

# SALVATION APPLIED.

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'Salvation Applied' forms the third of the 'three Sermons' which compose 'The Life of Faith.' See page 358. The separate title-page is given below.\* G.

### \* SALVATION APPLIED.

In one SERMON.

WHEREIN IS SHEWED,

The more speciall and peculiar worke of Faith, in apprehending Christ as our *owne*; the grounds thereof are shewed, with meanes to attaine it, and most of all the knotty objections against particular assurance of Gods love answered.

[Woodcut as before. Cf. Vol. IV. page 60.]

HEB. 10. 22.

*Let vs draw neare with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evill conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for R. D A V V L M A N, at the brazen Serpent in  
Pauls Churchyard. 1 6 3 7.

## SALVATION APPLIED.

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*And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and gave himself for me.*—GAL. II. 20.

WE have already, out of the words immediately going before, spoken of spiritual life, and of the excellency of it; and, in the third place, of the manner of conveyance, which is by faith; and, fourthly, the spring and fountain of this spiritual life, which is the Son of God, described here by his love and the fruit of it: 'He loved me;' and, as a fruit of that love, 'he gave himself for me.' Now, to come in the last place to the apostle's particular application, which he expresseth in this word 'me:' 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me;' wherein these points offer themselves to our consideration:

First, That God loves some with a peculiar and with a special love: 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

Secondly, That faith answers God and Christ's particular love by a particular application: 'Who loved me.'

Thirdly, That this particular faith in God's particular love is the ground of assurance, which springs from this particular faith.

Fourthly, That this assurance which proceeds from our particular faith in God's particular love, is the spring of all spiritual life, which sets the whole soul a-working. For what is the ground of my living by faith in all the passages of my life, but the apprehension of his love, who loved me, and gave himself for me; and can I then do less than give myself to him? Now to unfold these in order.

1. *That Christ loves some with a special, superabundant, and peculiar love;* for Christ, when he suffered upon the cross, looked with a particular eye of his love upon all that should believe in him; as now in heaven he hath carried our names upon his breast. As the high priest had on his breast-plate written the names of the twelve tribes in precious stones, Exodus xxviii. 21, 30; so Christ, our high priest, hath the names of all his children in his heart, to present them always to God by his intercession, so as when he now appears before God, the church with him appears before God in his heart. The Father sees the church in the heart and breast of Christ. Now as this, I say, is true in heaven, so upon the cross the church was in the breast of Christ. There was but a certain number for whom Christ savingly laid down his life, John xvii. 9. Paul was in the breast of Christ when he

shed his blood : ' Who loved me, and gave himself for me.' So that then Christ loves some with a peculiar, special, and superabundant love. Here then the question is concerning,

1. General love. 2. General gift.

*Quest.* Whether Christ loved all, and gave himself for all, because here the apostle saith, ' He loved me, and gave himself for me ' ?

*Ans.* 1. I answer briefly, first, that Christ's loving and giving himself was parallel in even lines with God's love and gift, John vi. 37, 39 ; for Christ gives himself for none but those which God hath first given him. Christ had his commission, and he came to do his Father's will, not his own, John vi. 38, and will save all whom his Father hath given unto him ; as it is John xvii. 6, ' Thine they were, thou gavest them me.' Those that the Father gives in election, Christ redeems, and by redemption saves ; for redemption, in regard of efficacy, is no larger than God's election. Therefore he joins, ' Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.' His love is only to those whom God gave him, for he looks upon all he died for as they were in his Father's love. There are a company in the world whom God hates : ' Esau have I hated,' Rom. ix. 13. Here love and gift go both together. He gives himself for no more than he loves, and he loves no more than God loves.

*Ans.* 2. Again, whomsoever Christ did love and give himself for to death, there be other fruits which accompany this. They who have interest in Christ's redemption, they have the spirit of application. Where there is obtaining by Christ anything of God, there, I say, is grace to apply it by his Spirit ; and many things go with it. For them that he died for, as the apostle shews, Rom. viii. 11, ' for them he rose again, and for them he sits at the right hand of God.' These go together : ' For if he spared not his own Son, but gave him to death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? ' Rom. viii. 32. Where God gives Christ, he gives the spirit of application with him, Mat. xvii. 13, 2 Thess. iii. 2. But we see that the greatest part of the world have not faith ; for it is the faith of the elect, which worldlings not having, nor the grace of application, therefore they have not the favour of God obtained by Christ. So it is written, Rom. v. 10, ' For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' These go together. Now the greatest part are not saved by his life, therefore they are not reconciled by his death.

Other places do clear this truth, as Heb. ix. 14, where is shewed, that where Christ hath offered up himself for any, there is also a purging of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. But the most are not purged, therefore they have no interest in Christ's death.

A strong reason is further shewed hereof by Christ, John xvii. 9, where he avouches plainly, and makes a main difference between two sorts of people, saying, ' I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.'

*Obj.* But here some may object, Christ's death is of larger extent than his intercession.

*Ans.* To cut off this objection, Christ says after in the same chapter, ver. 17, ' And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.' That is, I prepare and sanctify myself to be a sacrifice as a priest ; I prepare myself to be a holy sacrifice for such ; therefore Christ sanctified himself for them, not for the world. Under the law there was a brazen altar for sacrifice, and the golden altar for incense,

which golden altar for incense was effectual for no more than the brazen altar was for sacrifice. And Christ offered himself a sacrifice for all those that he makes intercession for. The point is clear. I will not answer all the objections might be brought, only encounter with some of the main ones, which are brought by the papists against this truth. Saint Paul's meaning, therefore, is not that he loved me with that love wherewith he loved all mankind. The apostle means a more special love, 'He loved me so as he gave himself for me;' that is, with a more special love than he bears to all mankind. This is a point that tends to God's honour and man's comfort; for God hath the more praise and thanks from his elect, and those that are redeemed by the peculiarity of it, which the more it is, the more they acknowledge themselves bound unto God and Christ. These are they that are elected, these are they for whom the Scriptures are, for whom the world stands and Christ came, Ps. cxvi. 1. They love God and single him out, and the more they do so, God doth single them out to delight in. Peculiarity enhanceth and raiseth favours to higher degrees than otherwise. The fewer that are taken out of the world from the refuse of mankind, the more their hearts are inflamed to love God again. God, as the psalmist says, hath not dealt so with every nation, Ps. cxlvii. 20. When will a man be most thankful to God and give him glory, but when he can say, Thou hast not dealt so with the rest of the world; what is in me more than in the rest of mankind? I differ nothing from them but in thy peculiar love. Hereupon comes the heart to be knit in love unto Christ again. But against this it will be objected,

*Obj.* Why doth Christ by the ministry persuade all in the church for to believe in Christ, and for to believe forgiveness of sins, if Christ did not die for them all?

*Ans.* I answer, that in the church he calls all, that he may cull out his own. The minister speaks promiscuously both to the elect and those that are not, because God will not rob his own children of the benefit, though they are mingled with others to whom the blessed things do not belong; as it is with the rain, it rains as well upon the rocks of the sea, and upon the barren heath as upon the good ground. Why, for any good to the rocks? No, but because, together with it, it rains upon the fruitful ground, which hath the benefit of the rain. So God rains the showers of his ordinances upon all, but the benefit thereof is only to his ground, not to the reprobates. The sun shines upon all, but who hath the comfort of that shining? Those who have eyes to see it only and use it, not the blind. But to them that believe not, they have another use. They have this benefit by Christ's death, that there is mercy offered them, and some gifts of the Spirit. God offers and stirs up good motions in them, but they rebel against them. There be many degrees and means of faith. They use not all the means they ought, neither take all the degrees, therefore they are without all excuse, because he gives more grace, not only the means, but he is ready to give more grace than they are willing to entertain. So it is their rebellion, which is the cause of their damnation. They are said to resist the Holy Ghost, such reprobates in the church, to quench the Spirit, Acts vii. 51, which implies the Holy Ghost is ready to work more in them than they are willing to entertain. Is it not so by experience? There is a company of profane persons, that, out of the abundance of their wicked hearts, and the poison of their breeding, will not vouchsafe to hear at all; others that do come, though for some bye and carnal ends. Happily the Holy Ghost, in hearing, beats upon their consciences and awakes them. But

what say their rebellious hearts? Shall I stoop to leave such and such courses that are pleasurable and gainful? Hereupon they resist the work of the Holy Ghost in the ministry, when their hearts tell them there is a readiness in the Holy Ghost, and that he is sent from Christ and the Father to work more effectually in them than they are willing to be wrought upon, and therefore it is they are damned. 'Thy perdition,' saith the prophet, 'is of thyself, O Israel!' Hosea xiii. 9. Their own consciences will tell them thus much. So it is no matter what cavils they raise of Christ's intention and God's election. Look thou, man, to thine own heart. Doth not thy own heart tell thee thou art a rebel, and livest in profane wicked courses, in neglect of holy duties? Thou carriest thine own sentence and cause of damnation in thy breast. I appeal to the worst, who live in sins against conscience. Here is the ground of thy damnation. There be many ascents and degrees to saving faith. Thou withstandest the beginnings and the motions of the Spirit. If they come in and work upon thy heart any estrangement from sin, thy proud heart begins to rebel, and will not yield. It is the only true obedience which lays itself at the foot of Christ, and is willing to be led and persuaded in anything so far as frailty will permit, and allows itself in no evil course. This is that which brings sound comfort, which they not doing, therefore are without all excuse.

*Obj.* If this were not so, they might object another day, Christ did not die for me, therefore why should I be damned for not believing?

*Ans.* Their consciences therefore will tell them, that they used not all means to believe, neither took the degrees of faith; for God's Spirit doth work after a kind in wicked men, as in the three bad grounds, the word was effectual in divers degrees; but when it comes to the upshot, they hated not their sins, were worldly minded; or, the plough had not made furrows deep enough to humble them, to value mercy and Christ above all things, and to hate sin above all. This is enough to justify their condemnation. Howsoever Christ is offered, and there is a command to believe, yet their hearts tell them they do not all they might. They must know that God's secret purpose in electing some, and redeeming some, and leaving others, it is hid from the world, as his secret will, that is not the rule of our obedience, but God's revealed will and commandment. Therefore men must look unto what God commands. If their conscience tell them that they yield not that obedience which they ought and might, but rather resist the motions of God's Spirit, hereupon comes their damnation to be just. They are commanded to believe. What! Not to believe remission of their sins; for know,

1. There is the act of faith; and 2. The fruit of faith.

Now a wicked man is not first commanded to believe the forgiveness of his sin, but in this order, in obedience to subordinate duty before. He is commanded to believe that he shall have benefit by Christ, by yielding obedience of faith to Christ. The act is one thing, and the fruit is another. Every one is bound to believe and cast himself upon Christ for salvation, but not bound to believe the fruit, unless they have the act.

*Obj.* But it will be objected, we are not bound to have the first act of faith to believe; if we should, it were in vain, we should believe a lie.

*Ans.* I say no. The gospel runs, whosoever believes in Christ shall have the fruits of the death of Christ, shall have everlasting life. Thus whosoever believes and casts himself upon Christ, doth the act, shall have the fruit. Away with idle questions; What? Doth the fruit of Christ's death

'belong to me? Did he die for me? Go thou to the act; if thou hast grace to cast thyself upon Christ, and to assent when he offers and invites thee, it is well. Yield the act of faith, and leave questioning of that, which is then put out of question. Reason not this, whether God hath elected, or Christ hath died for thee. This is the secret will of God. But the commandment is, to believe in Christ. This binds. Therefore, yield to Christ when thou art called and bidden to cast thyself upon him; then thou shalt find, to thy soul's comfort, the fruit of his death.

*Caution.* Let no man excuse himself by quarrelling against Christ, for not giving himself for all. There is no man condemned, but for not yielding obedience in the act of faith, and doing all that his heart tells him he might, but is unwilling to do. It is for rebellion he perishes: as when a malefactor is condemned, who hath a book given him to read, which he refuses to do. His not reading is the cause of his execution and death, as well as his ill deeds which he hath done: his refusing pardon, that he will not read, with the other. Both are causes of his death, because he doth not read, and because he is a malefactor (*a*). So in this case, when a man will not yield the act of faith, though his other sins will damn him, yet, if he would believe and take the mercy offered, his other sins would not damn him. If men would or could believe, no other sins would hurt them; but because they do not, their other sins shall be laid to their charge, and their rebellion, that they will not believe, and take the benefit of God's offer. They refuse mercy, because mercy cannot be had without conditions of obedience; as Christ reproves the Jews, John iii. 19, 'And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' This is the condemnation, with a witness, the great and main cause of condemnation: they would have heaven, if they might have it with their lusts; but they will not yield to the act of faith, to take Christ as he is offered unto them, upon his own terms, to be ruled by him, for better and for worse. This they will none of, which is that which damns them. They would single out of Christ what they list.

When Christ sent the seventy disciples forth to preach and heal the sick, notwithstanding they were to be refused of many, as it is Luke x. 11, yet they were taught by our Saviour, as to wipe off the dust of their feet against them, so also to convince them in this, that the kingdom of heaven was come near unto them. In vain, therefore, do wicked men and our adversaries cavil against God's justice in this, which every man's conscience shall accuse himself at last to be guilty of, and clear God of; in that they would none of wisdom's counsel, shutting their eyes against all instructions, refusing to be reformed. This I thought good to add, to avoid the snarling of wicked, carnal, profane persons.

2. The second point is, *that true faith doth answer this particular love and gift of Christ, by applying it to itself.* True faith is an applying faith. There is a spirit of application in true faith; for God in the Scriptures offers Christ, and Christ offers himself in the ministry to all that believe. Hereupon comes faith to make Christ our own. It doth appropriate Christ to itself in particular. Christ is a garment, faith puts him on; Christ is a foundation, faith builds upon him; Christ is a root, faith plants us in him; Christ is our husband, faith yields consent, and consent makes the match. So then there is a particular truth that strikes the stroke betwixt Christ and us: 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' The nature of faith is to make generals become particulars, to restrain generals into particulars;

for there is a particular cause, which must have a particular restraint. Christ's love is propounded to all in general. Before it do me good I must have a particular restraining faith for to make it my own. Now the papists are enemies to this particular faith, it being opposite to their opinions and authors, save some of the honester that incline to us. They say, that we ought to believe with a catholic general faith, that there is remission of sins for the church, but not 'for me;' for where, say they, is your name set down in Scripture? They are against this special faith, because they know it is the ground of assurance, unto which they are enemies; this assurance also being an enemy to all their fooleries, forgeries, and courses they take to have assurance.

We must know more clearly, that there is a particular faith required of us. A Christian ought to say, 'Christ loved me.' Neither is this by any special revelation; for God's Spirit doth witness ordinarily, first or last, so much to all that are his, except in some cases. Now that you may know this particular faith is aimed at by God in the Scripture, look what is the end of the ministry and of the sacraments. Are not we ambassadors from God to men, to unfold Christ's love in particular unto them: if they believe, then to tell them, that they may be assured of salvation? Doth not the apostle, Rom. x. 9, speak in particular, 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.' This is spoken to every man in particular.

And for the sacraments, what kind of faith doth baptism seal, when water is sprinkled upon the child? Doth it seal a general washing away of guilt? No; but a particular washing away of the guilt and filth of the sins of the party\* baptized. Wherefore are the sacraments added to the word, but to strengthen faith in particular? Therefore every one in particular is sprinkled, to shew the particular washing of our souls by the blood of Christ. What is the reason that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is added to the word, but that every one may be persuaded that it is his duty to cast himself upon Christ, and to eat Christ, and to believe his own particular salvation? It overthroweth the main end of the sacraments, to hold a confused faith in general. Therefore seeing it is the main end of the word and ministry, let us labour for this particular faith, that we may say in special, 'Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.' Nay, 'for me,' if there had been no other men in the world but I. And the rather labour for this, because it is that which distinguisheth us from counterfeit Christians and believers. For wherein is the main difference? It is in appropriation. True faith doth appropriate Christ unto itself, makes Christ a man's own, it being the nature of saving faith to draw the general into particulars, which is meant by eating Christ, drinking his blood, and putting on Christ; all which enforce particular acts of faith. But against this it will be said,

*Obj.* St Paul had a special revelation, without which no man ought to believe thus much.

*Ans.* I answer, he had no special revelation, for, Rom. viii. 38, he enlargeth the comfort unto all: 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' It is idle to speak of a special revelation, unless we call it so, as it is hid from the world; so every Christian hath a special revela-

\* Cf. footnote, Vol. III. p. 9.—G.

tion from the Spirit. For the Spirit, which knows the 'secret things' of God, and which knows his heart, testifies to him that he is a child of God, and so he hath a special revelation; but not if we distinguish one Christian from another. Every true Christian hath this revelation, because they have the spirit of revelation, for which the apostle prays, Eph. i. 17. 'For if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his,' Rom. viii. 9. Thus we have seen that God loves some with a peculiar and a special love; and secondly, that they have a special faith to make this love their own.

3. The third point is, *that assurance doth spring from this particular faith*; so that a Christian man may be assured of the love of Christ. But here divers questions and cases must be answered and explained to clear the point, else our speech shall not be answerable to the experience of God's people, or the truth itself. First, we must know that there is a double act of faith in the believing soul,

1. An act of faith, trusting and relying; and 2. An act of assurance upon that act of relying.

For it is one thing to believe and cast myself upon Christ for pardon of sins, and another thing upon that act to feel assurance and pardon. The one looks to the word more principally; the other is founded upon experience, together with the word. We ought to labour for both, for affiance and consent in the will, to cast ourselves upon Christ for salvation; and then upon believing we ought to find and feel this assurance. But these many times are severed, and sometimes the first is without the second. The first brings us into the state of grace. A man may be in the state of grace, by giving consent to Christ and relying on him for mercy, and yet want assurance of pardon and reconciliation in the second place.

This falls out oftentimes, especially in the new birth, that in those strug-glings when little grace strives with corruption, there the Spirit of God is exercised in the act, in yielding the obedience of faith, to cast itself upon the arm of Christ, into the bosom of Christ, and upon God's mercy. As for any feeling, it doth not so much stand upon it at first, as it doth regard the act; after which assurance it comes for a reward, as God sees it good.

Then again, it often falls out in the time of temptation, that the first act of affiance, it is without the act of persuasion or feeling, which requires more experience, when a Christian, in the time of temptation, hath rather experience of corruption and the wrath of God, having no experience of the contrary; yet he yields the first act of affiance with a particular faith, casting himself upon the mercy of Christ and upon his death, for the comfort of redemption.

*Quest.* But here a question must be asked, What is the reason that, where the first act of faith is, to cast itself upon the mercy of Christ in the promises, that yet there is not the sense of pardon and reconciliation, nor that full persuasion: why is this many times suspended?

*Ans.* 1. I answer, many causes there be of it. To name some:

(1.) *First, In some the distemper of the body helps the distemper of the soul*; I mean a melancholy temper, which is a constitution subject to distrust, fears, and temptations. As some tempers, that are of a bold spirit, are subject to presumption, the devil suiting himself to their temper; so where there is this melancholy abounding, which is prone to fear and distrust, the devil mingling his suggestions with their constitution, causes that those tempers are inclined to fear, where there is no cause of fear. They are careful enough to do their duties abundantly, as God doth discover his will unto them; they cast themselves upon God's mercy, and renounce them-

selves ; humble souls, only, out of distrust, helped by Satan applying himself to their distemper, they are kept in darkness.

(2.) And also it is, many times, *from a judgment not rightly persuaded* : as when they think they have no faith, because they have it not in so great a measure. And when they are not rightly conceited of the covenant of grace, which requires truth for perfection, and not measure. For Christ will not quench the smoking flax. He despiseth not the day of small things, but cherisheth it. 'Thou hast a little strength,' saith he to the church of Philadelphia, 'and hast kept my word,' Rev. iii. 8 ; yet they think, out of a spiritual covetousness, that they have none, because they have not so much as they would, and as stronger Christians have. They misconceive the covenant of grace, where truth goes for perfection. Sincerity is our perfection, which is known by a strife against the contrary, and by a desire of growth in the use of all means. There is not so much as truth where there is not this ; where the least is, there is this strife against the contrary, and a desire of growth in a further measure by the use of means.

(3.) Also, they are held perhaps without this persuasion and assurance of the pardon of their sin, because perhaps *they are taken up with other cares*. They do not value this so much as they should do ; whereas this is another manner of gift than the most take it for. God vouchsafes not this sweet heaven upon earth, the sense of his love in Christ to any, but it is sought for long, and valued highly, that afterwards we may be thankful for it.

(4.) Again, Perhaps *they are negligent in holy communion with those that are better than themselves* ; casting themselves into dead and dark company that want life, who bring them into the same temper with themselves. Many other causes may be reckoned why these acts are severed, that men, casting themselves in the spirit of obedience upon Christ, have not that assurance of the pardon and forgiveness of their sins. Hence we may give an answer to another question.

*Quest.* Why do some Christians feel more comfort than others do, who have the same means of grace ?

*Ans.* 1. I answer, Because God stirs up in some an higher esteem of it than others ; they have more spiritual poverty.

2. Again, There is difference in the ages of Christians ; some have had longer experience in the ways of God than others.

3. Again, Men differ in their temper. Some are of a more cheerful temper. Therefore there is a clearer manifestation which helps the work a little, the disposition of the outward man.

4. Again, Men differ in their worldly temper. Men, for want of Christian prudence, cast themselves too much upon the employments of the world, that they suffer the strength of their soul to be carried so one way, that they have no time to gather assurance of salvation. Howsoever, for the main they are conscionable,\* yet many such are so worn out with the world, as they differ in heavenly-mindedness and want of care of this, so they differ in assurance and want of God's love.

5. Again, As God hath a purpose to employ men, as he hath great and many things for some men to do, so he suffers them to have a greater measure of assurance and pardon of sin, because he intends they shall go through a great deal of business. Those who he intends shall not go through such employments, he vouchsafes not unto them that portion of assurance ; for these are distinct gifts of the Spirit, to give the spirit of

\* That is, 'conscientious.'—G.

faith, to cast ourselves upon Christ, and to give the spirit of assurance. Howsoever the Spirit doth both, as 2 Cor. ii. 14, *seq.*, it teacheth us those good things that we have of God; yet sometimes the Spirit doth not so teach us the good things of God, as it enables to do the works of the Spirit, because God hath divers employments for Christians.

*Quest.* Another question which some may move is, Why oftentimes it comes to pass that Christians of greater parts want assurance, and sometimes die without it, when many times a weaker Christian of meaner parts has it? Men of ordinary rank do many times die with more assurance than their great teachers. What is the reason it falls out that poor Christians of mean knowledge and gifts have a heaven upon earth, and enjoy a great deal of comfort when they end their days, men of greater parts dying more concealed?

*Ans.* I answer, Many reasons may be given. Christians are prone too much to value gifts; and those that have are much prone to be proud of them, and to think that grace and gifts go together, when these are often severed. Men of excellent gifts have many times no grace at all; and are given them for the good of others, not for themselves, being proud and barren all their days, not having any feeling of that they can largely talk of with glory to others; because they value these things, and neglect grace, humility, faith, and broken spirits, which things God values more than all gifts. Therefore you have men far above other[s] in gifts and glory of the world, which want this assurance.

*Quest.* But put the case they be good Christians, yet often they grow proud, and puffed up with great gifts, for the apostle says, 'Knowledge puffs up,' 1 Cor. viii. 1.

*Ans.* Again, When there is a great deal of good parts in knowledge, there is oftentimes great inquisition made after things which should not be looked after, and many impertinences, wanting knowledge and experience in that which they should more look after.

Then again, men of greater gifts may out of some error look for comfort too much in sanctification, and in the covenant of works, more than in faith. A poor Christian, perhaps out of right judgment, when he stands in need of comfort, may seek it in faith, in justification, casting himself upon Christ, when another man, thinking to find his comfort more in graces and gifts than in casting himself upon Christ in justification, he may justly be deprived of that comfort; whereas we honour God most, whatsoever our graces are, in casting ourselves upon Christ, and ending our days in mercy, making our appeal to mercy; whereas the graces of sanctification and excellent parts are excellent for the good of others, but if we place too much affiance in them, it is just with God we should oftentimes go mourning to our graves. Therefore we must set them in a right place, take them as signs and evidences of our comfort, but not forget to rely rightly on our free justification, and the fruits thereof, as the foundation of comfort, which made Saint Paul, Phil. iii. 8, count all things 'but dung and dross in comparison of the righteousness of Christ.'

Then again, God doth it to shew his freedom, that to whom he pleaseth he will give more assurance, to shew that he is a free giver. Our salvation is according to his good pleasure, so is the feeling of it; some shall have more, some less. God will sometimes manifest his comforts and feeling more to weak Christians than others, as a father or mother shews the greatest love to the weakest child. God knows that strong Christians have other things to support them with than feelings; they can go back, as holy

David doth, to former experiences, and rely upon the word and promise strongly; so he suffers them to support themselves with stronger things than present feelings. Those who are weakest, he vouchsafeth unto them the sweet feeling of his love, as parents dandle and study most to please the sickest and weak children. But we should leave this to God, who gives us what measure he will, and at what time he will. Some he thinks good to keep a long time from feeling this assurance, to humble them for being too bold with sin; and some, likewise, he will keep longer from this assurance, perhaps all the days of their life, because they have been too confident heretofore in touching and meddling with petty sins, which, as pitch and fire, hath burned and defiled them too much; in the mean time supporting them with sufficient grounds of a happy estate, notwithstanding their infirmities; they may be as good Christians after a fall as ever, though perhaps never attain unto that feeling and sense which formerly they enjoyed; for though they have not feeling, yet they may have strong faith, as Christ upon the cross had strong assurance without feeling, when he said, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Thus we see that assurance may be obtained.

*Quest.* Now we come to a more principal question, How we may know whether we have the act or no, the first act to yield the obedience of faith, for that is the main. Perhaps a Christian may die in the rage of a fever, or in child-birth, and never have strong assurance. Many go to heaven that never have it.

*Ans.* 1. But for the first, a man may know in his right temper that he performs the act of faith in affiance, by the reflect act of his soul, if it be not hindered, let him return upon himself; as, how do I know I understand a thing when I do conceive it? Why, by a faculty the soul hath to know it understands. So, how doth a soul know that it believes, but by a reflect act of the soul, whereby it knows it believes when it doth believe, especially when the soul is in a right temper? If a natural soul knows it understands when it understands, and loves when it loves, so doth the soul by the Spirit know that it believes when it doth believe. If, as I said, the soul be not distempered, it is the nature of the conscience to bear witness of the act of itself; and usually God's Spirit, together with the conscience, doth discover it, Rom. viii. 16.

2. But the safest course is to go to the fruit. Know thou hast the act of faith by the fruit. To name one now, because in the next point I shall have occasion to speak more of it. The fruit of this act is seen especially in the greatest temptation; for if a man have a spirit of prayer, then to go to God, and have boldness in extremity, certainly he believes; for faith is the cause of prayer, prayer is the breath and flame of faith. Where there is the spirit of prayer, there is always the spirit of faith; where there is boldness to go to God, there certainly is the Spirit, whereby we may be assured that we have the spirit of adoption, howsoever we find not so evident witness that we are the sons of God. Yet if we have liberty and boldness to go to God in extremity, it is a sign there is the spirit of faith; as we may see in David, Ps. xxxi. 22, 'For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee.' He said he was cut off, yet he cried unto God when he was in temptation. Though his flesh yielded, and said he was cut off from God, and that he was not the child of God, yet there was a better principle within him to pray, 'nevertheless I cried unto thee.' So saith Job, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15.

Job wanted this assurance and feeling, yet notwithstanding, see the act of his faith, 'Though he kill me, I will trust in him.' When in extremity we can trust God, and go boldly to the throne of grace, and not sink in despair, it is a sign that we are in the state of grace, and yield the act of faith. Though we find not that sweet feeling, at length God will be merciful to us; so that after we have yielded the obedience of faith, we shall find the assurance.

*Quest.* But at what time specially?

*Ans.* 1. First, Especially when a man hath yielded the act of faith, and cast himself upon God, and a long time lived by faith, then God will seal this believing with the spirit of adoption. When we believe specially against a temptation of distrust, then we usually have the sealing of the Spirit.

Then again, when we have striven with any corruption a long time, God, as a reward of our holding out, will crown our faith and our obedience with a sweet sense of his love. After that Job had strove a long time, at length concluding, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' God manifested himself in mercy unto him. The woman of Canaan, after she had striven and wrestled with Christ, at last gets a gracious answer; so when we can subdue our corruptions, and perform holy duties in some strength of grace, in reward of our diligence and care, we have some comfortable revelation of the Spirit, and taste of the life to come more than ordinary, God crowning our diligence with the sweet sense of his love.

And also, when he hath some great employment for us, to encourage us the more, he will give us the more evidence and manifestation of his love, more ravishment; as the disciples which were with Christ in the mount, they did see his glory there, because they were to see him abased afterwards. Those that God means to honour and use in any great employment, oftentimes before he gives them the full assurance of his love.

Again, sometimes in the midst of sufferings, to reward our faithfulness, as Paul in the dungeon was so filled with joy as to sing at midnight; to encourage us, that whatsoever our threatenings and torments shall be in our sufferings for the name of Christ, yet if we yield obedience to God, our comfort shall be more than our discomfort, as St Paul had the spirit of glory, which raised him above his abasement. Thus we see when they are severed, and when God pleases for to vouchsafe the manifestation together with the act.

Now I come to the fourth and last point, indeed the chief of all, *that this particular faith in obedience to Christ, with assurance of his particular love, is that which carries us along all our life of faith unto the day of death.* 'I live,' saith he, 'this life of faith in the Son of God.' Why, what makes him to do so? Oh I have good cause to love Christ and to depend upon him. Why? 'He hath loved me, and given himself for me;' and I feel so much to my soul's comfort, therefore I will wholly depend upon him, in life, in death, and for ever. And indeed particular special faith, if it be joined with some assurance, it is the ground of living by faith. No man can live a holy life by faith, but first he must know that God loves him and Christ loves him. Holy actions spring from love, and are directed by love to the right end, which only love moveth us to intend. How can any spirit aim at his glory whom he loves not first? Can any soul, not knowing whether Christ loves it or not, intend Christ's glory as it should do?

*Quest.* I beseech you, if we speak of doing or suffering, thankfulness or cheerfulness, especially at the hour of death, whence come all these?

*Ans.* Come they not from some taste of God's love? When do we love, but when many sins are forgiven? And when are we willing to suffer anything for Christ's sake, but when we know that he hath suffered so great things for us? We count it a glory to suffer anything for Christ, when we know he hath loved us and given himself for us.

*Quest.* Again, for thankfulness, how can a man be thankful for that he hath no knowledge of? What makes a man thankful for the great work of redemption in Christ, but a particular faith?

*Ans.* This made St Paul and the rest of the apostles so often to break out, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' He breaks out into thanksgiving that he, together with other Christians, had the Spirit, which doth persuade them of God and Christ's particular love. Then again, for thankfulness for ordinary blessings, how can a man thank God for any ordinary blessing, if he be not assured that it comes from the love of God in Christ? When he is persuaded of this, then he can give thanks, both for the principal and other lesser favours,

*Obj.* He may think else, What is all this to me? I am but fatted against the day of slaughter. It is good for me to take my pleasure whilst I may enjoy these things, to think I am but as a traitor, who hath the liberty of the prison. This smothers our thankfulness.

*Ans.* It is the believing soul that is thankful for mercies, and also cheerful in duties. Whence come Christians to be a voluntary people, zealous of good works? as Tit. ii. 11, the apostle sets zeal betwixt faith and works, looking both ways, saying, 'The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men, hath appeared,' by the first coming of Christ, and giving him to death, 'teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.' Here faith looks backwards. Then, looking forward, says he, 'Looking for, and waiting for the appearance of the blessed God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed us, that we might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

*Quest.* Whence comes a zeal to good works, but when we look to the grace that hath brought salvation and redemption from our sins, and to the glorious coming of Christ?

*Ans.* When faith looks both these ways, it is set a-fire, it makes us zealous, as Heb. ix. 14. When the heart is sprinkled with the blood of Christ in the forgiveness of sins, then we serve the living God, and are a voluntary and a cheerful people when our hearts are enlarged with assurance.

*Quest.* Further, what makes a man ashamed of his evil life? What breeds those affections of repentance, grief, and shame mentioned Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 32, 'Then shall ye be ashamed,' &c.?

*Ans.* When God had once pardoned their sins, and given them many favours, then shall ye be ashamed that ye have served me thus and thus, and grieve that ye have departed from me. So that then do Christians come to have those two penal affections of shame and grief, the two ingredients to true repentance. Why? 'Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me.' As if one should say, Hath he done so? Was my sins the cause of his death, and did his love move him? I am ashamed that I have offended so gracious and so sweet a Saviour. It makes a man weep over Christ. It was my sins which caused his death and torments. This particular faith fills the soul with all divine graces, and it follows Christ, and sees that he did all for us. Then a man sees that Christ was born for him: 'To us a child is born, and to us a son is given,' Isa. ix. 6. It follows Christ in his whole life, and so all that he did was for me. His

death, 'He died for me;' his sweating in the garden was for me, my sins caused it. So I see his love, and the foulness of my sins. He was thrust through the side for me, and cried upon the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' My sins had an active power there. He rose again for me, he is now in heaven for me, as carrying me in his breast. The sight and consideration of this draws the soul again unto Christ in repentance for sins, and in all holy duties whatsoever. This is the reason why those Christians that have been pulled out of the fire, and converted oftentimes by a violent conversion, are the most fruitful and loving Christians, as St Paul and others; because they know Christ hath forgiven them a mighty debt, a thousand talents; the more which debt appears to be, the more they know they are bound to God, and to sacrifice and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, that hath discharged so great a debt for them.

When they consider his wonderful love to such as they are, they are inflamed with love again; as in the gospel, the woman who had many sins forgiven her, therefore she loved much. The prodigal young unthrif in the gospel, for whom the fat calf was provided, no question he could not satisfy himself in expressions. God sometimes provides fat calves, great measures of comfort, even for prodigals, and they of all shew most love, they cannot tell how to satisfy him by any painstaking. 'The love of Christ,' saith Paul, 'constrains me, a holy violence moves me, who was a persecutor and a blasphemer,' 2 Cor. v. 14. So the sense of the love of Christ in pardoning of sins will constrain one to a holy violence in the performing of all duties. Why, if any base ends come into a man's mind, in that, is a Christian to regard himself, to seek his own ease, honour, pleasure? No; this consideration, if he have any assurance of the pardon of his sins, will move him to the contrary. Christ died for me; shall I not live to Christ, live to him that gave himself for me? Seek his honour that abased himself for me? So that it quells all base ends, the consideration of Christ's particular love.

So it stirs us up to be at cost for Christ and for his church, at any cost, to sacrifice our Isaacs. He loved me, and gave himself for me; is anything then I can give satisfactory? He gave himself for me, therefore I will give myself for him. This will make a man prodigal, even of his blood, for Christ's sake. When a man is moved to be discontented with his estate, and to doubt of God's providence in particular things, this will help, Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me. Will he not give me all necessities who hath given himself? So that this stirs up to all duties, cuts the sinews of all spiritual sins, of distrust in God's providence, and all base ends. It stirs me up in particular practice of holy life to go to him for all graces. I have himself, therefore he will give me his Spirit and grace. I have the field, therefore I shall have the pearl.\* He hath given me himself, he will give me therefore all that he hath; his Spirit, graces, and privileges, all shall be mine.

Thereupon it is used in all Paul's epistles as a compelling argument, as elect, and by the mercies of God do this; moving them to all spiritual duties from the love of God in Christ. And, dearly beloved, you are dearly beloved; the love that Christ bears you cost him dear indeed; it is a strong enforcement. Saint Peter's argument to this effect is very strong: 'You are not bought with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ are we redeemed from our vain conversation,' 1 Peter i. 18. You

\* 'Treasure,' *not* 'pearl,' a repeated slip of Sibbes's.—G.

see, then, I give you but a taste of it, what strong motives here are to live a holy life, and all fetched from particular assurance ; because Christ loved me, and gave himself for me. Hereupon, by the way, we may have a strong argument against the papists, who hold we cannot have particular assurance, for that which is brought as an argument to stir up to holy duties must be known of us. The arguments in this case which serve to persuade must be known. We do not persuade another to a duty by those arguments he is ignorant of. Here he speaks to Christians, as taking it for granted that they knew they were elected of God, and dearly beloved in Christ. That which is an argument stirring up to duty must be known better than the duty, because therefore this is an argument that stirs us up to all kind of duties whatsoever ; therefore we may be assured. But here a question may be asked,

*Quest.* Doth not a holy life and holy actions sometimes proceed from a soul not fully assured ? Then what shall we think of those good works that proceed from a Christian without strong assurance ? If all obedience in doing and suffering, that is pleasing, comes from faith and assurance, then what shall we think of such works as proceed not from it ? If you ask many a good Christian, what assurance have you that Christ hath given himself for you ? they will perhaps stagger at it ; for a humble broken-hearted Christian is subject to speak worse of himself than there is cause, though he be diligent in good works. What shall we think of such works then, when therewith they are not assured of Christ's love in particular ?

*Ans.* I answer, There can no holy life proceed but from faith ; from the first act of it. There must be that ; but sometimes we know not our faith, because the reflect act is hindered ; we know not we believe when we believe. There may holy duties proceed from a man when he knows not his grace and estate : in which time let him but examine himself, why doth he duties, whether out of love to God or no ? Yes. Can he endure God to be evil spoken of ? No. Will he allow himself in any known sin ? No. In this case, though he dares not say he is assured, yet the things he doth are from some love and desire of glorifying God. Christians do not know their estates often in such cases. They do work from a secret persuasion of God's love, though they know it not. He hath that he thinks he hath not, he works from that he thinks he doth not work from. He works from love to God, when he thinks he doth not, because he thinks he hath not so much as he would have : he works from grace, when he thinks he hath none. A child lives when it knows not that it doth live ; a child when it draws nourishment from the mother's breast, doth not know it lives itself, but the lookers on do, because they see the actions of life : so a Christian doth not know that he lives the live of grace, when the lookers on do, because they see spiritual hunger in him, and attending upon the means. Now he himself doth not see it, because of some spiritual covetousness, temptation, or desertion which is upon him. Yet that is a true and gracious action, which issues from a soul that discovers faith, however itself cannot be assured of its estate, there being for the time a suspension of it, through ignorance or other causes ; but certainly in such there is faith in the first act of obedience, and some assurance, where there are actions of spiritual life, though they have not that they covet to have.

The best way is to labour for both, for assurance and for the act itself ; for howsoever those who have the act only perform good obedience, yet it is not so large, so thorough, so cheerful as it would otherwise be. We ought to desire both that God would give us a spirit of faith, and discover

himself unto us, that our sins are pardoned, and that we are accepted to life, to give us strong assurance, that so we may be more plentiful in the work of the Lord. There is no Christian who hath a good heart but he will labour for the second as well as the first; he will labour to make his calling and election sure by all means, that God may have more glory, and smell a more sweet sacrifice from him, and that he may have more comfort in this world. Howsoever without assurance much good may be done, yet not so much as when there is full assurance, for then the soul is carried amain\* in obedience to God; doing and suffering is nothing then.

*Use 1.* Now for the uses of this, seeing that the persuasion of Christ's love to us in special is the spring of all holy life, this serves, in the first place, *to free this doctrine of assurance from scandal.* Assurance then is not the ground of presumption or security. These spring not from a particular faith, for a holy life, the clean contrary, springs from it. None can live a holy life but by a particular faith; and whosoever in particular doth believe the forgiveness of his own sins, will live a holy life, and not put himself into former bondage. It is a sign he is not that person for whom Christ gave himself, that doth enthrall himself into his former courses, unless he repent. We see those of the Israelites who had a mind to go back again into Egypt, did all perish in the wilderness; and those in Babylon's captivity who would not come out when they were called, did perish. It is pity they should ever be delivered that are in love with bondage. Those that will serve and be slaves still, it is pity but their ears should be bored to perpetual servitude. Some will live in their sins, and yet think that Christ died for them. No; whom Christ loves in particular, he gives them grace to lead a holy life, and to be freed from the bondage of their former corruptions. Those that are not redeemed from their vain conversation, are not redeemed from hell and damnation, unless God give repentance. Those both go together. Therefore let it be also a rule of trying and discerning, whether we truly believe that Christ loved us, and gave himself for us, by our care to live to him, and to give ourselves to him back again by a holy life. Wheresoever the one is, there is the other. This is that which may stop the mouths of many, and will shame them at the day of judgment, notwithstanding all their boasting that God is merciful, and Christ died for them. Oh!—their hearts will tell them,—but I have not cared to have the fruit of Christ's death in the governing of his Spirit; I would not have him my king; my conscience tells me I would not have Christ upon those terms: he offered himself to rule me; the minister told me of the danger, but I have preferred some base lust or other, such and such a course, before Christ; I hated to be reformed, I flattered myself with hope of mercy on no ground at all; therefore I never had any benefit by him.

*Use 2.* To make another use: *if particular faith and assurance be the ground of a holy life, let us labour for it by all means;* and let those that are in the state of grace, let them come to this fire if they will be kindled: if they find themselves dull to holy duties, let them come to this fire. Are we dead spiritually? Are we not so enlarged as we should be? Why, come and consider of the infinite love of God in giving his Son for thee, and the sweet love of Christ in giving himself for thee; and dwell in the meditation of this love. Do not let thy heart go off the consideration of Christ's sweet love, in stooping so low, not only in becoming man, but so low as hardly ever creature was, and all in love. Should not this kindle love in us again? So much the more dearer he should be unto us, the more base

\* That is, 'all at once,'—a sea term. Cf. Halliwell, *sub voce*.—G.

he was for us. When we have warmed our frozen hearts with the consideration of his particular love towards us, then we add fire to holy duties. Iron, when it is warm, is fit for any impression; so our cold hearts, though stiff of themselves, being warmed and fired by the love of Christ, are fit to receive any impression, and to do and to suffer any thing.

When we find ourselves backward to suffer anything for Christ, consider that Christ gave himself; or, if we be not thankful and fruitful enough, consider what was the end of Christ's giving himself, that we should serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives without fear; and being freed from the fear of death, damnation, and slavish fear, that we should serve him cheerfully in the spirit of adoption and love. I beseech you, in all indispositions of soul, let us make use of this, to come unto Jesus Christ. Experience teacheth any one when they are fittest for suffering, doing of any duty, to resist a sinful temptation to discontent or murmuring, even when they enjoy the assurance of Christ's love, and can read their own evidence that they are God's children, and the members of Christ. Then they are fit for anything. Therefore we should, as the apostle Peter exhorts us, 'give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,' 2 Pet. i. 10. It is a thing which requires all diligence. And the reason why we have it no more, is because we do not give all diligence to attain it. It requires our utmost endeavour, being of the greatest consequence, by which God hath most honour, and we most comfort, because it makes us most fruitful in our conversation.

*Obj.* But you will say, what then shall we say unto those who cannot say in particular that Christ loved them and gave himself for them? What course shall they take who have not this particular assurance and faith? What grounds have they to come to Christ if they be willing?

*Ans.* I answer, Those that have it not should labour to have it by all means whatsoever.

*Obj.* But what ground have I, who have been a wretched sinner, an unworthy wretch, what ground have I for to meddle with Christ, and to believe that he loved me, and gave himself for me?

*Sol.* 1. Consider, even the vilest that can hear me have the gospel offered unto them. Again, consider that Christ took thy nature, and how many inducements are there in this, for thee to take degrees of this particular faith, to come to it, that thou mayest be in this estate, to glorify God and to enjoy comfort.

*Sol.* 2. Hath not Christ taken thy nature, not the nature of angels? Oughtest not thou to think that he loves mankind, and why not thee, if thou wilt come in and cast thyself upon him? He is Jesus, a Saviour; and Christ, anointed of God; and Immanuel, to reconcile God and man together.

*Sol.* 3. Besides, thou sayest thou art a sinner. Why, but alas! what are thy sins? Is not his righteousness above them? His righteousness is the righteousness of God-man, of a mediator that is God, therefore far above thy sins. Considering then the excellency of his person, believe that the blood of Christ is able to purge thee from all.

*Sol.* 4. For a further ground for this particular faith, we may think of this inviting of all those who are unworthy: 'Whosoever will, let him come and drink of this water of life freely,' Rev. xxi. 17; yea, those that think themselves farthest off he bids them come: 'Come, all that are weary and heavy laden,' &c., Mat. xi. 28. If thou findest sin a burden, then Christ invites thee, and sends his minister to beseech thee to be reconciled.

\* Another example of Sibbes's peculiar use of 'alas!'—G.

Those that stand at the staff's end, he desires them to lay aside their weapons and come in.

*Sol.* 5. If that will not do, he lays his charge and command upon you to believe. If you will not believe, you add this sin unto all the rest. This is his commandment, that you should believe, or else you are rebels to his commandment. Nay, he counts it a sin worse than the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, a crying sin, not to come in when the gospel is proclaimed. Therefore never pretend your sins are great and many, but because of his offer, invitation, and command, it being without all restraint of person, sin, and time; even now, whatsoever thou hast been and art, seeing at whatsoever time a sinner repenteth there is no restraint of any sin but the sin against the Holy Ghost; if thou therefore come not in and cast thyself upon Christ, to be ruled by him hereafter, thou hast nothing at all to pretend. It is not the greatness of thy sins, but thy willingness to be still in thy sins, which hinders thee, for the greater thy sins have been, the greater will his glory be in forgiving: 'Where sin abounded, there,' saith the apostle, 'grace superabounded so much the more,' Rom. v. 20. Is it not for the honour of the physician or surgeon, to cure great diseases and sore wounds? A mighty God and Saviour loves to do mighty things: 'He loved me, and gave himself for me.' Did Paul find mercy? Who then should despair when such find mercy? He had sinned against the first table by blasphemies, and against the second by oppression and persecution. Who shall despair then when such as he and Manasseh shall find mercy? Therefore in any case come in, and the greater glory Christ shall have by thy coming. Do not flatter thyself with this, as if thy sins and unworthiness were such as God cannot shew mercy to such a wretch as thou art, or at least will not. No, no; deceive not thyself. Examine thine own false heart, and thou shalt find thou art in love with thy sins and wilt not leave them; and this will be alleged at the day of judgment against thee by thine own conscience, that thou wast more in love with thy sins than with the mercies of God in Christ, and therefore didst willingly remain in thy infidelity. This is the true cause, indeed, of thy backwardness, and not the greatness of thy sins. You see then that there is ground sufficient for any sinner to come in and labour for this particular assurance.

*Obj.* But put the case, I be not one that Christ redeemed, and God elected.

*Sol.* Away with disputing, and fall to obey. Put this question out of question, by believing and obeying. Come in and stoop unto Christ, and then it will appear that thou art one that Christ died for; for he gives himself for all that believe in him. Do thou thy duty, bring thou thy heart to rest upon Christ, and to be ruled by him, and then thou wilt put this question out of question, that thou art one of God's elect. The devil holds many in a state of darkness by this delusion.

*Obj.* If I knew that I were elected, or that Christ died for me, then I could believe.

'Secret things belong unto God, revealed things to us,' saith Moses. Thy duty is, when thou art sought for, invited, entreated, and commanded to be reconciled, then to come in and yield obedience, and in yielding thereof, thou shalt find the fruit of Christ's redemption, that thou art one for whom he gave himself. Thus much is for those who want this particular assurance.

Well then, to draw to an end, for those that pretend they have a particular faith and assurance of salvation, by this they shall know it. These things will follow.

1. *Then thou hast a care to live by faith in the Son of God daily*, and in all estates and conditions; and where this faith and assurance is, it is with care and conscience of duty always. Herein it is distinguished from a false conceit. Where there is no conscience of duty, there is no assurance of particular faith. This particular hath its ground from the general, from the word of God. The word saith that Christ gave himself for all believers; now I know I do believe: he loves all those that love him; and I know I love him, therefore I am beloved of him. Thus true faith goes to the conditions of the word. Those that live in courses contrary to the word have not this faith. 'Be not deceived,' saith the Scripture: 'neither whoremonger, adulterer, nor unclean person, shall inherit the kingdom of God,' 1 Cor. vi. 9. But I am such a one, saith a wicked man, and yet I think to enter into heaven, and that God will be merciful. No; in this case he will not be merciful, because one thus concludes wrongly, by a diabolical persuasion, contrary to the word.

2. Again, *This is with conflict*. You may know particular application where it is, to be good, because it is with conflict against temptations. A man never enjoys his own assurance of Christ's particular love, but with a great deal of conflict. There are two grounds that faith lays:

(1.) That general truth, that whosoever casts himself upon Christ shall be saved.

(2.) The particular application hereof—but I cast myself upon Christ, therefore I shall be saved.

This particular application, which is the work of faith, is mightily assaulted, more than the general. The devil is content that a man should believe the former, but he troubles us in the application, 'but I believe.' He hinders, what he may, the reflect act, that we may not say, I know I believe. Thus, wheresoever the sense of Christ's love is, there is a mighty conflict before it comes. The devil labours by all means to hinder application, for he knows that particular faith brings Christ home, which is all in all. But false Christians go on in a smooth course, are not thus assaulted from day to day. They hope well, not considering that whilst the strong man keeps the hold, all things are in peace; whereas there is no Christian but he finds his particular faith strongly assaulted, more than his general: which is the reason why these two equal truths are not equally believed, because Satan doth hinder the application, the minor part assuming more than the general. Those who have no conflict may fear they have no faith at all, God in wrath and justice suffering them to go on in a smooth uninterrupted state. But all who have experience know what this spiritual conflict with an unbelieving heart means, when it comes to application.

3. Again, a man may know his faith to be true *by his willingness to search himself, and to be searched by others*. He that hath a true sound faith, and particular assurance from thence, is willing oftentimes to search his heart. He would be better and better, labouring to examine himself and to be examined of others. Those who are willing to go on in a still smooth course, because they will not break the peace of their own deluding false hearts, rather thinking all well than to put themselves to the trial, we may know this is but presumption. Where there is true application there is always willingness to search our own evidence; nay, a Christian will be willing, when he cannot find his own evidence, to have the help of other Christians to read his evidence for him, and to tell him of his estate, and is inquisitive, especially when he meets with the skilful in those things.

4. Again, *This particular faith it is with a high prizing and admiration of*

*the love of God in Christ*, 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.' It is a sign that he hath no interest in this love, that prizes and values other things above it. If one had any assurance of this, he would value it above all other things in the world. He knows that howsoever Christ gives other things, riches, kingdoms, and honours to castaways, that yet Christ gives himself to none but his dear children. Therefore when he knows that he hath interest in Christ, he values him above all things in the world ; will part with all rather than with his interest in him, when others go on with a general conceit that Christ died for them and loves them, or howsoever, that yet come what will, they will go on in their pleasures and profits, though their hearts tell them there is something higher in their souls than Christ and his love. You see then that we may all come in who will. There is ground enough to draw them on, if they be not false to their own comfort, and how we may try whether we be assured or not.

*Exhortation.* I beseech you, therefore, as we desire to do anything that may please God, labour for particular faith and assurance. Would we have our whole course of life to stink before God ? I tell you, without this faith it is not possible to please God. Would we have all our life to pass fruitfully, and nothing to run upon our account when we are to die ? Oh pray that the Lord would increase our faith ; above all, labour for particular faith and assurance, for there is nothing Satan opposes us more in. It is a happy estate, a heaven upon earth. If Satan doth oppose it most, and it be the greatest happiness we can enjoy, it is worth the labouring after.

Let especially those that have ground and cause to be assured, humble broken-hearted Christians, let them by all means not yield to Satan, so much as to obscure the beauty of a Christian life, and to weaken the good things in others ; who see them so mopish and cast down as though Christianity were a life of perpetual sorrow, and not rather of perpetual rejoicing, Ps. xxxii. 10, 11. Our blessed Saviour indeed shews that mourners are blessed, but it is chiefly because it tends and ends in joy. There is a command to 'rejoice evermore,' but nowhere is it written, 'mourn continually.' Every one, therefore, ought to express by all means this assurance in the beauty of a holy life. Therefore those who make conscience of holy duties and of their ways, let them not yield to temptations of this kind. If we be in such darkness, let us not trust unto our own judgment, but let us trust the judgment of others. Oftentimes others know more by us than we by ourselves. We ought to yield much to the discerning of Christians in this kind. It is an easy matter when all things go well with us, in a right current, having some feeling, then to have comfort and to be fruitful ; but when we are in our dumps, and in the hour of temptation, then it is not so easy. When a tree bears a great deal of fruit, and abounds with leaves, it is an easy matter to say, This is a fruitful tree ; but when in winter the sap falls to the root, is covered with snow and frost, the leaves shaken off, and the root that is unseen lies hid, then it requires some judgment and former experience to say, This tree hath life, and is fruitful, though now there appears none. So a Christian may be in such an estate, that he requires the judgment of some others to look upon him. When in such a case, he must go to former times, for God's love is constant, always like himself.

And go to the secret working of grace ; when outwardly there appears little, go to the pulses. As, if we would know whether a man who is in a swoon hath life and breath, we go to feel the pulses, to see if there be any breath remaining ; so in a case of desertion, or seeming deadness of

spirit, try which way goes the soul in the desires of it. Is there not a desire to please God? Are there not groans and endeavours with those desires? Are not those desires restless, and thy soul unsatisfied? Thou dost not content thyself with a little faith, but thou desirest more and more, and thou art ashamed, because thou hast so little. This is the pulses beating, and the breathings of a living soul. Yield not to Satan, who tells thee there is no ground for thee to be assured of thy estate. Where we find these evidences of a living soul, we ought to believe there is true life there; which I speak to those, who, without cause, are carried to doubt of their estates.

*Obj.* And do not tie Christ to thy conditions: If I had feeling and joy, I could believe, and be cheerful; if God would send a messenger from heaven, an interpreter, one of a thousand unto me, or if I had those supernatural suavities that some others have found, and those joys; or were not corruption so busy with me, and I so prone to be overtaken by them.

*Sol.* But I say unto thee, know this for thy comfort, that whilst thou art clothed with flesh, two fountains will have two streams; that which is born of the flesh will be flesh, and which is born of the Spirit will be spirit still. Inform thy judgment, mistake not, neither say thou wilt not be comforted unless thou find such a thorough mortification of thy corruption, as admits no strong combustion.

*Quest.* Shall St Paul, that chosen vessel, have cause to cry out, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24, and canst thou think to be freed from them?

*Ans.* No; deceive not thyself. Thy comfort stands in this, with St Paul, not to allow the evil that thou doest; that sin shall not have dominion over thee, as the apostle speaks, thou not being under the law, but under grace; for saith he in another place, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these two are contrary, so that ye cannot do the things which ye would,' Gal. v. 17. Comfort thyself rather from this self-combat, and thence even gather thy assurance, that now sin and thou are not one lump; that a heavenly light hath discovered this thy darkness unto thee; only be sure, sin hath no quiet possession in thee. Complain of thyself, and of thy corruptions, unto thy Christ as fast as they come; lay the burden upon the strongest, and then fear not the issue: that which thou allowest not of, complainest of, and repentest of, shall not, cannot undo thee, but the Spirit at last shall have a final victory. So much for thy corruptions.

And for thy joy and feeling: tie not thy Saviour to thy conditions and qualifications; look to thy desires, thy constant walk, not thy straying fits and thine infirmities; remember that this is Christian perfection, not to live in any gross sin, nor allow of any smaller sin; and for thy imperfections, look up unto that infinite fulness of thy Saviour, and storehouse of all grace, whence we receive grace for grace: 'who is made unto us of God the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. i. 30. And then, whatsoever thy emptiness be, a part of his riches being fetched and applied by the hand of faith, will make thee up complete with the best. And know, that as in the state of innocence under the first Adam, his comfort came from within himself upon his obedience or disobedience, so now under the second Adam, the true and substantial ground of thy comfort is without thyself, in thy justification, and application of his all-sufficient merits and righteousness to thy trembling soul.

Walk on therefore in the obedience of faith, having a respect unto all

God's commandments, and then assure thyself the promise is so, thou shalt not be ashamed. Labour as much as thou canst for an higher measure of sanctification and mortification, for this will assure and confirm thy justification the more it is ; but with these cautions.

*Caution 1. Be not discouraged at thy small measure whatsoever, if in truth, so as to fly off from applying the riches of thy Saviour and sweet husband unto thee ; in whom, whatsoever thy poverty be, if married to him, thou art complete and rich with the best ; for the weaker thou art, thou hast so much the more need of a stronger helper to uphold and sustain thee : it being the law of marriage for the wife to be endowed with all the husband's riches, who is to pay her debts, whatsoever she be, being once married unto him.*

*Caution 2. Again, Whatsoever pitch of sanctification or mortification thou obtainest, rest not in that, but on the all-sufficiency of thy blessed Lord Jesus, who is thine, and so with him all his obedience, righteousness, and merits of his life, death, and resurrection ; for there is nothing so exact in thee, but in the time of tentation the devil will find a hole in it, and so make his advantage thereof for thy discouragement ; whereas it is clear, 'the prince of this world being come,' as our Saviour says, 'found nothing in him,' John xiv. 30.*

*Caution 3. And for the remainder, in those eclipses which damp thy spirit in this thy pilgrimage, by desertion, afflictions, or howsoever, know that precious faith, that it may shine the more, must be tried. Make then a virtue of necessity, buckle thyself to this business of most importance ; strive to obey whatsoever thou feelest ; in sense of thy misery believe thy happiness in Christ ; in sense of God's anger believe his love, and that he will not be angry for ever. Faith, where it is, is of a victorious nature. Therefore, as in contraries thou wouldst have an evidence of any goodness in thee, in contraries strive against contraries. When thou feelest nothing but matter of discouragement, know the commandment is to believe, and thy duty is to obey. No service can be performed comfortably without some persuasion. Strive then to get all the arguments thou canst of a good estate ; and when thou thyself art not able get others to read thy evidences for thee, believe the judgments of others who can tell thee, that these things found in thee come not from a corrupt and false heart.*

And withal, *pray for the spirit of revelation*, as St Paul doth, Eph. ii. 17. Pray that God would vouchsafe thee his Spirit, to discover unto thee that love he bears thee, and the riches thou hast in Christ ; to shew thee the height, and breadth, and depth, and length, with all the dimensions of his love in Christ more and more ; that so the more we grow in the sense and feeling of his love to us, the more we may be inflamed to love him again ; for we cannot love him unless we find him loving us first. So beg of him to give us the spirit of revelation. And attend upon the means that doth beget faith, which is especially the word, which is called the word of faith, and look to the examples of others, how God hath brought them from a wicked course of life into a sweet state of grace. Take benefit likewise by the example of those we live with. Use all means to take notice of Christ's particular love. It is the main thing we should labour after in this world. Can we know how long we have to live in this world ? What will make us die willingly, but when we know that Christ will have a care of our souls ? What made David to commend his soul into God's hands, but this, 'Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth ?' Ps. xxxi. 5. What will make us die in the faith cheerfully ? Why, Lord, thou hast redeemed

my soul ; when at the hour of death we can commend our soul to Christ, Take my soul, blessed Saviour: thou hast redeemed me, thou hast loved me, and given thyself for me ; look upon that soul in mercy that thou hast sprinkled with thine own blood. Strive we then for this particular faith, without which we cannot resign up our souls comfortably unto Christ at the last.

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NOTE.

(a) P. 391.—‘It is for rebellion he perishes: as when a malefactor is condemned, who hath a book,’ &c. The allusion here, which is a not unfrequent one in Sibbes and his contemporaries, is to what used to be called ‘the benefit of clergy,’ by which a convicted felon saved himself from capital punishment on being able to read a verse or two from the Psalms on being found guilty. It was restricted originally to the clergy—hence the designation—but was afterwards extended to any person who could read. There was a certain rough justice in its original limitation, in so far as pardon was disallowed to a ‘clergyman’ unable to read. But altogether it was a strange statute, and more strange than even its original enactment was its vitality—having only been abolished in the year 1827. A reference is made to it by Sir Walter Scott, in his ‘Lay of the Last Minstrel,’ canto i. v. 24:—

‘Letter nor line know I never a one,  
Were’t my neck-verse at Hairibee.’

G.