

THE FRUITFUL LABOUR FOR ETERNAL FOOD.

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### NOTE.

'The Fruitful Labour' appeared originally in 'The Beams of Divine Light (4to, 1639). Its separate title-page will be found below.\* For general title-page see Vol. V. page 220. G.

\* THE  
FRUITFUL  
LABOUR

FOR

Eternall Foode.

In two Sermons,

By the late Reverend and Learned

Divine RICHARD SIBBS,

Doctor in Divinity, Master of Katherine Hall in

Cambridge, and sometimes Preacher at

Grayes-Inne.

ESAY. 55. 2.

*Why doe you spend money for that which is not Bread?  
and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken di-  
ligently unto mee, and eate yee that which is good, and let  
your soule delight it selfe in fatnesse.*

JOHN 6. 55.

*For my flesh is meate indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*

L O N D O N,

Printed by G. M. for Nicholas Bourne and Rapha Harford, 1639.

## THE FRUITFUL LABOUR FOR ETERNAL FOOD.

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*Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*—JOHN VI. 27.

OUR blessed Saviour was mighty in word and deed. Witness what he did, what he taught, and both in this chapter.

*What he did.* He fed many with a few loaves. He came over the water without any help.

*What he taught.* Witness from this part of the chapter to the end.

The words are part of an answer of our blessed Saviour to his hypocritical followers, that followed him for the loaves, and not for any confirmation of their faith by his miracles. For upon occasion of those two miracles—mentioned in the former part of the chapter—they followed him; and perceiving that he was miraculously come over the water, they began to ask him, ‘Rabbi, how camest thou here? Our Saviour perceives that they meant to compliment with him. He sees with what hearts they came after him. Therefore, as most befitting the exigence of their state, because they were hypocrites, he answers, not to their question, but to their persons, ‘Verily, verily, ye seek me, not because of the miracles, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat that perisheth,’ &c.

The verses together contain a conviction, and an injunction or direction.

A conviction, and that is serious and loving. *Serious*, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because of the miracles, but because ye ate of the loaves,’ &c. He convinceth them of their fault, of their hypocrisy, of their wicked and carnal aims in holy business. They come flattering of Christ: but as he was too holy to flatter, so he was too wise to be flattered. He deals therefore directly with them, thoroughly convinceth them of their hypocrisy and corrupt aims in following after him. We are all naturally prone to these carnal ends in holy actions. We must take heed with what minds, with what hearts, we come before God, whose eyes are brighter than the sun, who regards not so much what we do, as with what minds we do it.

As his conviction is serious, so it is loving; for with the *conviction or reproof follows the injunction or direction*, ‘Labour not for the meat that perisheth.’

In the injunction there are two things:

First, He shews them what they should not follow. He takes them off from labouring after 'the meat that perisheth.'

And then, secondly, he instructs them in what they should follow, what they should seek after: 'but labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life,' &c.

There are arguments in both. In the first, there is an argument dissuasive, and that is unfolded: 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth,' because it is meat that perisheth.

In the second, there are arguments persuasive, or enforcing to the duty, and they are three,

The necessity.

The excellency.

The possibility of attaining.

The necessity. It is meat; and what so necessary as meat?

The excellency; and that is set forth, first, by the continuance. It is 'meat that endures.' Secondly, by the fruit or effect of it. It is 'meat that endures to everlasting life.' It is meat to life, and it is meat that tends to an everlasting, to a glorious life.

The possibility of attaining it. 'The Son of man shall give it you: for him hath the Father sealed.'

There are three things that must concur to make a thing attainable, and to be had:

A willingness in the giver.

Power and strength to give it.

And then authority with power.

Here are all these. *Here is will to bestow it.* He will give it. What freer than a gift? The Son of God became the Son of man upon purpose to give it. He will give it, and he will give it freely.

Here is *power and strength to give it*; for he is the Son of God as well as the Son of man.

And then here is *authority joined with that power*, for 'the Father hath sealed him.' The Father that created heaven and earth, that hath all power in his hands, that is King of kings and Lord of lords, 'he hath sealed him.' He hath given him full commission to be the Saviour of all that trust in him. Christ came not without authority from God the Father. He came out with God's broad seal as his commission.

So you see the arguments, both dissuasive, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth,' and persuasive, 'but for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.' I shall but touch the former, and principally insist upon the latter branch."

To speak a little for the explication or the words. What is here meant by the 'meat that perisheth'?

We must enlarge the sense according to our Saviour's meaning. By 'the meat that perisheth,' he doth not intend only outward food, but all outward things whatsoever, they are the 'meat that perisheth.' All earthly and outward things are the food that the soul of a natural man feeds upon. The soul of a covetous man feeds upon his money, applauding himself that he is worth so much and so much. The ambitious man, chameleon-like, feeds upon the air, upon the airy applause of the people. The sensual man feeds upon base and sensual pleasures. In a word, all carnal men, natural men, are condemned to that sentence of the serpent, 'to eat dust,' to feed upon outward, earthly, perishing things. So that everything that is not grace and glory, or the means that lead to it, is a perishing thing.

† Nay, to raise it a little higher, learning and knowledge, if it be only of perishing things, is food that perisheth ; for as the frame of nature and the civil frame of the world must have an end and perish, so the knowledge of natural and civil things must needs be perishing also.

And to say no more, the very knowledge, the speculative and contemplative knowledge of religious things, if we have only the knowledge of the things in us, and are not turned into the things we know, is a perishing thing. The truths of God indeed are the food of the soul, but unless the goodness of those truths be the food of the will and affections, unless we are moulded and fashioned into the very form of those truths, unless we are framed to a love and liking of that which we know, that those truths be rooted and planted in us, it is ‘ food that perisheth.’

In a religious discourse, in preaching, all your ornaments, besides that which quickeneth and strengtheneth the soul to holy duties, is ‘ food that perisheth.’ And your hearing, if it be only to hear witty sentences and turnings of speech, without regard to the truth itself, is ‘ food that perisheth.’ Thus you see what a great latitude this food that perisheth hath in Christ’s meaning.

Now our blessed Saviour takes them off from labouring for this by a strong argument. Would you have a greater argument ? ‘ It is food that perisheth.’ We do not regard the lustre of things, but their continuance. Why do we esteem of crystal more than glass ? Because it continues. Flowers have a goodly gloss, but we regard them little, because they are fresh in the morning, and cast away at evening. And so it is with all excellencies, unless it be grace or glory. All flesh is grass, and the excellentest things of nature, wit, and honour, and learning, and all, though they be not as grass so common, yet they are as ‘ the flower of the grass ;’ they are all fading and withering ; but the word of God endureth for ever ;’ that is, the grace and comfort that we get by the blessed truths of God, ‘ that endures for ever,’ and it makes us endure for ever. But all other things are food that perisheth, and we perish in the use of them. ‘ The world passeth away, and the concupiscence of it ;’ the world, the things lusted after perish ; and in lusting after the world, the lust perisheth, and we perish too in the pursuit of them ; nay, which is worse, the immoderate seeking after these things destroy us : we eternally perish. For by placing our affections on earthly things we turn earthly. Therefore in divinity we have our denomination from our affections. We are called good or ill, not from our knowledge, but from our affections. The devil knows good, but he is not good. It is loving, and joying, and delighting in good or ill that makes us good or ill. We have our form and being in religion from our affections.

Now by seeking after and placing our affections, that are ordained to close with better things—which shall make us happy in another world—by planting them on earthly things, we become like the things, earthly ; by placing them on the world, we become the world, we become earthly. Therefore they are not only perishing in themselves, but we perish in the pursuit of them. It is a strong argument that is here used. All earthly things are ‘ food that perisheth.’ For, alas ! he that is rich to-day may be poor to-morrow. He may be as rich as Job in the morning, and as poor as Job at night. He may be in credit now with Haman, and be in discredit ere soon. He may be in health now, and sick ere long. We need not Scripture for this. Experience reads us this lecture enough ; but we are so desperately set on earthly things, that neither faith nor experience, nor the

strength of discourse, nor reason, is sufficient to take us off, till God by his Spirit convince us thoroughly of this. Therefore Moses prays that 'God would teach them to number their days,' Ps. xc. 12. So, though there is a sufficient argument in the discovery of these earthly things to be perishing things to enforce a dissuasion, yet we cannot loosen our affections to them, nor know the uncertainty of them till God teach us.

To make some use of this in a word, and so to go on to that which I more intend. If all things here below be grass, and as the flower of the grass, perishing and fading things, why then we should *take heed that we do not redeem any perishing thing with the loss of that which doth not perish, with the loss of this soul of ours*, which is an eternal spiritual substance, breathed in by God in the creation, and redeemed by Christ; which is capable of immortality, capable of happiness, capable of the blessed impression of the image of God. 'What if one should gain the whole world,' saith Christ, that knows the price of a soul best, 'and should lose his own soul!' It is an argument sufficient even to a man that is led but with the strength of natural reason, not to labour for that which will perish, when he hath a soul that will not perish. To labour after that thing as his main chief good, that is of shorter continuance than himself, is extremity of folly. Therefore no carnal man, that seeks after these perishing things, can ever be a wise man, because he hath an end inferior to himself. He may be wise for particular ends, to be rich, to have great places, to get his pleasure. This is to be wise for particular ends. But he cannot be wise for the chief, and last, and best end, for his soul, for eternity. He cannot direct his course that way, that labours for the 'food that perisheth.'

And again, we should not pass\* to *neglect any earthly thing, to gain advantage of our souls*, because they are perishing things. We should force ourselves to contentment in the loss of earthly things for the gain of spiritual. The loss of things perishing is an easy matter. We lose things that will perish whether we lose them or not. All earthly things perish either in our time or after us. We should not therefore be over-eager in getting of these earthly things. Let us leave things that perish to men that perish. You see therefore how strong a reason our Saviour Christ allegeth here, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, because it perisheth.'

And learn here from our blessed Saviour *a point of heavenly wisdom*. You see when he would take us off and dissuade us from the pursuit of earthly things, he takes an argument from the nature of them. They are perishing things; and therefore, when we look upon the outward lustre of earthly things, we should withal consider the perishing nature of them. When we are tempted to too much delight in the creature, we should present to ourselves the perishing and fading nature of outward things. When we are tempted to sin, either to commit or to leave that which is good for anything that is outward, we should consider, What do I now? I stain my soul, I clog my conscience, I contract guilt and grounds of terror for the time to come for that which is perishing.† It is always good to have present to our souls and to our fancies the nature of earthly things, that they may be as present as the temptation that Satan from them urgeth and forceth upon the soul. It is good always to remember that they are perishing things, and that as they are perishing in themselves, so they will destroy us, cause us to perish in the pursuit of them. But my meaning is not to dwell long upon this.

\* That is, = 'hesitate.'—G.

‘Labour not for the meat that perisheth.’

What! Doth Christ mean that we should not labour at all for earthly things? Doth he read a lecture of ill husbandry, and unthriftiness, and negligence?

No. He doth as we do. When we would set a crooked thing straight, we bend it as much the contrary way. Our Saviour saw that they were desperately addicted to earthly things, that they followed him for their bellies, sought him for the loaves, therefore he bends the stick the contrary way: ‘Labour not for the meat that perisheth;’ that is, labour not for it in comparison of better things; labour not so inordinately, so immoderately, labour not so unseasonably. It is said of the Israelites that they brought Egypt into the wilderness, because they brought the love of the garlic and onions of Egypt with them, Num. xi. 5. We have many come to the church, to these holy exercises, to this holy place, but they bring the world with them. They come with carnal affections. Labour not so unseasonably. It should be our heavenly wisdom to lay aside importunate earthly thoughts of earthly things; to drive them away, as Abraham did the birds from the sacrifice, Gen. xv. 11. We should leave them as he did the beasts and his servants, at the bottom of the mount, when he went up to sacrifice unto God, Gen. xxii. 5. Thus, labour not; labour not immoderately; labour not inordinately; labour not unseasonably.

But how shall we know when our labour is immoderate, unseasonable, and inordinate after earthly things?

I answer, In a word, when they either hinder us from, or hinder us in, holy things; when they keep us from holy duties, as from the sanctifying of the Lord’s day, or from any other service of God; or when they hinder us in them; when they fill us full of distractions; when they turn the soul from the business in hand, &c. Thus, when they do either hinder us from or hinder us in better things, we may know we offend against this dissuasion of Christ. ‘Labour not for the meat that perisheth.’

But why doth our Saviour begin first with his dissuasion, ‘Labour not for the meat that perisheth,’ and then enjoin what they should seek after, but ‘for the meat that endureth to everlasting life’?

Because he saw that their souls were corrupted, and desperately set upon the seeking after earthly things; and when the soul is invested to anything, there must first be a removal of that; as in ground, the thorns must first be rooted out before there be any sowing of seed; and in bodily distempers, there must first be a purging of the malignant humour before there be any cordials given. So Christ, he first takes them off from an immoderate and inordinate seeking after the world and earthly things, and then he directs them what they should do, what they should seek after: ‘Seek the food that endures to everlasting life.’

Here is the prerogative of Christianity. A heathen man, out of the strength of moral discourse and outward experience, can teach the negative part, can tell you that all earthly things are vain and perishing. A stoic will declaim wittily and gravely from moral principles and daily experience upon these things; that these earthly things of themselves are all vain and fading, and that it is our conceit of them only that bewitcheth us to them: it is that only that renders them to us green and fresh. But now for the affirmative part, what we should seek after; here paganism is blind. That is only to be learned in the church of Christ. It is proper to Christianity to direct us here, as I shall discover better to you when I come to speak of the duty enjoined, which is that I especially aim at.

But before I come to enforce the act or duty which our Saviour here exhorts unto, I must unfold the object of that act : what is meant here by the 'meat that endures to everlasting life.'

The 'meat that endures to everlasting life' is our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus, as he is contained and wrapped up in the means of salvation, with all the blessed liberties, privileges, and prerogatives, graces, and comforts, that we have by him and in him. For our blessed Saviour never goes alone. He is never embraced naked ; but with him goes his graces, comforts, prerogatives, and liberties. We have him not now as we shall see him 'face to face' hereafter in heaven ; but he is to be considered as wrapped up in the word and sacraments. So is Christ the food that lasts to everlasting life. And in this latitude we must take it, or else we mistake and straiten the Holy Ghost.

But why is our blessed Saviour so considered, and the comforts, and prerogatives, and good things we have by him, termed food ?

In divers respects. To instance in a few. But, first, you must know that as the soul hath a life as well as the body, so it hath a taste as well as the body ; and as God, lest the body should pine away, hath planted in it an appetite, which is the body's longing after that which refresheth it—for if it were not for appetite, if it were not for hunger and thirst, who would care for meat and drink ?—so God hath planted in the soul, lest it should pine away, a spiritual appetite, an earnest longing and desiring after that which is the most necessary good of the soul ; for the soul hath that which the body hath, taste, and smell, &c., though in a more sublime and divine sense, but as really and truly, as we shall see afterwards. Now our blessed Saviour is this spiritual food of the soul. He is the bread of life that came down from heaven ; he is the true manna ; he is the true tree of life in paradise, in the church of God, the true paradise. He is the true shew-bread ; he is the true Lamb of God.

He, considered with all the blessed prerogatives, and privileges, and comforts we have by him, is called meat or food for divers respects.

First, *Whatsoever sweetness, or comfort, or strength there is in meat, it is for the comfort, and strength, and good of the body* ; so whatsoever is comfortable and cherishing in Christ, as indeed all comfort and cherishing is in him, it is for our good ; to us he is given, for us he was born : 'To us a child is born, to us a Son is given,' Isa. ix. 6 ; all is for us, for us men, for us sinners. There is nothing in his natures, in his state and condition, both of abasement and exaltation, nothing in his offices, but it is all for our good. Consider him in his human nature, and join with his nature his abasement : that he was man, that he took upon him our nature, that he was abased in it, that he humbled himself to death, even to the death of the cross, to be a sacrifice for our sins ; how doth the soul feed on this, on the wonderful love of God in giving Christ to be incarnate, and then to die for us ! How doth the soul feed upon the death of Christ, because by that God's wrath is appeased, and he reconciled ! 'Where the dead body is, there the eagles resort,' Mat. xxiv. 28. So doth the soul prey and feed upon the dead body of Christ. Christ crucified is the special food of the soul.

Consider him in his exaltation, in his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven ; how doth the soul feed upon that ? Christ our surety has risen again. Therefore our debt is discharged, the justice of God is satisfied to the full. So for his ascension. When the soul is basely-minded on earthly things, it ascends to Christ, who is taken up to heaven for us.



So his sitting at the right hand of God. The soul feeds on that, because he sits there till he have triumphed over all his enemies, till he have trod them all under foot.

Consider him in his offices. In ignorance the soul feeds on him as a prophet to instruct it. In the sense of wrath and anger, the soul feeds on him as a priest to make peace and reconciliation. In want of righteousness, the soul feeds on his righteousness: 'he is our righteousness.' In the sense of corruption, the soul feeds on him as a king, that by his Spirit will ere long work out all corruption; that as he will tread down all our enemies without, so he will tread down all corruption within. He will never leave the soul till he have made it a glorious house, fit for himself.

So the prerogatives we have by him, the soul feeds on them, feeds on his redemption; that by his redemption we are freed from our enemies and all that hate us, and all that we feared; that we are set at liberty from the law, from sin, and from death; and notwithstanding all the debasements of this world, we are 'the sons of God and heirs of heaven.'

In a word, whatsoever is in Christ is for our good. He is all mine; his life is mine; his death is mine; his resurrection is mine; his ascension is mine; all is mine. He is expended and laid open for my good. That is the first.

Again, As in the bodily life *there is a stomach, a power to work out of the meat that which is for strength and nourishment*, so in the soul there is faith, the spiritual mouth and stomach of the soul, to work and draw out of Christ whatsoever is for the comfort and nourishment of it. As there is comfort in Christ, so the Spirit of God gives a man a hand, a mouth, as it were; gives a man faith to work out of Christ somewhat for comfort. What were food if there were not a stomach to digest it, to make it a man's own? So what were Christ if we had not faith to lay hold on him?

Again, thirdly, *As our life is nourished and maintained with that which is dead, with dead things*, so the chief dish that maintaineth and nourisheth the life of the soul, as I said before, is 'Christ crucified.' 'God forbid,' saith the apostle, 'that I should rejoice in anything but in Christ crucified.' When the soul of a poor sinner is pursued with accusations from Satan and his own conscience, when they take part with God against him, whither runs it? To the city of refuge. It runs to Christ, to Christ crucified. Thither the soul flies, being pursued with the guilt of sin; 'to the horns of the altar,' as Joab did when he was pursued, but with better success, for he was pulled from thence, 1 Kings ii. 28. But the soul that flies to Christ crucified, to the death of Christ, to Christ abased, to his satisfying the wrath of God by his death, and making of us friends with God, there it holds; there it lives; and there it will continue for ever. This keeps the soul alive.

And then again, *as in meat, before it can nourish us, there must be an union, an assimilation, a turning of it into us*, so Christ, except he be made one with us by faith, unless there be an union between him and us, he can never nourish and comfort us savingly.

Again, *As we oft eat, and after we have received food once, yet we eat again every day, because there is a decay of strength—and there are still new businesses, new occasions that require new strength—and therefore there is need of a continual repairing of our strength by food*, even so there is a perpetual exigence, a continual need that the soul hath to feed upon Christ, upon the promises of Christ, and the prerogatives by Christ, because every day we

have fresh impediments, fresh assaults, and therefore we have need to fetch fresh supplies and refreshment from Christ, to have meat from Christ every day ; to live on Christ not only at the first, but continually ; that as our corruptions, and temptations, and infirmities return every day, so every day to feed on Christ for the repairing of our spiritual strength. Especially we are to make daily use of the death of Christ ; for howsoever the death of Christ be transient in respect of the act of it, as one of the ancients saith (*a*), yet the fruit of it remains for our daily comfort and refreshment. His blood runs every day in the church afresh, like a fountain always poured out, for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in, Zech. xiii. 1. It always runs ; that is, in regard of God's imputation, in regard of the fruit that comes to the soul ; and therefore we should make daily use of it for the comfort and strength of our souls upon all occasions. ' We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : and he is the propitiation for our sins,' 1 John ii. 1. He is now an intercessor in heaven ; he continually applies the fruit of his death now by his intercession in heaven.

Again, As, *after meat received and eaten, there is strength and comfort gotten for the affairs of this life*, so likewise after the soul hath digested and relished Christ, and the benefits and prerogatives that come by him, after we have made the heavenly truths of Christ our own, the soul is strengthened to holy duties. It is fit to do ; it is fit to suffer ; it is fit to resist temptations ; it is fit to perform all the services of Christianity.

In these and divers other respects Christ is the blessed meat here mentioned ; not himself alone, but considered with all the blessed good things which we have by him. For Christ, as I said before, is never alone. If we have him, we are sons in him ; we are heirs in him ; we are free in him ; we are redeemed in him ; we are kings in him ; priests in him ; prophets in him ; we are all in him ; we have with him all the good things that he hath ; for as we have not them without him, so we have not him without them. Those that have the field, have the pearl in the field ; and they that have the pearl in the field, have the field. They that have Christ, have Christ clothed with all his blessed prerogatives, and privileges, and comforts.

But wherein lieth the difference between this meat, this food of the soul, and other meat ?

In these things. First of all, *Christ, as he is from heaven, so all the graces and comforts that we have by him are all from heaven*, and they carry us to heaven. All the other things are earthly.

Secondly, *All earthly food doth not give, but maintain life where it is ; but Christ he is such a food as gives life*. He is as well life as food : ' I am the life,' John xi. 25.

Again, thirdly, *The nourishment we have from this outward food, we turn to ourselves ; but Christ, this spiritual meat, turns us into himself*, transforms us into his own likeness ; for Christ offered to us in the gospel being digested by faith, doth by his Spirit change us every way into his own likeness.

Lastly, *All other meats are consumed in the spending, and there will a time come when we shall not be able to relish any worldly thing ; our mouth will be out of taste with these outward things*. But Christ, the food of the soul, is never consumed, but grows more and more ; and when we can relish no other, we may relish this food that endures to everlasting life. It always satisfies the soul. All earthly things are as salt water, that increase the appetite, but satisfy not. Only Christ and grace, and the comforts we have by him, satisfy, and that everlastingly. They are as a spring that never dies.

As he himself in his own person endures to everlasting life, so all that we have by him is everlasting. Grace is everlasting. Grace ends in glory. Christ always satisfies, though not wholly here, because there must be a continual recourse to him; yet he will satisfy hereafter. 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied,' Mat. v. 6.

Thus you see what is meant by the 'food that endures to everlasting life,' and the reason of the resemblance and the difference that is between this and other meat.

Here are arguments enough then to enforce us to a labouring after this meat that endures to everlasting life, that is so agreeable to the best part of us, that is able to make us happy; to labour by faith to get them to be our own.

Now the labour required is especially to get a stomach to this meat. God requires nothing of us when we come to his delicacies but that we bring a good stomach with us. I will therefore speak a little of that, what we must do to get an appetite to this spiritual meat.

A good stomach, we know, is procured *by sharp things*. The paschal lamb was 'to be eaten with sour herbs,' Exod. xii. 8. If we would have an appetite after Christ, labour daily to consider what a cursed estate we are in without Christ. God hath left the law, as for other purposes, so for this, that we should feed upon the threatenings of it, that it should drive us to Christ. A legal faith is the way to evangelical. Labour therefore thoroughly to be convinced of the need thou standest in of Christ, and then I need not bid thee to labour for the food that endures to everlasting life. That will sharpen thy appetite after it. And beg of God illumination to see the ill that is in thee, and the ill that belongs to thee. God hath left infirmities and corruptions in us on purpose for this end, and likewise we have temptations without us. We carry not only a hell within us, which if God should not keep in would carry us to despair; but there is a hell without us, the temptations of Satan, the accusations of the law, the anger and wrath of God. Thus we should labour to be convinced of our wretched estate without Christ, the danger we are in if God should take us hence on a sudden. This will force every day a fresh appetite and stomach in the soul to feed on Christ.

Secondly, If we would sharpen our appetites to this food, *we must purge our stomachs*, which naturally surfeit of earthly things. Purge the soul by a consideration of the vanity of all other things that draw us from Christ. The reason why we have no better relish of Christ and heavenly things is, because we cleave in our affections so much to earthly things. We set up idols in our hearts instead of Christ, and we cleave in an adulterous and false affection unto them. Let us set before us arguments of the vanity of all things but Christ; and there can be no better argument than here is set down, 'they are all perishing things.' That which the soul neglects Christ, and heaven, and happiness for, and is so madly set upon, alas! they are all base in respect of the soul. The whole world is not worth a soul. They are all perishing things, of less continuance than the soul is. We should purge our souls by such considerations as these.

Then again, thirdly, *exercise getting a stomach*. Let us every day spend our spiritual strength in spiritual exercises, in resisting temptations, in withstanding the snares of Satan, in bearing those daily crosses that God lays upon us. Live as Christians should live, and the exercise of a Christian life will enforce us to go unto Christ to feed on him, to fetch

from him spiritual strength. When in our daily exercise we shall see the continual need we have of pardon for daily sins, of comfort and strength against daily corruptions and infirmities, this will make us feed on Christ and on the promises made in him—not only on the promise of forgiveness, but on the promise of a supply of necessary grace, on that sweet promise, that ‘he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed,’ Mat. xii. 20—feed on him as a King to subdue our corruptions, &c. The daily exercise of a Christian life will force us unto Christ.

Again, To whet our appetite after Christ, *consider the necessity we have of spiritual strength and comfort.* When a man considers that he hath a journey to take, he will eat to enable him to his journey; as Elias was bid to rise up and eat, because he had a journey to go, 1 Kings xix. 7. We are all to take a journey as far as heaven, and we are to travel through the wilderness of this world; and we shall be daily assaulted, besides our inward corruptions, with divers temptations; and therefore we had need every day to fetch strength from Christ. And consider that sickness will come, and death will surprise us; and if we have not Christ, we are wretched creatures without him. And though we have applied Christ to ourselves, and made him our own, yet a time of desertion, a time of trial, will come. Thus the necessity of spiritual strength will force us to feed upon Christ.

Again, To get us a stomach to these things, *let us converse with those that are spiritual, with those that are heavenly-minded,* ‘that have tasted of heavenly things,’ Heb. vi. 4. When we see them delight in reading, delight in hearing; when we see them contemplate of heaven and heavenly things, on Christ and the benefits we have by Christ, on the blessed condition of a better life, and of the world to come; when we see these persons that are better than ourselves, that have less cause than we, take such pains for their souls, we will be ashamed of our own neglect; and it will be the discourse of a soul presently with itself, Surely there is some excellent strength and comfort in these things, some extraordinary sweetness and refreshment that these men find, that they so fall to them. It is a great advantage to converse with those that are spiritual.

And lastly, To put an edge to our dull appetites after this food, *consider we know not how soon this table that Christ hath spread, these dainties that wisdom hath provided for us in the ministry of the word, may be taken from us.* Therefore, let us fall to while we have them. We should do as those do, that, being at a feast, and have neglected feeding, at the latter end, when they see all ready to be taken away, fall to afresh. We know not how long we may enjoy these blessed opportunities. Therefore now with Joseph, let us lay up against a time of scarcity. There will a hard winter come. Therefore, let us imitate the wisdom of that poor creature the ant, to provide against winter, Prov. vi. 6. Now, while the jubilee is, let us take out a pardon. There is a time of spending to come; now let us ‘get oil in our lamps,’ Mat. xxv. 4. Now is the seed time; now are the waters stirred in the pool of Bethesda; now is the acceptable time of grace. We know not how long it shall continue. Therefore, now let us labour for the food ‘that endureth to everlasting life.’ I never knew any repent of the pains they had taken for their souls; but many that have lamented and bewailed the precious time they have spent, and that they have not been good husbands for their souls. It is one special point of heavenly wisdom to take advantage of our precious time, to fill it up with holy exercises. Let us often offer this consideration to our souls, Wherefore was I sent hither into

this world? What is the end why I live here? Is it to scrape together perishing things, and so to perish with them? Or am I not rather sent hither to get out of the state of corruption wherein we all are by nature? to get into Christ, to make him mine own, to be turned into him, to feed on him, to get joy, and comfort, and strength from him? Is not this the end why I live here?

But to go on, and to make an use of trial, whether we have, as we should do, relished and tasted Christ, whether we have fed on this meat or no. How shall we know that?

I answer, We may easily know it. For, first of all, if we have relished Christ and the good things by him, *we disrelish all other things; we begin to have a baser esteem of all earthly things.* It is with the soul as it is with a balance. When Christ is high in the soul, other things are low; and when other things are high, Christ is low in the soul. Christ was high in Paul's soul; therefore he esteemed all as 'dung' in comparison of the excellent knowledge of Christ, Philip. iii. 8. The poor woman of Samaria, when she had heard Christ, and tasted the sweetness that was in him, down goes her water-pot, and she runs to the city and tells them, 'I have seen a man that hath told me all things; is not this the Messiah?' John iv. 29. Zaccheus, when he had tasted of grace, and had the pardon of his sins by Christ, 'half my goods I give to the poor,' &c., Luke xix. 8. When grace is planted in the soul, when the soul hath tasted once of better things, there will be a mean and base esteem of earthly things. The more the soul feeds on heavenly things, the less respect it hath to temporal things. The soul is a finite essence, and it cannot spend itself on all things. The more it runs into severals, the more shallow it is to others; as in a stream, when it is cut into many channels it runs weakly in the several, whereas it runs strongly in the main. So it is with the soul: when it is scattered, as the poor Israelites were about the land of Egypt to gather straw, to gather these perishing earthly things, it is weak to heavenly things; it hath little strength to those. But when the course of it is wholly bent to those, there are but weak or no desires running to these earthly things. When once the soul of a Christian hath had a true taste and relish of the things of heaven, it looks with a despising eye upon whatsoever is here below. When once it hath tasted of Christ, then especially it grows out of relish with poison; then away with popery! away with false doctrine! away with hypocrisy and formality in religion!

Again, secondly, We may know that we have tasted Christ, and fed on him, and on the good things that are by him, *when we are strengthened by our feeding; when we are strengthened to duties; strengthened against temptations\* and against corruptions.* Thou sayest thou believest on Christ, and hast made him thine own; what comfort and strength feelest thou by Christ? Art thou able to encounter a temptation? Art thou able to resist a lust? Art thou able to perform holy services? If there be no strength in thee, but every temptation turns thee over, and thou yieldest to every base lust, where is Christ? Canst thou believe Christ to be thy King, and yet suffer thy lusts to bear sway in thee? Canst thou believe that Christ is a priest that died for thy sins, and yet cherishest and lovest sin? Canst thou believe that Christ is in heaven, and that thou art in heavenly places with Christ, and yet hast no mind of heavenly things, but art carried away with every earthly thing? No. Thou hast not yet tasted how good and gracious the Lord is; thou hast not relished the heavenly manna. The

\* That is, 'temptations.'—G.

soul that feeds on Christ is strengthened from spiritual reasons, and supernatural grounds, and divine principles drawn from Christ, to duty, so that it is enabled even with a holy violence to do anything for Christ's sake; for the soul reasons thus: Christ gave himself to death for me; I will therefore, if need be, give myself to death for him. Christ thought nothing too dear for me, I will think nothing too dear for him. This pride, this vanity that I am tempted to, these were the spears that were the death of my Saviour. Thus the soul fetches reasons from the death of Christ to strengthen it against temptations, to strengthen it to duty; and so for the matter of comfort. After meat hath been received we are refreshed. If the soul be sweetly refreshed with the comforts that are to be had in Christ, and in the word of Christ, it is a sign we have tasted Christ. Those that have trembling and discouraging hearts and souls, that cannot rest nor receive comfort, it is a sign they have not rightly tasted Christ. 'Come unto me,' saith Christ, 'all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest to your souls,' Mat. xi. 28. In Christ there is rest, out of Christ there is no rest. And so likewise those that have corruptions bearing sway in them. It is a sign they have not so much as touched Christ, for if they had but touched Christ, he would stop the issue of their corruptions. The poor woman in the gospel, as soon as she had touched Christ, her bloody issue was stayed; so, upon the least touch of Christ by faith, there will be an abating of corruption.

Thirdly, In the bodily life, we know after a good meal *the desire and appetite is satisfied*, so the soul that tastes of Christ, it hath sweet satisfaction and contentment. Oh the sweet satisfaction that a Christian soul hath above a heathen! A Christian, that hath Christ, need not go out of him for anything. It hath fulness and satisfaction in him in all estates, both in life and in death. Dost thou find Christ, and the privileges and prerogatives we have by him; dost thou find the word of Christ and the promises of the word fully and sufficiently satisfy thee? Then it argues that thou hast fed on Christ; for Christ being received by faith into the soul, gives it fulness and contentment.

Lastly, To name no more, as men, if they have the grace of God in their hearts, *will give thanks for their bodily food*, so it is an evidence that we have fed on Christ, when our hearts and tongues are enlarged to praise God for Christ, for the comforts, and contentment, and satisfaction that we find in him and in religion. Therefore St Paul begins his epistle to the Ephesians with 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,' Eph. i. 3. And St Peter, being led by the same blessed Spirit, his heart being full, his mouth is full of thanks: 'Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to an inheritance immortal, that fadeth not away, reserved for you in the heavens,' 1 Peter i. 4, for you that are reserved by faith to salvation. So, undoubtedly, the soul that tastes the sweet comforts of religion in Christ will be much in sweet enlargements of heart in thanksgiving. It cannot be otherwise. It is an universal reason. The more believing a soul is, the more thankful a soul is. Where there is no praise, there is no faith.

Thus you see how we may try whether we have tasted and relished, whether we have fed upon 'the food that endures to everlasting life' or no. Taste is the most necessary sense of all, saith a wise searcher of the mysteries of nature: our life is maintained by taste (b). Every creature sees not, every creature hears not, but every creature hath taste. You may

judge of yourselves by your taste and relish; and if once you have tasted and relished Christ, all the world cannot persuade you to fall from him. If all should say there were no sweetness in religion, that it were better to be a worldling, &c., you would defy\* it; you would never believe it. There is no disputing against what a man tastes. If all men should say sugar were sharp, if I once tasted it I would say otherwise.

‘Labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life.’

The arguments enforcing this act upon the object to labour for Christ are, that he is food, and food that endures; ‘and food that endures to everlasting life.’

Let me from these arguments here in the text, for I will draw no other, enforce what I have said before. I have shewed you what this labour is, and rules how you may know whether you rightly labour for this food or no. Now to enforce this act, consider, first, the necessity of that our Saviour here enjoins us to; *it is food*.

It is a strange thing that persons should persuade themselves that they are Christians, and yet go from day to day without refreshing themselves with Christ, and with the meditation of the blessed estate they are in by him, both in respect of this world and that which is to come; without getting strength from Christ against tentations and against corruptions. Christ is food, and the promises and prerogatives we have by him are food. We should labour after it every day, feed on it every day. If a man should ask a man in his calling, Why do you take such pains, morning and evening, rising early and going to bed late? he would answer, It is to get bread; it is to get food to maintain my family. So should it be our answer to any that wonder why we take such pains for our souls, why we labour so after Christ. Oh, remember we take pains for life; to get and maintain life; and what is so necessary as life? And if life be so necessary, food which preserves it must be necessary. We see the patriarchs for food left their country; and the poor Egyptians sold themselves and their cattle, and all to get food to keep life. We famish eternally except we feed on Christ; except we have so much faith as makes us one with him; except by faith we digest him and get nourishment and strength from him. It will appear to be so when it is too late. Ere long nothing in the world will relish us; and then if we have not Christ and the things of another life to relish us, what will become of us? I beseech you, consider what opinion and judgment we shall have ere long of these earthly things, and of the better things of another world. At the hour of death, our judgments will be convinced that the things of heaven are the best things; and if it be true that they will be so then, why is it not true that they are so now? Labour to have the same judgment now.

With the necessity our blessed Saviour joineth the excellency of this food, ‘It is food that endures to everlasting life.’ Christ and the good things we have by him are of equal extent and of equal time with our souls. If we labour for earthly things, we labour after that which is of shorter continuance than our souls. We may outlive our happiness, and what a miserable state is that! But if we labour for the food that endures to everlasting life, our happiness is of the same continuance with our souls, and that is only true happiness.

If there were such a tree upon the earth now as there was in paradise, a tree of life, that whosoever should taste of the fruit of it should live,

\* That is, in the literal sense, = disbelieve.—Ed.

though but on the earth here to enjoy his sensual pleasures, oh what would not men give for a little fruit of that tree, though it were to redeem a little time, and to lengthen out a fading, base life on earth, but much more to live for ever ! Here is food 'that endures to everlasting life,' to such a life as is heavenly and glorious. Now, blessed be God that since we are cast out of the first paradise by sin, that now in our relapsed estate God is so merciful to us as to provide another manner of tree of life. That in paradise was but a typical tree. The true tree of life is Christ ; and whosoever feeds on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Certainly if we believed this, it could not be, but it would wondrously set us on to labour after this meat, because it is not only food that tends to the preservation of life, but to life everlasting, to a life that endures as long as our souls.

And let us know that if we do not labour for this meat that brings to this life, look what degree of excellency we have had in the rank of the creatures, the same degree we shall have in misery ; for as the angels in the degree of excellency were the most excellent creatures, but being fallen they are in the same degree of misery that they were in happiness, and are now the most accursed creatures of all others, so man, as he is a most excellent creature, if he feed on the food that endures to everlasting life ; so if like Nebuchadnezzar he feed as a beast on earthly things, and forget his soul and affections, which are made to close and feed on Christ and better things, he shall have the same degree of misery that he hath in happiness, even next to the devils, the most wretched creature that can be. What if a man were clad as Aaron was in all his pontificality, in his priestly robes ! What if he should feed deliciously every day as Dives ! What and if he had the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Samson ! What and if he had all the kingdoms of the world ! If he have not the 'food that endures to everlasting life,' he should be stripped of all these ere long. It is only Christ, and the good things that are to be had in him and by him, that continue everlastingly.

This should enforce us to labour after this food in the use of all good means. And before I leave the point, consider the reality, the truth of these heavenly things, of these things we have by Christ, 'the second Adam,' all things else are shadows. The food that nourisheth the body is not food in comparison of that. Earthly kingdoms are not kingdoms in respect of that ; earthly sonship is not sonship to that ; earthly riches they are nothing, they are vanity in comparison of that. Earthly inheritance is no inheritance in comparison of the inheritance we have by Christ. All other things are but titles of things. They are but empty things. There is a reality in Christ, a truth in the kingdom of grace. Alas ! what is riches, what are pleasures, what are honours, what is sonship, what are all earthly things, in comparison of the soul, which is an immortal, a spiritual, an eternal substance ? They are but shadows. Those things that are of equal extent and continuance with the soul ; and not only of equal extent, but that raise the soul to have communion with God in heaven, with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; there is the reality, there is the truth, if we will have the truth of things. 'I am that bread,' saith Christ afterwards in this chapter, 'and my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,' as if other meat and other drink refreshed not indeed, but were only shadows of things.

Labour therefore for this meat ; and certainly, if so be the Spirit of God once convince your judgments that these things which I say are true, both



for the necessity and excellency of this food, they will be effectual to stir you up to labour more after this food that endures to everlasting life. So much for that.

‘Which the Son of man shall give you, for him hath God the Father sealed.’

To come now to the possibility of attaining this food, which is the third argument our blessed Saviour useth to enforce upon us this injunction, to ‘labour for the food that endures to everlasting life.’ Hope stirreth up endeavour, as we see in merchandizing. Though when we venture beyond the seas we commit all to wind and water, as they say, and it is doubtful what the issue may be, yet we hope, and that sets us on work. So the poor husbandman, but that he hopes to have a comfortable issue, to have a harvest, he would never set himself to work. Now here is hope; and hope on a better ground a great deal; for he that makes other things successful, he hath given Christ for this purpose; and Christ, you see here, he gives himself, ‘which the Son of man shall give you.’

Here is all that we may ground and found our hope upon. Here is will, here is power, and here is authority to give it.

Here is will; Christ will give it. Why? Because he is the Son of man. What use is there of these words in this place? Why doth he not say, ‘which the *Son of God* shall give you’?

Oh, the Son of God without the Son of man is indeed a fountain of good things, but he is a sealed fountain; alas! of no comfort. Our comfort is in Immanuel, God-man. All our comfort is to be brought back to God, from whom we fell in paradise, and we must be brought back again to God by God. But unless God had become man, man had never come back again to God. Therefore all the union and communion we have with God, it depends on this first union of Christ with our nature, that the Son of God became the Son of man, as St Austin saith (c); for now the next union, that we become the sons of God, it comes from this, that God became man. And therefore he saith here, ‘the Son of man shall give it you.’ You need not climb up to heaven to fetch this food that endures to everlasting life, for the Son of God is come down from heaven to earth to take the nature of man; and in that to die, in that to satisfy God’s wrath, and so to become this blessed and everlasting food; the Son of man, ‘the second Adam.’ As by one man we all come to misery, so by the ‘second Adam,’ by man, we are restored to a blessed condition again. Therefore he saith here ‘the Son of man,’ because in the human nature all our salvation was wrought. Indeed, the worth and efficacy of our salvation comes from the divine nature; but it was wrought in man’s nature, the divine nature could not work it alone. But I will not dwell on this.

‘The Son of man shall give it you.’ You need not fear it, God is become man on purpose to give it you. We may now boldly go to a mediator which is made bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. We should have feared and trembled if he had only been God, but now all grace and comfort is hid in this nature of ours in Christ. If Christ had not took this poor, wretched nature of ours upon him, it had been a hateful nature to God. God hated the nature of man; but now, because the Son of God is become the Son of man, our nature is become lovely in the eyes of God; and not only lovely, but it is filled in him with all grace, and of his ‘fulness we receive grace for grace,’ John i. 16. He will give it therefore, because he is ‘the Son of man.’

Here is will ; ay, but what power and strength hath he to give it ?

He is so the Son of man as that he is also the Son of God. Therefore we are said, Acts xx. 28, 'to be redeemed with the blood of God.' Christ by his eternal Spirit, by his Godhead, offered himself a sacrifice for sin. So that he can give it because he is God.

But what authority hath he ?

He is 'sealed' to do it. That is the third ; that is, he hath authority, for authority is here expressed by 'sealing.' Now, Christ is said to be 'sealed,' first, *because there is the impression of God upon him.* Even as the seal imprints in the wax the likeness of that which is in it, so God hath imprinted in Christ his own likeness. He is the image of God, for Christ as he is God is the character\* of his Father ; and his human nature is likewise as like God as nature can express. 'We saw,' saith the apostle, 'his glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God,' John i. 14. We saw a kind of divinity in him, as much as human nature could receive ; the likeness of God sparkled in him ; therefore he is said to be 'sealed.' But that is not all, nor the principal here meant.

Again, secondly, The use of a seal is to appropriate and distinguish from other things ; so Christ is sealed, that is, God hath appropriated him to be his own Son, and to be a mediator of his own appointing, and hath distinguished him from all others by a blessed anointing and qualification of him above all. He is as Saul among the rest, higher than all ; he is as Aaron, anointed with the oil of gladness, but above his fellows, and yet for his fellows. From him distils the blessed ointment of grace. It is poured on his head first, and descends from him down to all the skirts of his garment, to all his members. So here is in this sealing likeness, distinction, and appropriation.

But especially by sealing here is meant *authority* : for a thing sealed is not only to distinguish and appropriate to a man's use, but to authorise also. As a magistrate that hath the king's broad seal, he is authorised ; so Christ he hath God's seal, God hath authorised him to be a mediator ; and as he was foreordained before all worlds, as the apostle Peter saith, 'to be the head of them that should be saved, and to be their mediator,' 1 Pet. i. 9, *seq.*, so when the fulness of time was come, when he came in the flesh, he was authorised by the greatest testimony that ever was, by the blessed Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, at his baptism. 'This is my beloved Son, hear him,' saith a voice from heaven, Mat. iii. 17. There was the Father, the Son in the voice, the Holy Ghost in the dove. There was the whole Trinity. So he was authorised from heaven.

And then he was authorised by his miracles. God gave him power to work those works which none could do but a Mediator. Therefore he saith, 'If you believe not me, yet believe me for my works' sake,' John x. 38.

He was authorised also by his resurrection, as the apostle saith, in Rom. i. 4 : 'He mightily declared himself to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.' The angels from heaven brought witness of him. He was witnessed by all kind of persons on earth, yea, by the devils themselves. So he is 'sealed' and authorised every way, by all kind of witnesses, to be a mediator.

This is set out in other phrases in the Scripture. In Ps. ii. 7, 'This my Son have I set upon my holy hill of Sion ;' and Rom. iii., toward the latter end, ver. 25 : 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation.' God

\* That is, *χαρακτήρ*, the 'express image.'—Ed.

hath set him forth as the shewbread was set out under the law. And then again in another place, 'Whom he hath sent,' 1 John iv. 9, 10; and in 1 Cor. i. 30, 'He is made of God unto us wisdom,' &c. 'He is made of God;' that is, he is 'sealed,' appointed, authorised by God for that purpose.

So you see why Christ is said to be sealed, especially because he is authorised by God the Father, 'made,' 'sent,' 'set forth,' 'whom the Father hath sealed;' that is, the party offended by our sins, he hath sealed and authorised Christ to be a mediator.

If this be so, let us learn this use of it, to bless God the Father as well as Christ. 'Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and 'Blessed be Christ,' for him hath the Father 'sealed' by the Spirit. The blessed Trinity have all a hand in our salvation.

And then again consider, if we despise Christ, whom we despise. We despise the Father that hath 'sealed' him. It is a weighty matter. Read the second psalm, and you shall see there what it is to despise Christ, not to 'kiss the Son;' that is, when God hath anointed and sent forth a Saviour, and 'sealed him,' and authorised him by all the testimonies that can be, to be a mediator, not to receive him for our king, for our priest and prophet. It is a rebellion, not against Christ only, but against the Father who hath 'sealed' him.

And likewise it serveth wonderfully to strengthen our faith when we go to God for forgiveness of sins. Offer him his own broad seal, offer him Christ as a mediator authorised by himself. Lord, I am thus and thus a sinner, but notwithstanding, thou hast sent thy blessed Son and set him forth to be a Saviour for me, and him I offer to thee. Thou canst not deny or refuse thy own 'sealed' Mediator and Redeemer. If he had been a mediator of my own appointing and of my own sealing, it were another matter; but I offer thy own mediator, look on the death of him whom thou hast 'sealed' to be my intercessor. It is a wondrous prevailing argument with God. He cannot deny that which he hath devised himself, him whom he chose before all worlds for this great office.

But how shall I know whether he be 'sealed' for my good or no? Saith the soul that hears this, we hear much of an authorised Saviour, of an authorised mediator to be all-sufficient, but what is that to me?

Why? For whom is he 'sealed?' Is he 'sealed' for angels or for men? And amongst men is he 'sealed' for holy men or sinners? 'I come not to seek or to save whole men, or men that never were lost,' Mat. xviii. 11. No. He came to seek and to save men, but they are lost men, sick men; and it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all means to be embraced, 'that Christ came into the world to save sinners,' saith blessed Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. Therefore he is 'sealed' to save thee if thou art a sinner, to save thee if thou wilt receive him; and thou art bound to receive him, under pain of the punishment of rebellion. Is it not rebellion not to receive a magistrate whom the prince has authorised under his broad seal? It is another manner of matter not to receive Christ. It is a greater sin than to sin against the law; for if a man sin against the law there is the gospel to help him, but if a man sin against the gospel there is not another gospel to him. Now to refuse Christ offered in the gospel is a sin against the gospel. Where then can there be hope of salvation? Salvation itself cannot save him that will not be saved, that refuses the remedy 'sealed' by God the Father, the party offended. Who can heal him that casts down the potion that is brought to heal him? that refuseth the physician that comes to cure him? I say he is 'sealed' to save thee if thou wilt be saved;

if thou wilt receive him; receive him not only to be thy Saviour, but to be thy king to rule thee, and thy prophet to teach and instruct thee, as we shall see afterwards.

But, to clear this a little better, we must know that there are three distinct sealings.

There is God's sealing of Christ, which I have unfolded to you.

And there is our sealing of God; that is, our sealing of God's truth.

And then again, there is God's sealing of us by his Spirit. And these follow one the other.

Why hath God sealed Christ, but that we hereupon should be stirred up to believe and to receive Christ, and so by consequence to seal, that God is true in sending such a blessed Mediator, as St John saith, 'He that believes in the Son hath set to his seal that God is true,' John iii. 33. God hath sealed him, that we, by receiving him, should seal God's truth.

Beloved, God comes to us for our testimonials, for our hands and seals. Oh how wondrously doth God condescend to weak man! He hath sealed Christ for the office of a mediator, and he offers him unto us, and he comes to us likewise that we would set to our seals too, that Christ is the Son of God. He counts it not sufficient that he hath sealed him himself, but he will have us seal too; and we seal him when we receive him. He that receives him hath set to his seal that God is true. He that doth not receive him, 'he makes God a liar,' saith St John, 1 John v. 10.

And what comes of this, when we receive Christ, and set to our seal that God in the promise of salvation by Christ is true? Then we having honoured him, he honours us by his Spirit, as the apostle saith, Eph. i. 13, 'In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed.' So when we believe and set to our seal that God is true, God seals us by his Spirit; 'after ye believed you were sealed.'

But what is this seal of the Spirit whereby God seals us after we believe?

I answer, God seals us when he sets the stamp of his Spirit upon us; when the work and witness of his Spirit is wrought in us. For as in a seal the wax hath all in it, the whole likeness of the image that is in the seal, so the soul that is sealed by the Spirit hath the likeness of the Spirit of Christ stamped on it. God imprints in their spirits the likeness of his Son; that is to say, he makes them loving souls, humble souls, obedient as Christ was in all things, patient, meek, &c. You may see in the spirit of a believing man an expression of the spirit of Christ. So that if you would see Christ in his excellencies, look on the spirit of a true Christian. There you shall see a resemblance of Christ Jesus, not perfectly, but in some comfortable\* measure. You shall see the very image of Christ. You shall see how full of love he is, how patient in crosses, how humble, how meek, how obedient to God in all things, both in a passive and active obedience. This is the stamp of the Spirit; when a man believes, God honours him by setting his image on him.

And yet this is not all. Besides this, we are sealed with the witness and comfort of the Spirit as well as with the work of the Spirit, the Spirit of God sweetly witnessing that we are the sons of God. And this sweet witness of the Spirit especially comes after we have honoured God by believing in temptation, when we are able to hold out and say as Job said, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15. So when we can, after conflicts of doubting and despair, say, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' I will set to my seal that he is true. Well, will you so? God, to

\* Qu. 'conformable'?—Ed.

honour such a soul, seals him to the day of redemption ; that is, he gives to the soul of such a one a sweet evidence and testimony that he is the Son of God.

And this seal of the Spirit is double : not only done by the witness and work of the Spirit inwardly, which I have shewed, but likewise the Spirit doth seal them outwardly, enabling them to make an outward confession of Christ and his truth ; and therefore, in Rev. vii. 3, *seq.*, Christians are said to be ‘sealed in the forehead,’ that is, as they are marked and singled out in ill times, to be such as God hath set his special favour upon, so they are ‘sealed’ with a spirit of boldness, willingly and with forwardness to confess the truth of Christ in ill times.

Now, to apply it to our purpose, wouldst thou know whether thou be such a one, for the present, as for whom Christ is ‘sealed’ a mediator ? Examine, first of all, whether thou hast put to thy seal that God is true, by receiving and believing Christ, and the promise of salvation through him. If thou hast done so, then thou wilt find another seal from God, even the work of the Spirit in sanctifying of thee, and conforming of thee to the image and likeness of Christ ; and thou wilt find the witness and comfortable testimony of the Spirit, in telling thee that thou art the son of God ; and withal thou wilt have a spirit of boldness, and readiness, and forwardness to confess Christ. Thou wilt not care for all that the world saith ; but wilt, if need be, stand to the profession of religion to the death.

If thou canst find this in thyself, undoubtedly thou art not only such a one as Christ came to seal, but for the present thou mayest be assured that thou hast interest in this mediator, sealed by God for that purpose.

Thus you see that here is ‘food that endures to everlasting life,’ which is Christ and the benefits we have by him. You see that that blessed meat is attainable, because he is willing to give it ; for he is become man for that purpose. He is able to give it, for he is God as well as man, and he hath authority to give it, for God the Father hath sealed him and fitted him for that office. If we receive him, he will seal us with his blessed Spirit ; that is, the same Spirit that furnished Christ with grace, that sanctified him in the womb, will sanctify all those that are his members, will work a likeness and conformity in them to his blessed image ; for the same Spirit that was in the natural Son is in all the adopted sons of God. And he will likewise give us the comfortable evidence and assurance that we are the sons of God, furnish us with boldness and resolution to profess Christ in all times.

Let me then, I beseech you, come again to re-enforce this exhortation. Take heed you refuse not Christ. Consider with what authority he comes. ‘He is sealed.’ It is no presumption therefore to receive him, though you be never such sinners, to receive him ; I mean not only to be a priest to reconcile you to God, but to be a king to rule you, and a prophet to instruct you by his Spirit ; to receive him on this manner is no presumption. To receive him indeed as a Saviour, but to neglect him as king, to refuse to come under his government, is great presumption ; but to receive whole Christ is obedience and faith, and no presumption ; nay, if you do not receive him you sin damnably, you commit the greatest sin that can be. He came to save all that will come under his blessed government, that will kiss the Son. ‘Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the waters of life,’ Rev. xxii. 17. All the good promised by Christ is promised upon our receiving of him, upon the obedience of our faith. There is nothing required but a will to embrace him, and to be under his government. There

is no exception made of sins, or persons, or times. 'At what time soever a sinner repent,' 1 Kings viii. 30, *seq.*, whatsoever sinner, whatsoever time, or whatsoever the sins be, if he repents, Christ is ready to receive him.

If you pretend your unworthiness and want of excellencies, he takes away that objection. 'Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden,' Mat. xi. 28; 'Come, buy without money,' Isa. lv. 1; and here in the text, 'The Son of man shall give;' and what so free as gift?

If you pretend you have sinned since your calling, and that you have sinned against conscience and knowledge, and therefore now you have no further hope of Christ, remember that Paul, 2 Cor. v. 20, speaks to the Corinthians that were in the state of grace, 'I beseech you to be reconciled to God;' and in Jer. iii. 6, *seq.*, 'Return again, you backsliding Israel, and I will heal your backsliding;' and again, 'Will a man receive a wife that hath played the harlot, and broken the band of marriage? Yet return, O house of Israel, and I will receive you.' Therefore run not away from God. Though thou hast sinned after thou art in the state of grace, come again, I beseech you. Still Christ is to be received; the door of grace is always held open, and the golden sceptre continually held out as long as we live in this world.

But yet it is not good to neglect the time of grace. Receive Christ presently; defer not to come under his government; and receive him wholly, or else there is no receiving of him at all.

And to press this a little further; I beseech you, consider that if you leave not your sinful courses, and come under the blessed government of Christ, if you receive not this 'sealed' king, this 'sealed' priest and prophet, this 'sealed' mediator, whom God hath 'sealed' and sent unto you for salvation, there is not anything in the world that will one day more torment you than your refusal of him. Oh that we should ever live to hear of salvation so freely offered, and of a Saviour so authorised, yet notwithstanding that we should respect our sins more than our souls! and because we could not have him to be our Saviour except we came under his government and be ruled by him as a king, we refused him wholly altogether. Indeed, if we might have had salvation by him and the forgiveness of sins, and withal have remained under the rule and sway of our own lusts, and been led by them, we would have been contented to have had him; but rather than we would leave our blasphemous, our unclean, injurious, and covetous courses of life, we were content to let Christ go if he would. Oh that we should reject this 'sealed' Saviour! Oh that we should refuse salvation offered on such loving terms, when God was so loving as to seal and authorise his Son; when the Son was so loving as to give himself when he was 'sealed;' to refuse this and that for such base respects, will certainly one day, when the conscience is wakened, prove the greatest torment that can be!

See how the apostle notably enforceth this in the second of the Hebrews, ver. 3: 'If so be they did not escape that despised Moses' law, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' He doth not say, How shall we escape if we oppose Christ, if we rail on him, if we despise his image in his children, as many cursed wretches do? but, How shall we escape if we do but '*neglect* so great salvation,' so witnessed and authorised with all the signs, so offered and tendered with all the terms of love that may be?

And therefore, if there be any here that have lived in sinful courses, and have a purpose to break them off, that are weary of the government of their lusts, and of Satan that rules them by their lusts,—for all are under one government or other, either under the 'sealed' government of Christ, or

under the base government of Satan that tends to damnation,—Oh leave it, and come under this governor ‘sealed’ by God the Father, authorised from heaven by the blessed Trinity, by miracles, and by all the arguments that can be; come under his blessed government and you shall do well. God the Father, the party offended with your sins, he hath ‘sealed’ him; and he cannot refuse a mediator of his own sealing.

And do not say your sins have been thus and thus; for consider what were these parties that he offers himself to here, that he saith to, ‘Labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life.’ Were they not cursed hypocrites, that followed him for the loaves, and yet he saith to them, ‘Labour for the meat that endures,’ &c. I am ‘sealed’ even for your salvation, if you will come out of your hypocrisy and be ruled by me. Therefore let none stand out from coming under the government of Christ, for he offers mercy, you see here, to the worst of men, even to cursed hypocrites.

And, to conclude with a word of comfort, if there be any poor distressed soul frightened in conscience with the sight of his sins and Satan’s temptations, Oh let such consider the love of God in Christ. Satan pictures out God as a terrible judge; and so he is indeed to men that go on in their sins, ‘a consuming fire.’ But art thou weary of thy courses? art thou willing to come under a better covenant? Let not Satan abuse thee by setting God before thee as a terrible judge, and Christ as one that would not save thee. No. Come in, kiss the Son, ‘for him hath the Father sealed,’ ‘sealed’ for thee if thou be weary of thy sins. Enforce not upon thy soul any unwillingness to be in God. Wherefore doth God stoop so low, and labour by all these arguments here, as that Christ is the Son of man, and that he shall give it you, and that the Father hath sealed him for that end; wherefore is all this, but to shew his willingness to receive thee? Wherefore hath the Father ‘sealed’ Christ but in love to thee? Come in, therefore, and then, if you will seal to his truth, if you will believe and cast yourselves on God’s gracious promise, even against doubting and distrust, you shall find God sealing you by his Spirit; you shall find his Spirit witnessing to your spirits that you are the ‘sons of God.’

Here then you see is sure footing for poor doubting souls to fasten upon. God the Father, the party offended, hath ‘sealed’ his Son; hath authorised him to save thee, if thou repent and come in. What are all thy sins and unworthiness to Christ, God-man, ‘sealed’ and authorised by the Father, who is the party offended? If thou art willing to come in, bring all thy sins and oppose them to Christ, God-man, ‘sealed’ by the Father, and they will vanish as a cloud. But, as I said before, if thou wilt not come in and accept of this Saviour, if thou wilt not submit thyself to his government, thou sealest thy damnation.

Thus you see I have unfolded this blessed portion of Scripture. Christ Jesus, and all the prerogatives and benefits that come by him, is the food that endureth to everlasting life. You see the arguments our blessed Saviour useth to enforce us to labour after this food. It is ‘food.’ It is food that ‘endures,’ and it is food that ‘endures to everlasting life;’ and he ‘will give it,’ for ‘him the Father hath sealed’ and authorised so to do. He is both the gift and the giver; both the food and the inviter to the food; both the priest and the sacrifice. Labour therefore after this food.

There is an objection which I will briefly answer, and so end.

*Labour* after it. Why? Christ will give it; if he will give it, why must we labour after it? And if we must labour for it, how doth he give it? How can these two, gift and labour, stand together?

I answer, Very well ; Christ will give himself, and forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting, and yet we must labour too. But we must know for what we must labour. We must not labour for any merit to the title unto heaven and happiness. Christ indeed gives that. But labour in the use of all good means to get knowledge and faith to receive this gift, to get the knowledge of Christ, what he is in his natures and offices, what he hath promised, what he hath done and what he hath suffered, what the intent of the gospel is ; what the giver is ; and what the authority is, that his Father hath given him. This requires labour. It is a labour to crack the shell, to understand the letter of the Scripture ; to know what the gift and what the giver is. And it is likewise a labour to get faith to receive this gift ; to get the soul emptied of all self-confidence ; of all worth in itself and in the creature ; for Christ must be received with a beggar's hand ; and it will ask much labour to deny a man's self ; for proud flesh will always have somewhat to trust to either in itself or in the creature.

So that these two may well stand together, labour and gift. We are taught to pray, ' Give us this day our daily bread.' God will give us our daily bread. We must not therefore stand still and do nothing ; but though God will give it, yet he will give it in the use of means, in the use of our lawful callings. So here, God will give us this spiritual food ; yet he will give it in labour. It is his ordinance ; and whatsoever he gives, he gives not in idleness, but in obedience to his ordinance. He will have us to labour in the use of the means, in reading, hearing, receiving the sacrament, praying, meditating, and the like, to have a part in Christ this blessed gift. Nay, because he will give Christ, therefore labour. The one enforceth the other. The like reason Moses giveth the Israelites : ' Fight,' saith he, ' for the Lord hath given them into your hand,' Joshua x. 19. They might say, If our enemies be given into our hand, why should we fight ? Yes ; fight the rather, be encouraged to fight, because you shall be sure to conquer. So here, ' Labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life, for the Son of man will give it.' Therefore labour, because he will give it. In labouring we shall be sure to have it ; do that which belongs to thee, and thou shalt be sure to have that which belongs to God ; thou shalt find Christ, and heaven, and glory, and all in the use of the means. But he gives nothing without labour. There can be no good done in earthly things without labour ; and do you think to have heaven without labour ? No. Spiritual things are against the stream. Heaven is up the hill. There must be labour, there must be striving against corruptions within, and against temptations without ; and our labour it is a happy labour. It is not a barren labour ; ' Our labour is not in vain in the Lord,' as the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xv. 58. We that labour for the food that endures to everlasting life, we labour for somewhat ; but worldlings that beat their brains, and tire their spirits, and rack their consciences, and wear out their bodies, it is all for nothing ; it is for that which is ' vanity and vexation of spirit,' Eccles. i. 14 ; for that which they must leave behind them. A true Christian, to encourage him to take all the pains that may be, he labours for something ; it is a hopeful and not a barren labour. And, beloved, blessed are we that we can have this food for our labour ; that since the fall we can recover by the ' second Adam ' a better estate than we had by the first.

And our blessed Saviour, to the end he might distinguish true Christians from hypocrites, enjoins this duty of labouring so much the more ; for we have many in the church that think to have Christ and his benefits without



labour, as if heaven would drop into their mouths. They can say that God is merciful, and Christ died for us ; but you shall in the mean time find them careless of reading, of hearing, of praying, of the communion of saints, &c., are idle in working out their salvation with fear and trembling, negligent in selling all that they have for the pearl, will part with nothing for Christ. I say, to distinguish these hypocrites from true Christians, therefore he saith, 'Labour,' to shew to us that only they that labour for Christ in the use of all good means ; that labour for the true knowledge of him, and for faith to receive him ; that sell all for him ; that take pains to grow in grace and in union with Christ ; that make him their best portion in the world, and delight in him : it is they only that have interest in Christ ; only the painful\* Christian is the true Christian.

Therefore, I beseech you, as you would have it discerned that you are not hypocrites in the church, be stirred up to use all sanctified means to know Christ, to believe in him, to know that you are in communion with him, that you belong unto him. Be not discouraged. You shall have rest ere long. 'There is a rest for the people of God,' as the apostle saith to the Hebrews, Heb. iv. 9. Indeed, so long as we are here below, there is labour joined with weariness ; for we have great conflicts with corruptions and temptations, with enemies within and enemies without ; but be of good comfort, we shall at last come to a rest, to a rest perpetual and everlasting. It is true, in heaven there shall be labour, for we shall be always praising God ; but it shall be labour without weariness, labour without conflict. There shall be no corruption within, nor no devil without. Satan could enter into paradise below, but he shall never enter into that heavenly paradise. Therefore be encouraged to labour for a while. Though it be tedious, because of corruptions and temptations, 'yet there is a rest for the people of God, an eternal rest.

\* That is, 'painstaking.'—G.

(a) P. 366.—'Especially are we to make daily use of the death of Christ ; for howsoever the death of Christ be transient in respect of the act of it, as one of the ancients saith ; yet . . . ' The *thought* is common to Bernard and Augustine.

(b) P. 370.—'Taste is the most necessary sense of all, saith a wise searcher of the mysteries of nature ; our life is maintained by taste.' Query, Bacon ?

(c) P. 373.—'All . . . depends . . . as Saint Austin saith, for now . . . ' This great fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, is constantly dwelt upon throughout the works of Augustine. G.