arising unto us from this. And—

First: O, if we could get your hearts summoned to obey this, that ye would come in to Christ, and give over your hearts to Him to be wrought upon by His word. Alas! and² any of you have a bairn that is unlettered, ye will send it to the school that it may learn there. Others,

¹ Knew.

² If . . .

through feeling of disease on their bodies, will have recourse to the physicians. If a man have a weak and troubled estate he will have recourse to the lawyer, and will concredit¹ his cause to him. And yet thou hast a rebellious soul, and yet thou wilt not give over that to Christ to take and order therewith, and to work upon all the powers thereof, and to change them by His word. If we could once win on this far, to let God's word work upon our hearts by our Lord's power, we would then find that we get a sweet niffer,² we would get a new heart for an old heart, we would get new spirits for old spirits. O! but that is a sweet and a happy change. And there is no way for us to become new men and women, but only this, by renouncing ourselves over to the power of God's word to be wrought upon by it, and, if we be not new men and new women, it had been better for us that we had never lived. Woe! is to that soul for evermore that has no more of Christ than nature gives unto it! We may get some learning by being at schools, wisdom may be acquired by pains, riches, &c., and the world may esteem of a man for these things; but yet, for all that, he is nothing else but Christ's painted tomb. For all these, he is all rotten and filthy within; for as beautiful-like as he looks without, yet within he is nothing else but the workhouse of the devil. Say of such a man what ye will, make him never so trim³ a man for natural parts, wanting a spiritual work, yet he is no other in Christ's account, but a trim³ limb of the devil. Will the world call him an honest⁴ man, then he is an honest⁴

¹ Entrust.

² Exchange.

³ Fine.

⁴ Honourable or respectable.

heir of Satan. If ye will call him a civil¹ man, yet he is no other but a civil² heir for hell, whatever the world thinks of him or himself. Yet this is the account that God has of a man so long as he has not given himself over to be wrought upon by the word of God.

Second *use*. An² there be any here who are complaining of a rebellious heart, of a stony and hard heart, I say to such; "Look if ye cannot get faith to believe in this gospel of Christ, to lay hold upon thir³ weapons that are mighty, through the power of God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and get faith to believe in it. Thou wilt not find the heart to be so backward. A soul which has such a hard,⁴ a rebellious, and a stony heart, it burdens them very sore. But here [is] a ground of comfort to such, if thou can get faith to believe it, that albeit thy heart were never so rebellious, hard, and stiff, yet there are weapons in Christ's armoury that are able to ding⁴ it down, to humble and soften it. Thou wilt say, "I cannot get my haughty heart humbled, nor can I get it win off the love of the world, and I find many lusts prevailing there wherewith I am greatly borne down." But here is our comfort, if we have faith to believe. This word of the gospel, it is mighty through the power of God to bring all these in subjection. If ye can get but this far as to be chased into Christ, by reason of the sight of your sins, it is sweet and comfortable.

O, but I like these souls well who are ever mourning for sin, who are complaining of a hard, rebellious, un-circumcised, stony heart. But here is a ground of comfort for such, that God's word is mighty through His

¹ An outwardly correct.

² If.

³ These.

⁴ Cast.

power to bear down sin. If we could once win to this, to think that sin is a burden, it were good for us, it would drive us in to Christ. Thou art nearer to heaven when thou art bemoaning the estate of thy hard heart, and art putting it in Christ's hand to be healed, than when thou thinkest all well with you. Thou art meet then to receive of Christ's pity, for He is a Lord ready to forgive all such as come to Him in humility, He is a physician who will take sick folks in hand to heal them who have no money to give for their cure. He is indeed the poor man's physician. He seeks no more of us, but only to tell Him that we are sick. He has a hammer to beat down the hard heart. He has a sword to cut it in pieces. He can make whole the broken heart and afflicted spirit for sin ; He can give a new heart and new spirit. Cast not down your heart, because ye find the hardness thereof ; cast not away your confidence for all that, but believe in God's word, which is mighty through the power of God to bring it under these.

The Lord be thanked that there is this meikle¹ power in the gospel of Christ, as to make a soul that is sick for sin whole again, as to make a hard heart a soft heart ; that there is virtue into it, as to pour down that Spirit upon us, promised to the house of David (Zech. xii. 10), the spirit of prayer and supplications, and the spirit of repentance and mourning for sin. And if we could attain to this, it were a sweet preparation for a solemn fast and humiliation when the Lord is glooming² upon the land for the sins thereof, and the Lord is calling to solemn fasting and humiliation for the sins of the land ;

¹ Much.

² Frowning.

it were meet that every one of us should take to heart our own sins and the sins of the land wherein we live, and be humbled before God for them, that so the Lord might comfort us.

Now, where are the fruits and effects of thir¹ weapons of our warfare? To pull down strongholds, to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God in bringing in subjection everything to the obedience of Christ. These be even all things that be either within or without a man that set themselves in any way against the gospel. It brings all of them in subjection. Especially it casts down all these fortifications that be inwardly in the soul against Christ and the gospel, even all these things that natural men lippen² to.

Now, whose is the house before this work be wrought? Matt. xii. 44, answers this question. Satan says, "I will return into my house whence I came out." So the goodman of that old house is no other but the devil; and Christ our Saviour says in another place, "How can a man enter into a strong man's house, unless he first bind the strong man and cast him out?" He means there that Satan is master of every man's house until Christ come into the soul and bind him and cast him out, and take possession there Himself. That may gar³ all our feathers fall, albeit so oft we will say that we love Christ. For speer⁴ at all men and women, they will say that they love Christ, and they are angry that any should think otherways, yet by nature all of us are keeping a castle against Christ, and were keeping it for

¹ These.² Trust.³ Cause.⁴ Ask.

the devil's service. And of necessity before ever Christ come to dwell into the soul, all these high towers they must fall to the ground, and Christ must bring in a new work with Him, and make us new creatures. And this is one of the works of the gospel, even to lay all the heights that are in man's soul down even with the ground, to make sin and the devil and all these lusts that are keeping up the castle of the heart from him, fall flat to the ground together. And He scoops¹ all that muddy house to the door, that so He may make a pleasant house of ashler work for Himself. It seeks to cast down all the old rotten barns that formerly have been built there by sin and the devil, and to exalt us, that so the king of glory may come in as it is, Psa. xxiv. 7 : "Exalt yourselves, ye gates ; be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : that so the King of glory may come in."

All this serves greatly to ding² down our proud natures, to let the natural and the civil³ man see in what estate he is in God's sight, albeit he have a good report before the world, that yet notwithstanding he is not a man great in God's sight unless the gospel has gotten work in him to ding⁴ the high towers that are in him. If thou hast never had a sick soul for sin it is a token that Christ and His word have never had any work in you ; it is a token, if it be so, that as yet we are God's rebels ; and woe is to them for evermore who are in that case, and will remain in it stubbornly. He has wisdom to call in rebels, and power to make them submit themselves to Him. But He has also a rod of iron to bruise them all to pieces, who proudly stand out

¹ Sweeps.

² Cast.

³ Outwardly correct.

⁴ Cast.

against Him. Well's¹ them who can give over the old house to Christ in time, who resolve that nature and their sins and their own old hearts will never take them to heaven. Aye, albeit they have some knowledge of God, and be acquainted with divinity that way liberally; yet [they] know that all these are no other but the keeping up of a castle against Christ, and building up forts against Him, and are made to acknowledge that we are ever in a woful estate until the gospel come in with the power thereof, and ding² down all these strongholds that are in us; and to account so of ourselves that we know nothing till we know that Christ has thus wrought in us. Mark the speech of a learned man who doubtless had a very great measure of learning, yet he says of himself: "I know nothing, neither do I desire to know anything but the Cross of Christ and Him crucified; whereby I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me." All the natural and civil³ honesty in the world will not do the turn to bring us to heaven, till we once see that by nature we are in a damnable case, and, in God's mercy that if He please He may cast us away from Him for ever to hell. If we be not made Christ's captives we shall be captives and bondmen in hell for ever. Except we become a fallen down building that Christ may build us up, we shall questionless be miserable for ever.

Now of this point a word or two of some things. First, concerning some ordinary faults that are in some, making them to hold by these towers. Next, we will show unto you some marks of these where these strongholds are casten down. Third, we will show unto you

¹ Good is it for them.

² Cast.

³ External good name.

the way that the Lord keeps in casting down these strongholds.

Now for the ordinary faults that are in men in holding up these towers. They are :

First : And there is no man who is born without this : Thir¹ walls of sin and strongholds they are not altogether casten down so long as we are living here. If it had not been so, one who was a chosen vessel of mercy, the Apostle Paul, had never used that speech spoken, Rom. vii. 18 : " I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This was spoken by him after his regeneration. And woes them ! who acknowledge not that there is some of the old work of nature to the fore² in them so long as they are here. Why ? How can this be true ? Because there is nothing that altogether expels original corruption that is in all of us but only glory. I know indeed that true grace sneds³ away the branches off that tree, and wins in upon the stock also. And grace casts down the walls and the roof of this house. But for the root of this tree, and the ground stones of that house, there is nothing gets that hoked up⁴ and takes order with it but only glory. Aye, the children of God, when the house has been casten down by the grace of regeneration, they have been ready many times to build toofalls⁵ for themselves again ; as we read of Noah, Lot, David, who fell in heinous sins after they were freely regenerate[d] of God, and the falling into these heinous sins, it was the building of toofalls⁵ and little houses of sin and corruption again.

¹ These.

² Still remaining.

³ Lops off.

⁴ Dug up.

⁵ Small buildings adjoining a large one.

But there be others again, against whom the Lord is shooting the arrows of His gospel, and yet there is not a hole made into their walls by them, nor a branch sned¹ off their tree for all that can be done to them. We may read of the like of these, Acts vii. 51, where the Apostle Stephen is preaching to some Jews, and in the end he says unto them: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart." He shoots strongly at them, but there is not a hole made into their wall for all his shots, but they fortify it so strongly that it shoots back again at himself, who preached to them, and they presently stone him to death for what he did. And so did they to Christ Himself. He shot at them by the preaching of His word and working of miracles among them, to batter down their old walls; but they shot out again at Him and crucified Him. This is a pitiful mark where the gospel is preached to people, and it convinces them of sin, and all that that produces in them is, it raises hatred in their heart against the preachers of the gospel. But there is not one hole made in their old work for all that they can do, but it stands upright unshaken.

But there be a third sort of people whose old walls and strong towers, preachers, by their preaching, make to totter and shake, but incontinently² when they find their walls begin to shake, they set to to put props to them to hold them up; such as we read of Cain and of Ahab, they did this—they returned to their former pleasures and their old sins again, albeit their consciences were challenged for the wrongs they had done. And, indeed, these persons are in a very miserable case, who get their sins

¹ Lopped off.

² Immediately.

discovered and laid open to them by the preaching of the word, and yet go home presently and away to the tavern, or, when they go out here, fall to their swearing, and so heap up their sins continually and obdures¹ their conscience. These are in a very fearful case if they were sensible of it.

But the best sort of the hearers of God's Word is these who fald² themselves willingly to Christ our Lord, when He speaks to them by His Word and preachers, who are content that the Lord ding³ down their towers of pride, of worldly-mindedness, of filthiness, that He bring to the ground their high castles of self-love, lay under His feet their love to the world, ding³ down their conceit and love they have to superstition and idolatry. And in the Word of God, ye will find six several marks of such hearers as these, and we shall point at them. For the—

First mark, look Acts ii. 37, where the Apostle Peter preaching to a number of souls who were converted to Christ, it is said, they were pricked at the heart by his preaching. The words he spake to them were such as if a serpent had stinged them, they were so sharp they pierced the heart. When the Word of God begins to batter at the hearts of such, and to discover unto them the great towers of atheism that are in them, the high walls of profanity, the deep waters of bloodshed, the strong desires of filthiness, when they see such a slavery to all sorts of sin, and are borne down under the sense thereof, then the heart of the child of God it is stinged, it is pricked, it is rent, and pierced, as it were by it.

¹ Hardens.

² Bow.

³ Cast.

The *second mark* of such is set down to us Jer. xxxi. 18: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised." When once the soul is complaining of sin and is borne down under the sense thereof, and is sending up complaints both to God and to His servants against it, it is a token that these high towers are beginning to fall down, but as long as thou art continuing in thy guiltiness of sin, and are not complaining against it, that is not the gate¹ to heaven. Albeit thou hope for heaven, yet it is not well with thee, it is a token that there are high towers into thy soul, that the work of the old Adam is yet standing fast.

A *third mark* of these who fald² willingly to Christ, and stoop to His Word, is this: They begin presently when their sins are discovered to them, to make syllogisms of their own, even as the unjust steward, who was shot out of his service, for faults committed by him. When he was out he begins to think with himself: "What shall I do now? I cannot beg for shame. None will pity me for work. I cannot work. And I have not of my own to keep me." And so he resolves he will back to his master again. Let him cast him in prison if he will, for then he kens³ he maun⁴ find⁵ him. Happy is the soul when it comes to such an estate as that; it sees it has nothing of its own to live upon, and so resolves it will go back to Christ. Let Him cast it in prison, if He will, it is in a better estate nor⁶ it was then. Sich-like⁷ [was] the forlorn son when he had

¹ Way.² Bow.³ Knows.⁴ Must.⁵ Find him the means of living.⁶ Than.⁷ Suchlike.

spent all that he had, and had no more. He resolves that he could not die for hunger in a far country, and, at the first, he thought he could not for shame go home to his father, yet when he saw that no other could be, he resolves that he will do it, go home, and offer his service to his father, for he thought it better to be a living servant nor¹ a dead son.

A *fourth mark* of these who stoop willingly to the gospel is: It raises into them an earnest desire after a Saviour. I will not say but in some this desire of a Saviour is not so thoroughly² spiritual as it should be; yet there is some desire in him after Christ, and he sees that far, that he may not want Him, and he desires that Christ would come in into his soul and ding³ down all his haughty lusts and imaginations, and wishes that he were in body and soul made captive to Jesus.

A *fifth mark* of these who are obedient to the gospel of Christ is: He looks, evermore looks, to the promises with a long look of love. He never hears such a promise as that Christ Jesus came into the world to save penitent sinners, but he thinks with himself, "O! if I were one of these whom He is come to save. And O! if I could have my heart steeped into these gracious promises."

A *sixth mark* of these who yield unto the gospel is: There is no man who prizes Christ so highly as such a man does. O! he would give heaven, if he had it, to have Christ. There is nothing he would think too dear to be sure of Christ. You know that woman who is spoken off by the Evangelist Luke, who washt Christ's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of

¹ Than.

² Thoroughly.

³ Cast.

her head. If her hair had been heaven and her tears, she would have thought them over¹ ill to wash and to dight² Christ's feet; she had such a high estimation of Him. When once the soul comes to this pass; "O! miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death," and knows how far thou art oblist³ to Christ for delivering you from it, it will make you to put a high price upon Christ, and make you to say, "O! that I could give anything for Him that I might get Him. If heaven and earth were mine I would give them for Him." There will be no pinching then, when the soul is once truly humbled by the word of God. There will be no pinching then what we give for Christ. It would not be then, "Wilt thou give thy sinful lusts for Christ? wilt thou quit thy pride for Him? wilt thou quit the world and the things thereof for Christ?" We will stand upon nothing then, but we will quit all willingly that we may gain Christ. And these are very lively and clear marks of a downcasten and humbled soul by the word of God.

Now for the way and order that the Lord keeps in casting down thir⁴ strongholds. The text tells us that nature and the old man it is first cast down, it is all shot to the ground; and so the law it has work first to cast down before the gospel get anything ado to raise up. And this is to let all of us see what estate we are in by nature, even in the state of damnation. I know this casting down of the old work it is rather a preparation for working than any proper work.

But what is the first work that the gospel works upon

¹ Too ill, *i. e.*, not good enough. ² Wipe. ³ Bound. ⁴ These.

the soul? There is a question about this among some. Some say that repentance it is the first work; others say that believing it is the first work. But I think there can be no true repentance without some measure of faith preceding. But verily I think there is a work into the soul that goes before either faith or repentance. Our Saviour Christ has a word John vi. 45, 46: "They shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me." So there is a sort of hearkening to the word of the Father, that is in some before it be in others; and while He speaketh of a resurrection in the former verse, it is likely to be meant that that is the first work. Then this is the first work that is wrought into the soul—howbeit the habit of all the rest be wrought then also—even a spiritual hearing and apprehending of Christ by the soul; and then in the next place follows believing. And Christ our Lord He puts a difference between this hearing and faith, for the soul it can never come to Christ to believe in Him until it have once some apprehension of the first work wrought into the soul, until it learn to make a difference between Christ and other men by a spiritual hearing of God's word, till they learn to know His tongue by¹ the tongue of all others. Where before they had but a light conceit of His word, now they esteem greatly of Him and of His word; and having attained to that, then follow believing in Christ and resting upon Him. And then follows the third work, a godly sorrow for sin, which indeed is formally the work of repentance, for whatever sorrow they had

¹ To be different from.

formerly, it was nothing else but a legal downcasting for sin, but no true repentance and godly sorrow till then.

Use. Then there must be a humiliation and downcasting in all who rightly know what Christ is. I would send all of you to this mark to see and try if ye have ever had this humiliation and downcasting, and consequently to try if ye have Christ. Alas! I trow,¹ examine the most part, and speer² at them how they gat Christ, and how He came to them, or when were their high castles dung³ down. I trow¹ they maun⁴ be forced to answer that they have either gotten Him in their cradle, while they were young, and kent⁵ not of it, or they have gotten Him sometime while they were sleeping; but for grief and sorrow for sin, for one tear for offending God, they never kent⁵ nothing of that kind. I would be loath now by saying this to bind sorrow for sin unto tears, for I know there is a true sorrow that is without tears, and I know there is a real sorrow that is beyond tears. But this far, I say, that there maun⁶ be a true humiliation for sin one way or other before Christ come into the soul. But alas! I trow¹ all Jobs [Job vi. 4] be dead to have such sorrow, and find such grief for sin as he had. To have the arrows of the Almighty drinking up their spirits as he had, I trow¹ the most part kens⁷ not what that means, as to have such a deep sort of offending at themselves for offending of such a good Lord, even, to be angry at the heart at themselves, for offending Him; and when this is, it will drink up the spirits.

¹ Believe.² Ask.³ Cast.⁴ Must.⁵ Knew.⁶ Must.⁷ Knows.

I pray you try whether or no this work be in you, for many will be beguiled at the last day, thinking that they have gotten these things, and when it is tried it will be found to be nothing else but a plain imagination. And God, at the first, sees all such to be but false and counterfeit work; their repentance, their believing, and all that they have; and so that they are not in Christ. And therefore we should never rest until we get sure wit^r whether we be in Christ or not, if we be passed beyond nature as yet, if we be stepped from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of God. Lord, waken all of us to put ourselves to a trial in this point, and to see that we be not such who profess to be in Christ, and yet in the meantime remaining in nature. Now to this Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory for ever. Amen.

^r Knowledge.