

life in your souls, Gal. v. 17. Not only a combat betwixt *light* in the higher, and *lust* in the lower faculties; not only opposition to more gross external corruptions, that carry more infamy and horror with them than other sins do: but the same faculty will be the seat of war; and the more inward and secret any lust is, by so much the more will it be opposed and mourned over.

In a word, the weakest Christian may, upon impartial observation, find such signs of spiritual life in himself (if he will allow himself time to reflect upon the bent and frame of his own heart) as desires after God; conscience of duties; fears, cares, and sorrows, about sin; delight in the society of heavenly and spiritual men; and a loathing and burden in the company of vain and carnal persons.

Object. O but I have a very dead heart to spiritual things!

Sol. It is a sign of life that you feel, and are sensible of that deadness; and besides, there is a great deal of difference betwixt *spiritual deadness* and *death*; the one is the state of the unregenerate, the other is the *disease* of regenerate men.

Object. Some signs of spiritual life are clear to me, but I cannot close with others.

Sol. If you can really close with any, it may satisfy you, though you be dark in others; for if a child cannot go, yet if it can suck; but if it cannot suck, yet if it can cry; yea, if it cannot cry, yet if it breathe, it is alive.



SERMON VI.

Of that Act on our Part, by which we do actually and effectually apply Christ to our own Souls.

JOHN i. 12.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name.

NO sooner is the soul quickened by the Spirit of God, but it answers, in some measure, the end of God in that work, by its *active reception of Jesus Christ, in the way of believing*: What this vital act of faith is upon which so great a weight depends, as our interest in Christ and everlasting blessedness, this scripture before us will give you the best account of; wherein (omitting the consideration of the coherence and context of the words) we have three things to ponder.

First, The high and glorious privilege conferred, viz. “Power to become the sons of God.”

Secondly, The subject of this privilege described, “As many as received him.”

Thirdly, The description explained, by way of opposition, “Even as many as believe on his name.”

First, The privilege conferred is a very high and glorious one, than which no created being is capable of greater; “power to become the sons of God:” this word ἐξουσίαν is of large extent and signification, and is, by some, rendered “*this * right*, by others “*this dignity*, by others *this prerogative*, this *privilege* or *honour* :” It implies a title or right to *adoption*, not only with respect to the present benefits of it in this life, but also to that blessed inheritance which is laid up in heaven for the sons of God. And so Grotius rightly expounds it of our *consummate* sonship, consisting in the actual enjoyment of blessedness, as well as that which is *inchoate* : not only a right to pardon, favour, and acceptance now, but to heaven and the full enjoyment of God hereafter. O what an honour, dignity, and privilege is this!

Secondly, The subjects of this privilege are described; “As many as received him.” This text describes them by that very grace, *faith*, which gives them their title and right to Christ and his benefits; and by that very act of faith, which primarily confers their right to his person, and secondarily to his benefits, viz. *receiving him*: there be many graces besides faith, but faith only is the grace that gives us right to Christ; and there be many acts of faith besides receiving, but this receiving or embracing of Christ, is the justifying and saving act: “As many as received him,” οσοι δε ελαβον αυτον,] *as many*, be they of any nation, sex, age, or condition. For “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all, and “in all,” Col. iii. 11.

Nothing but unbelief bars men from Christ and his benefits. As many as [*received † him*;] the word signifies “to accept, take,” or, (as we fitly render it), to receive, assume, or take to us; a word most aptly expressing the nature and office of faith, yea, the very justifying and saving act; and we are also heedfully to note its special object, ελαβον αυτον: The text saith not αυτα, *his*, but αυτον, *him*, i. e. his person, as he is clothed with his offices, and not

* Beza, hoc jus; Piscator, hanc dignitatem. Lightfoot, prærogativam. Heinsius, privilegium; nec multo aliter voce ἐξουσίας Hellenistæ usi videntur cum Chaldæorum ܐܘܬܘܢ expresserunt.

† Δαμναειν and παραλαμβανειν, both signify to receive.

only his benefits and privileges. These are secondary and consequential things to our *receiving him* *. So that it is a receiving, assuming, or accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, which must have respect to the tenders and proposals of the gospel, “for therein is “the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,” Rom. i. 17. therein is Jesus Christ revealed, proposed, and offered unto sinners, as the only way of justification and salvation; which gospel-offer, as before was opened, is therefore ordinarily necessary to believing, Rom. x. 11, 12, 13, &c.

Thirdly, This description is yet further explained by this additional exegetical clause, [*even to them that believe on his name* ;] here the terms are varied, though the things expressed in both be the same; what he called *receiving* there, is called *believing on his name* here, to shew us that the very essence of saving faith consists in our receiving of Christ. By *his name*, we are to understand Christ himself: it is usual to take these two, believing in him, and believing in his name, as terms convertible, and of the same importance, שמו ושמו ; חווא, חווא—*Ipsa est nomen suum, et nomen ejus ipse est* †: His name is Himself, and Himself is his name. So that here we have the true nature and precious benefits of saving faith excellently expressed in this scripture, the sum of which take in this proposition;

Doct. *That the receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ is that saving and vital act of faith which gives the soul right both to his person and benefits.*

We cannot act spiritually till we begin to live spiritually: Therefore the spirit of life must first join himself to us, in his quickening work, (as was shewn you in the last sermon), which being done, we begin to act spiritually, by taking hold upon, or receiving Jesus Christ, which is the thing designed to be opened in this sermon.

The soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of the soul, and Christ is the life of faith. There are several sorts of faith besides saving faith, and in saving faith there are several acts, besides the justifying or saving act; but this receiving act, which is to be our subject this day, is that upon which both our righteousness and eternal happiness do depend. “This, as a *form*, differences sa-

* The gospel offer is God's act, made by means of the word: acceptance is man's act; yet so, as it is also the gift of God; for a man cannot receive the Mediator, unless faith, which is the instrument of this acceptance, be given him by God.

† Drusius.

“ving faith from all other kinds or sorts of faith* ;” by this it is that we are justified and saved. “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God:” yet it doth not justify and save us by reason of any proper dignity that is found in this act, but by reason of the object it receives or apprehends. The same thing is often expressed in scripture by other terms, as “Coming to Christ,” John vi. 35. *Trusting* or *staying* upon Christ, Isa. l. 10. But whatever is found in those expressions, it is all comprehended in this, as will appear hereafter. Now, the method into which I shall cast my discourse on this subject, that I may handle it with as much perspicuity and profit as I can, shall be,

First, To explain and open the nature of this receiving of Christ, and shew you what it includes.

Secondly, To prove that this is the justifying and saving act of faith.

Thirdly, To shew you the excellency of this act of faith.

Fourthly, To remove some mistakes, and give you the true account of the dignity and excellency of this act.

Fifthly, And then bring home all, in a proper and close application.

First, In the first place then, I will endeavour to explain and open the nature of this receiving of Christ, and shew you what is implied in it.

And, indeed, it involves many deep mysteries, and things of greatest weight. People are generally very ignorant and unacquainted with the importance of this expression; they have very slight thoughts of faith who never passed under the illuminating, convincing, and humbling work of the Spirit: but we shall find that saving faith is quite another thing, and differs in its whole kind and nature from that traditional faith, and common assent, which is so fatally mistaken for it in the world †.

* *Forma vel aliquid formæ analogum ponitur differentiæ loco.*

† There are divers other expressions by which the nature of saving faith is expressed in scripture, viz. Eating Christ's flesh, and drinking his blood, John vi. 40. Coming to Christ, Matt. xi. 28. Having the Son, 1 John v. 12. Trusting or depending upon him, for which the Hebrew uses three emphatical words, אָמַן, אָבַטַח, and אָבַטַח. The first signifies a firm and stable trust. The second, to lean, or depend with security. The third, to betake one's self to a sanctuary for protection. All which is supposed or included in our receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ: In eating and drinking we must receive meat and drink: coming to Christ is necessarily supposed in receiving him, for there is no receiving at a distance. Having the Son, and receiving him, are notions of the same importance; and for trusting, relying with security, and betaking ourselves to Christ for refuge, they are all in-

For, *First*, It is evident that no man can receive Jesus Christ in the darkness of natural ignorance: we must understand and discern who and what he is, whom we receive to be *the Lord our righteousness*. If we know not his person, and his offices, we do not take, but mistake Christ. It is a good rule in the civil law, *Non consentit qui non sentit*. A mistake of the person invalidates the match. He that takes Christ for a mere man, or denies the satisfaction of his blood, or divests him of his human nature, or denies any of his most glorious and necessary offices, let them cry up as high as they will, his spirituality, glory, and exemplary life and death, they can never receive Jesus Christ aright. This is such a crack, such a flaw in the very foundation of faith, as undoes and destroys all. *Ignorantis non est consensus*: All saving faith is founded in light and knowledge, and therefore it is called *knowledge*, Isa. liii. 11. and *seeing* is inseparably connected with *believing*, John vi. 40. Men must hear and learn of the Father before they can come to Christ, John vi. 45. The receiving act of faith is directed and guided by knowledge. I will not presume to state the degree of knowledge which is absolutely necessary to the reception of Christ; I know the first actings of faith are, in most Christians, accompanied with much darkness and confusion of understanding: but yet we must say in the general, that wherever faith is, there is so much light as is sufficient to discover to the soul its own sins, dangers and wants, and the all-sufficiency, suitableness, and necessity of Christ, for the supply and remedy of all; and without this, Christ cannot be received. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28.

Secondly, The receiving of Christ, necessarily implies the assent of the understanding to the truths of Christ revealed in the gospel, viz. his person, natures, offices, his incarnation, death, and satisfaction; which assent, though it be not in itself saving faith, yet is it the foundation and ground work of it; it being impossible the soul should receive, and fiducially embrace, what the mind doth not assent unto as true and infallibly certain*. Now, there are three degrees of assent; *conjecture*, *opinion*, and *belief*. Conjecture is but a slight and weak inclination to assent to the thing propounded, by reason of the weighty objections that lie against it. Opinion is a more steady and fixed assent, when a man is almost certain, though yet some fear of the contrary remains with him. Belief is

volved in the receiving act; for as God offers him to us as the only prop of our hearts and hopes, so we receive him to rely upon him. And as he is held forth in the gospel as the only *Asylum*, or city of refuge, so we take or receive him, and accordingly betake ourselves to him for refuge.

* See Dr. Scater on Rom. iv. 3.

a more full and assured assent to the truth ; to which the mind may be brought four ways.

First, By the perfect intelligence of sense, not hindered or deceived. So I believe the truth of these propositions, Fire is hot, water is moist, honey is sweet, gall is bitter.

Secondly, By the native clearness of self-evident principles. So I believe the truth of these propositions, The whole is more than a part ; the cause is before the effect.

Thirdly, By discourse, and rational deduction. So I believe the truth of this proposition, Where all the parts of a thing are, th re is the whole.

Fourthly, By infallible testimony, when any thing is witnessed or asserted by one whose truth is unquestionable *. And of this sort is the assent of faith, which is therefore called our receiving the witness of God, 1 John v. 9. our setting to our seal that God is true, John iii. 33. This *prima veritas*, divine verity, is the very formal object of faith : into this we resolve our faith. *Thus saith the Lord*, is that firm foundation upon which our assent is built. And thus we see good reason to believe those profound mysteries of the incarnation of Christ ; the hypostatical union of the two natures in his wonderful person ; the mystical union of Christ and believers ; though we cannot understand these things, by reason of the darkness of our minds. It satisfies the soul to find these mysteries in the written word ; upon that foundation it firmly builds its assent : and without such an assent of faith, there can be no embracing of Christ : all acts of faith and religion, without assent, are but as so many arrows shot at random into the open air, they signify nothing for want of a fixed determinate object.

It is therefore the policy of Satan, by injecting or fomenting atheistical thoughts, (with which young converts use to find themselves greatly infested) to undermine and destroy the whole work of faith. But God makes his people victorious over them : yea, and even at that time they do assent to the truths of the word, when they think they do not ; as appears by their tenderness and fear of sin, their diligence and care of duty. If I discern these things in a Christian's life, he must excuse me if I believe him not, when he saith he doth not assent to the truths of the gospel.

Thirdly, Our receiving Christ necessarily implies our hearty *approbation*, liking and estimation ; yea, the acquiescence of our very

* It is not becoming, that God, when he should speak to men, should confirm his words with arguments, as if otherwise he was not to be believed ; but, as becomes himself, he speaks as the supreme Judge of all things, whose [prerogative] it is, not to argue, but to pronounce what is truth, &c. *Lactan. de falsa religione, p. (mihi) 179.* Faith fails, where the divine authority of the scripture is wanting.

souls in Jesus Christ, as the most excellent, suitable, and complete remedy for all our wants, sins, and dangers, that ever could be prepared by the wisdom and love of God for us: We must receive him with such a frame of heart, as rests upon, and trusts in him, if ever we receive him aright; "To them that believe he is precious," 1 Pet. ii. 7. This is the only sovereign plaister in all the world that is large enough, and efficacious enough, to cure our wounds: And therefore as Christ is most highly esteemed, and heartily approved, as the only remedy for our souls; so the sovereign grace and wisdom of God are admired, and the way and method he hath taken to save poor souls, by Jesus Christ, most heartily approved as the most apt and excellent method, both for his glory and our good, that ever could be taken: for it is a plain case, that none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections, to that person whom they esteem not as the best for them that can be chosen: None will forsake and quit all for his sake, except they account him as the spouse did, "The chiefest of ten thousand."

There are two things in Christ, which must gain the greatest approbation in the soul of a poor convinced sinner, and bring it to rest upon Jesus Christ.

First, That it can find nothing in Christ that is distasteful, or unsuitable to it, as it doth experimentally find in the best creatures. In him is no *weakness*, but a fulness of all saving abilities; "Able to save to the uttermost:" No *pride*, causing him to scorn and condemn the most wretched soul that comes to him: No inconstancy or *levity*, to cause him to cast off the soul whom he hath once received: No *passion* but a Lamb for meekness and patience: There is no spot to be found in him, but "He is altogether lovely," Cant. v. 16.

Secondly, As the believer can find nothing in Christ that is distasteful, so it finds nothing wanting in Christ that is necessary, or desirable: Such is the fulness of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption that is in Christ, that nothing is left to desire but the full enjoyment of him. O, saith the soul, how completely happy shall I be, if I can but win Christ! I would not envy the nobles of the earth, were I but in Christ. I am hungry and athirst, and Christ is meat indeed, and drink indeed; this is the best thing in all the world for me, because so necessary and so suitable to the needs of a soul ready to perish. I am a law-condemned and a self-condemned sinner, trembling for fear of the execution of the curse upon me every moment; in Christ is complete righteousness to justify my soul; O there is nothing better for me than Christ. I see myself plunged, both in nature and practice, into the odious pollutions of sin, and in Christ is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness: His blood is a fountain of *merit*, his spirit is a fountain

of holiness and purity: None but Christ, none but Christ. O the manifold wisdom and unsearchable love of God, to prepare and furnish such a Christ so fully answering all the needs, all the distresses, all the fears and burdens of a poor sinner! Thus the believing soul approves of Christ as best for it. And thus in believing, it gives glory to God, Rom. iv. 21.

Fourthly, Receiving Christ consists in the *consent and choice of the will*; and this is the opening of the heart and stretching forth of the soul to receive him: Thy people shall be willing in the day of "thy power," Psal. cx. 3.

It is the great design and main scope of the gospel, to work over the wills of poor sinners to this: And this was the great complaint of Christ against the incredulous Jews, John v. 40. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

It is disputed by some, whether faith can be seated in two distinct faculties, as we seem to place it, when we say it involves both the *approbation* of the *judgment* and the *consent* of the *will*. I will not here entangle my discourse with that fruitless dispute. I am of the same judgment with those divines, that think faith cannot be expressed fully by any one single habit, or act of the mind or will distinctly, for that (as * one well notes) there are such descriptions given of it in scripture, such things are proposed as the object of it, and such is the experience of all that sincerely believe, as no one single act, either of the mind or will, can answer unto: Nor do I see any thing repugnant to *scripture* or *philosophy* if we place it in both faculties. Consent (saith † Vasquez) seems to denote the concurrence of the will with the understanding; but to leave that, it is most certain the saving, justifying act of faith lies principally in the consent of the will, which consent is the effect of the Almighty Power of God, Eph. i. 19. He allures and draws the will to Christ, and he *draws with the cords of a man*, i. e. he prevails with it by rational arguments: For the soul being prepared by convictions of its lost and miserable estate by sin, and that there is but one door of hope open to it for an escape from the wrath to come, and that is Christ; being also satisfied of the fulness and completeness of his saving ability, and of his willingness to make it over for our salvation, upon such just and equal terms; this cannot but prevail with the will of a poor distressed sinner, to consent and chuse him.

Fifthly, and *lastly*, The last and principal thing included in our

* Dr. Owen in his doctrine of Justification, p. 155.

† Consent seems to denote the concurrence of the will with the understanding, by relishing the same thing which the understanding doth perceive, 12. Q. 15. a. 1. Faith is not a simple act, but consists of divers parts, knowledge, assent, and trust, which do not all belong to the same faculty. *Wendel. Theol.* p. 450.

receiving of Christ, is the respect that this act of acceptance hath unto the terms upon which Christ is tendered to us in the gospel †, to which it is most agreeable, 1 Cor. xv. 11. "So we preach, and "so ye believed:" Faith answers the gospel-offer, as the impress upon the *wax* doth the engraving in the *seal*; and this is of principal consideration, for there is no receiving Christ upon any other terms but his own, proposed in the gospel to us; He will never come lower, nor make them easier than they are for any man's sake in the world; we must either receive him upon these, or part with him for ever as thousands do, who could not be content to agree to some articles, but rather chuse to be damned for ever than submit to all: This is the great controversy betwixt Christ and sinners; upon this, many thousands break off the treaty, and part with Christ, because he will not come to their terms; but every true believer receives him upon his own, i. e. their acceptance of him by faith, is in all things consentaneous to the overtures made of him in the written word. So he tenders himself, and so they receive him; as will be evident in the following particulars.

First, The gospel offers Christ to us *sincerely* and really, and so the true believer receives and accepts him, even with a *faith unfeigned*; 1 Tim. i. 5. If ever the soul be serious and in earnest in any thing, it is so in this: Can we suppose the heart of him that flies for his life to the *refuge city*, to be serious and in earnest to escape by flight the *avenger of blood* who pursues him? Then is the heart of a convinced sinner serious in this matter; for under that notion is the work of faith presented to us, Heb. vi. 18.

Secondly, Christ is offered to us in the gospel *entirely* and *undividedly*, as clothed with all his offices, priestly, prophetic, and regal; as Christ Jesus the Lord, Acts xvi. 31. and so the true believer receives him; The *hypocrite*, like the *harlot*, is for dividing, but the sincere believer finds the need he hath of every office of Christ, and knows not how to want any thing that is in him.

His ignorance makes him necessary and desirable to him as a *prophet*: His guilt makes him necessary as a *priest*: His strong and powerful lusts and corruptions make him necessary as a *king*: and in truth, he sees not any thing in Christ that he can spare; he needs all that is in Christ, and admires infinite wisdom in nothing more than the investing Christ with all these offices, which are so suited to the poor sinner's wants and miseries. Look, as the three offices are undivided in Christ, so they are in the believer's acceptance; and before this trial no hypocrite can stand; for all hypocrites re-

† Rom. iv. 17. ὑπήκασατε δε εκ καρδιας εις ον παρεδουθητε τυπον διδαχης. The will like melted metal, is delivered into the gospel-mould, where it receives the same form and figure that the mould gives.

ject and quarrel with something in Christ; they like his pardon better than his government. They call him indeed, Lord and Master, but it is but an empty title they bestow upon him; for let them ask their own hearts if Christ be Lord over their *thoughts*, as well as *words*; over their *secret*, as well as *open* actions; over their *darling* lusts, as well as others; let them ask, who will appear to be Lord and Master over them, when Christ and the world come in competition? When the pleasure of sin shall stand upon one side, and sufferings to death, and deepest points of self-denial, upon the other side? Surely it is the greatest affront that can be offered to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, to separate in our acceptance, what is so united in Christ, for our salvation and happiness. As without any one of these offices, the work of our salvation could not be completed, so without acceptance of Christ in them all, our union with him by faith cannot be completed.

The gospel-offer of Christ includes all his offices, and gospel-faith just so receives him; to submit to him, as well as to be redeemed by him; to imitate him in the holiness of his life, as well as to reap the purchases and fruits of his *death*. It must be an entire receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Thirdly, Christ is offered to us in the gospel *exclusively*, as the alone and only Saviour of sinners; with whose blood and intercession nothing is to be mixed; but the soul of a sinner is singly to rely and depend on him, and no other, Acts iv. 2. 1 Cor. iii. 11. and so faith receives him, Psal. lxxi. 16. "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Phil. iii. 9. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ." To depend partly upon Christ's righteousness, and partly upon our own, is to set one foot upon a rock, and the other in a quick-sand; either Christ will be to us all in all, or nothing at all, in point of righteousness and salvation; he affects not social honour; as he did the whole *work*, so he expects the sole *praise*; if he be not able to save to the uttermost, why do we depend upon him at all? and if he be, why do we lean upon any beside him?

Fourthly, The gospel offers Christ *freely* to sinners as the *gift*, not the *sale* of God, John iv. 10. Isa. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17. and even so faith receives him. The believer comes to Christ with an empty hand, not only as an undeserving, but as an hell-deserving sinner; he comes to Christ as to one that justifies the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth

* A man may as lawfully join saints or angels in his mediation with Christ, as *graces*. It is gross idolatry to make the works of God a God, and it is but a more subtle idolatry to make the works of Christ a Christ. *Burgess de Leg.*

“the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Where by him that worketh not, he means a convinced, humbled sinner, who finds himself utterly unable to do the task the law sets him, i. e. perfectly to obey it; and therefore in a law sense is said not to work; for it is all one as to the intent and purpose of the law, not to work, and not to work perfectly. This is he convinced of, and therefore comes to Christ as one that is in himself ungodly, acknowledging the righteousness, by which alone he can stand before God, is in Christ, and not in himself, in whole, or in part; and by the way, let this encourage poor souls that are scared and daunted for want of due qualifications, for closing with and embracing Christ. There is nothing qualifies a man for Christ more than a sense of his unworthiness of him, and the want of all excellencies or ornaments, that may commend him to divine acceptance.

Fifthly, The gospel offers Christ *orderly* to sinners, first his *person*, then his *privileges*. God first gives his Son, and then with him, or as a consequent of that gift, he gives us all things, Rom. viii. 32. In the same order must our faith receive him. The believer doth not marry the *portion* first, and then the *person*, but to be found in him is the first and great care of a believer.

I deny not but it is lawful for any to have an eye to the benefits of Christ. Salvation from wrath is, and lawfully may be intended and aimed at: “Look unto me, and be saved all ye ends of the “earth,” Isa. xlv. 22. Nor do I deny but there are many poor souls, who being in deep distress and fear, may, and often do, look mostly to their own safety at first; and that there is much confusion, as well in the actings of their faith, as in their condition; but sure I am, it is the proper order in believing, first to accept the person of the Lord Jesus: Heaven is no doubt very desirable, but Christ is more: “Whom have I in heaven but thee?” Psal. lxxiii. 25. Union with Christ is, in order of nature, antecedent to the communication of his privileges, therefore so it ought to be in the order and method of believing.

Sixthly, Christ is *advisedly*, offered in the gospel to sinners, as the result of God’s eternal counsel, a project of grace upon which his heart and thoughts have been much set, Zech. vi. 13. The counsel of peace was betwixt the Father and the Son. And so the believer receives him, most deliberately weighing the matter in his most deep and serious thoughts; for this is a time of much solicitude and thoughtfulness. The soul’s espousals are acts of judgment, Hos. ii. 19. on our part, as well as on God’s; We are therefore bid to sit down and count the cost, Luke xiv. 28. Faith, or the actual receiving of Christ, is the result of many previous debates in the soul: The matter hath been pondered over and over: The objec-

tions and discouragements, both from the self-denying terms of the gospel, and our own vileness and deep guilt, have been ruminated, and lain upon our hearts day and night, and after all things have been balanced in the most deep consideration, the soul is determined to this conclusion, I must have Christ, be the terms never so hard, be my sins never so great and many, I will yet go to him, and venture my soul upon him; if I perish, I perish. I have thought out all my thoughts, and this is the result, union with Christ here, or separation from God for ever must be my lot.

And thus doth the Lord open the hearts of his elect, and win the consent of their wills to receive Jesus Christ upon the deepest consideration and debate of the matter in their own most solemn thoughts: They understand and know, that they must deeply deny themselves, take up his cross and follow him, Matt. xvi. 24. renounce not only *sinful* but *religious* self; these are hard and difficult things, but yet the necessity and excellency of Christ make them appear eligible and rational: by all which you see faith is another thing than what the sound of that word (as it is generally understood) signifies to the understandings of most men. This is that fiducial receiving of Christ here to be opened.

Secondly, Our next work will be to evince this receiving of Christ as hath been opened, to be that special saving faith of God's elect: This is that faith of which such great and glorious things are spoken in the gospel, which, whosoever hath shall be saved, and he that hath it not shall be damned; and this I shall evidently prove by the following arguments or reasons.

Arg. 1. First, That faith which gives the soul right and title to spiritual adoption, with all the privileges and benefits thereof, is true and saving faith.

But such a receiving of Christ as hath been described, gives the soul right and title to spiritual adoption, with all the privileges and benefits thereof.

Therefore such a receiving of Christ as hath been described is true and saving faith.

The major proposition is undeniable, for our right and title to spiritual adoption, and the privileges thereof arise from our union with Jesus Christ; we being united to the Son of God, are, by virtue of that union, reckoned or accounted sons, Gal. iii. 26. "You are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ:" The effect of saving faith is union with Christ's person, the consequent of that union is adoption, or right to the inheritance.

The minor is most plain in the text: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power or right to become the sons of God:" A false faith hath no such privilege annexed to it; no

unbeliever is thus dignified: No stranger entitled to this inheritance.

Arg. 2. Secondly, That only is saving and justifying faith, which is in all true believers, in none but true believers, and in all true believers at all times.

But such a receiving of Christ as hath been described, is in all true believers, in none but true believers, and in all true believers at all times.

Therefore such a receiving of Christ as hath been described, is the only saving and justifying faith.

The major is undeniable, that must needs contain the essence of saving faith, which is proper to every true believer at all times, and to no other.

The minor will be as clear, for there is no other act of faith, but this of *fiducial receiving Christ* as he is offered, that doth agree to all true believers, to none but true believers, and to all true believers at all times.

There be three acts of faith, * *assent, acceptance, and assurance*: The Papists generally give the essence of saving faith to the first, viz. *assent*. The Lutherans, and some of our own, give it to the last, viz. *assurance*: But it can be neither way so. *Assent* doth not agree only to true believers, or justified persons. *Assurance* agrees to justified persons, and them only, but not to all justified persons, and that at all times.

Assent is too low to contain the essence of saving faith; it is found in the unregenerate as well as the regenerate: yea, in devils as well as men, James ii. 19. it is supposed and included in justifying faith, but it is not the justifying or saving act. *Assurance* is as much too high, being found only in some eminent believers: and in them too but at some times. There is many a true believer to whom the joy and comfort of assurance is denied; they may say of their union with Christ, as Paul said of his vision; whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; so they, whether in Christ or out of Christ, they cannot tell †.

A true believer may “walk in darkness, and see no light,” Isa. l. 10. Nay a man must be a believer before he know himself to be so; the *direct act of faith* is before the *reflex act*: so that the justifying act of faith lies neither in *assent* nor in *assurance*. *Assent* saith, I believe that Christ is, and that he is the Saviour of the elect.

* The act of faith consists in assent, by which one assents to any proposition revealed by God on the authority of the revealer. *Becan. Theol. Schol. Tom. 3. cap. 8. Q. 4.*

† Many new born Christians live like the new born babe, *Vivit, et est vitæ nescius ipse sui*: The whole stock of many a believer consists in the bare direct acts of faith.

Assurance saith, I believe and am sure that Christ died for me, and that I shall be saved through him. So that *assent* widens the nature of faith too much, and *assurance* upon the other hand *straitens* it too much; but *acceptance*, which saith, I take Christ in all his offices to be mine, this fits it exactly, and belongs to all true believers, and to none but true believers; and to all true believers at all times. This therefore must be the justifying and saving act of faith.

Arg. 3. Thirdly, That and no other is the justifying and saving act of faith, to which the properties and effects of saving faith do belong, or in which they are only found.

But in the fiducial receiving of Christ are the properties and effects of saving faith only found.

This therefore must be the justifying and saving act of faith.

First, By saving faith, Christ is said to “dwell in our hearts,” Eph. iii. 17. but it is neither by *assent*, nor *assurance*, but by *acceptance*, and receiving him that he dwells in our hearts; not by *assent*, for then he would dwell in the unregenerate; nor by *assurance*, for he must dwell in our hearts before we can be assured of it: therefore it is by acceptance.

Secondly, By faith we are justified, Rom. v. 1. But neither assent nor assurance, for the reasons above, do justify; therefore it must be by the receiving act, and no other.

Thirdly, The scripture ascribes great difficulties to that faith by which we are saved, as being most cross and opposite to the corrupt nature of man; but of all the acts of faith, none is clogged with like difficulties, or conflicts with greater oppositions than the receiving act doth; this act is attended with the greatest difficulties, fears, and deepest self-denial. In assent, a man’s reason is convinced, and yields to the evidence of truth, so that he can do no other but assent to the truth. In assurance there is nothing against a man’s will or comfort, but much for it; every one desires it: but it is not so in the acceptance of Christ, upon the self-denying terms of the gospel, as will hereafter be evinced. We conclude therefore, that in this consists the nature and essence of saving faith.

Thirdly, Having seen what the receiving of Jesus Christ is, and that it is the faith by which we are justified and saved, I next come to open the *dignity* and excellency of this faith, whose praises and *encomiums* are in all the scriptures; there you find it renowned by the title of *precious faith*, 2 Pet. i. 7. *enriching faith*, Jam. ii. 5. *the work of God*, John vi. 29. *the great mystery of godliness*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. With many more rich *epithets* throughout the scriptures bestowed upon it.

Now faith may be considered two ways, *viz.* either qualitatively or relatively.

Considered *qualitatively*, as a saving grace, it hath the same excellency that all other precious saving graces have; as it is the fruit of the Spirit, it is more precious than gold, Prov. viii. 11, 19. And so are all other graces as well as faith; in this sense they all shine with equal glory, and that a glory transcending all the glory of this world: but then consider faith *relatively*, as the instrument by which the righteousness of Christ is apprehended and made ours, and in that consideration it excels all other graces.

This is the grace that is singled out from among all other graces, to receive Christ, by which office it is dignified above all its fellows: as Moses was honoured above the many thousands of Israel, when God took him up into the *mount*, admitted him nearer to himself than any other of all the tribes might come; for they stood without the *rail*, while Moses was received into the special presence of God, and was admitted to such views as others must not have: so faith is honoured above all its fellow-graces, in being singled out, and solemnly anointed to this high office in our justification: this is that precious eye that looks unto Christ as the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent, and derives healing virtue from him to the soul. It is the grace which instrumentally saves us, Eph. ii. 8. As it is Christ's glory to be the door of salvation, so it is faith's glory to be the golden key that opens that door.

What shall I say of faith? It is the *bond* of union; the *instrument* of justification; the *spring* of spiritual peace and joy; the *means* of spiritual life and subsistence; and therefore the *great scope* and *drift* of the gospel; which aims at and presseth nothing more than to bring men and women to believe.

First, This is the *bond of our union* with Christ; that union is begun in our vivification, and completed in our actual receiving of Christ; the first is the bond of union on the Spirit's part, the second a bond of union on our part. "Christ dwelleth in our hearts by "faith," Eph. iii. 17. And therein it is a door opened to let in many rich blessings to the soul; for, by uniting us to Christ, it brings us into special favour and acceptation with God, Eph. i. 6. Makes us the special objects of Christ's conjugal love and delight, Eph. v. 29. Draws from his heart sympathy and a tender sense of all our miseries and burdens, Heb. iv. 15.

Secondly, It is the instrument of our justification, Rom. v. 1. Till Christ be received (thus received by us) we are in our sins; under guilt and condemnation; but when faith comes, then comes freedom: "By him all that believe are justified from all things*."

* The being found in Christ has a tacit reference to the judgment of God; to us there is no condemnation, because he finds us clothed with a righteousness, such as he requires, i. e. completely perfect, even the righteousness of Christ by faith, imputed to us. *Bern. on the place.*

Acts xiii. 38. Rom. viii. 1. For it apprehends or receives the pure and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus, wherein the soul, how guilty and sinful soever it be in itself, stands faultless and spotless before the presence of God; all obligations to punishment are, upon believing, immediately dissolved; a full and final pardon sealed. O precious faith! Who can sufficiently value it!

What respect, reader, wouldst thou have to that hand that should bring thee a pardon when on the ladder or block? Why, such a pardon, which thou canst not read without tears of joy, is brought thee by the hand of faith. O inestimable grace! This clothes the pure righteousness of Jesus upon our defiled souls, and so causes us to become the "righteousness of God in him," or as it is 1 John iii. 7. "Righteous as he is righteous:" *Non formali & intrinseca justitia, sed relativa*: Not with a formal inherent righteousness of our own, but with a relative imputed righteousness from another.

I know this most excellent and most comfortable doctrine of imputed righteousness, is not only *denied* but *derided* by Papists. Stapleton calls it *spectrum cerebri Lutherani*: The monstrous birth of Luther's brain! But, blessed be God, this comfortable truth is well secured against all attempts of its adversaries. Let their blasphemous mouths call it in derision, as they do *putative righteousness*, i. e. a mere fancied or conceited righteousness: Yet we know assuredly Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and that in the way of faith. If Adam's sin became ours by imputation, then so doth Christ's righteousness also become ours by imputation, Rom. v. 17. If Christ were made a sinner by the imputation of our sins to him, who had no sin of his own, then we are made righteous by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, who have no righteousness of our own, according to 1 Cor. v. 21. This was the way in which Abraham, the father of them that believe, was justified; and therefore this is the way in which all believers, the children of Abraham, must, in the like manner, be justified, Rom. iv. 22, 23, 24. Who can express the worth of faith in this one respect, were this all it did for our souls?

But, *Thirdly*, It is the *spring* of our spiritual peace and joy: and that as it is the instrument of our *justification*. If it be an instrument of our *justification*, it cannot but be the spring of our *consolation*, Rom. v. 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." In uniting us with Christ, and apprehending and applying his righteousness to us, it becomes the seed or root of all the peace and joy of a Christian's life. Joy, the child of faith, therefore bears its name, Phil. 1. 25. "The joy of faith." So 1 Pet. 1. 8, 9. "Believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable." We cannot forbear rejoicing when by faith we are brought to the sight and

knowledge of such a privileged state; when faith hath first given and then cleared our title to Christ, joy is no more under the soul's command; we cannot but rejoice, and that with joy unspeakable.

Fourthly, It is the *means* of our spiritual livelihood and subsistence: all other graces, like birds in the nest, depend upon what faith brings in to them; take away faith, and all the graces languish and die: joy, peace, hope, patience, and all the rest, depend upon faith, as the members of the natural body do upon the vessels by which blood and spirits are conveyed to them. "The life which I now live (saith the apostle) is by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20. It provides our *ordinary food*, and *extraordinary cordials*, Psal. xxvii. 13. "I had fainted, unless I had believed." And seeing it is all this to our souls,

Fifthly, In the last place, it is no wonder that it is the main scope and drift of the gospel, to press and bring souls to believing: it is the gospel's grand design to bring up the hearts of men and women to faith. The urgent *commands* of the gospel aim at this, 1 John iii. 23. Mark i. 14, 15. John xii. 36. Hither also look the great *promises* and encouragements of the *gospel*, John vi. 35, 37. So Mark xvi. 16. And the opposite sin of unbelief is every where fearfully aggravated and *threatened*, John xvi. 8, 9. John iii. 18, 35. And this was the third thing promised, namely, a discovery of the transcendent worth and excellency of saving faith.

Fourthly, But lest we commit a mistake here, to the prejudice of Christ's honour and glory, which must not be given to another, no not to faith itself; I promised you in the fourth place, to shew you upon what account faith is thus dignified and honoured; that so we may give unto *faith* the things that are *faith's*, and to Christ the things that are Christ's.

And I find four opinions about the interest of faith in our justification: some will have it to justify us *formally*, not relatively: i. e. upon the account of his own intrinsical value and worth; and this is the *popish* sense of justification by faith. Some affirm, that though faith be not our perfect legal righteousness, considered as a work of ours, yet the *act* of believing is imputed to us for righteousness, i. e. God graciously accepts it instead of perfect legal righteousness, and so, in his esteem, it is our evangelical righteousness. And this is the Arminian sense of justification by faith.

Some there are also, even among our reformed divines, that contend that faith justifies and saves us, as it is the condition of the new covenant. And lastly, others will have it to justify us as an *instrument* apprehending or receiving the righteousness of Christ; with which opinion I must close. When I consider my text calls it *a receiving of Christ*. Most certain it is,

That, *First*, It doth not justify in the *popish sense*, upon the account of its own proper worth and dignity; for then,

First, Justification should be of debt, not of grace; contrary to Rom. iii. 23, 24.

Secondly, This would frustrate the very scope and end of the death of Christ; for if righteousness come by the law, i. e. by the way of works and desert, then is Christ dead in vain, Gal. ii. 21.

Thirdly, Then the way of our justification by faith would be so far from excluding, that it would establish boasting, expressly contrary to the apostle, Rom. iii. 26, 27.

Fourthly, Then there should be no defects or imperfections in faith, for a defective or imperfect thing can never be the matter of our justification before God: if it justify upon the account of its own worth and proper dignity, it can have no flaw or imperfection in it, contrary to the common sense of all believers. Nay,

Fifthly, Then it is the same thing to be justified by faith, and to be justified by works, which the apostle so carefully distinguisheth and opposeth, Phil. iii. 9. and Rom. iv. 6. So that we conclude it doth not justify in the Popish sense, for any worth or proper excellency that is in itself.

Secondly, And it is as evident, it doth not justify us in the Arminian sense, viz. as the *to credere*, the act of believing is imputed or accepted by God, as our evangelical righteousness, instead of perfect legal righteousness. In the former opinion you have the dregs of Popery, and here you have refined Popery. Let all Arminians know, we have as high an esteem for faith as any men in the world, but yet we will not rob Christ to clothe faith. We cannot embrace their opinion, because,

First, We must then dethrone Christ to exalt faith: we are willing to give it all that is due to it, but we dare not despoil Christ of his glory for faith's sake: "*He is the Lord our righteousness,*" Jer. xxiii. We dare not set the servant above the master. We acknowledge no righteousness but what the obedience and satisfaction of Christ yields us. His blood, not our faith; his satisfaction, not our believing it, is the matter of our justification before God.

Secondly, We dare not yield this point, lest we undermine all the comfort of Christians, by setting their pardon and peace upon a weak imperfect work of their own. Oh how tottering and unstable must their station be, that stand upon such a bottom as this! What alterations are there in our faith, what mixtures of unbelief at all times, and prevalency of unbelief at some times; and is this a foundation to build our justification and hope upon? *Debile fundamentum fallit opus*: If we lay the stress here, we build upon very

loose ground, and must be at a continual loss both as to safety and comfort.

Thirdly, We dare not wrong the justice and truth of God at that rate, as to affirm that he esteems and imputes our poor weak faith for perfect legal righteousness*. We know that the judgment of God is always according to truth; if the justice of God require full payment, sure it will not say, it is fully satisfied by any acts of ours, when all that we can do amounts not to one mite of the vast sum we owe to God. So that we deservedly reject this opinion also.

Thirdly, And for the third opinion, That it justifies as the *condition of the new covenant*; though some of great name and worth among our Protestant divines seem to go that way, yet I cannot see, according to this opinion, any reason why repentance may not as properly be said to justify us as faith, for it is a condition of the new covenant as much as faith; and if faith justify as a condition, then every other grace that is a condition must justify as well as faith. I acknowledge faith to be a condition of the covenant, but cannot allow that it justifies as a condition. And therefore must profess myself best satisfied in the last opinion, which speaks it an instrument in our justification: it is the hand which receives the righteousness of Christ that justifies us, and that gives it its value above all other graces; as when we say a diamond ring is worth one hundred pounds, we mean not the gold that receives, but the stone that is set in it, is worth so much. Faith, considered as an habit, is no more precious than other gracious habits are, but considered as an instrument to receive Christ and his righteousness, so it excels them all; and this instrumentality of faith is noted in these phrases, *ἐπι τῆ πίστει*, Rom. iii. 28. and *διὰ τῆς πίστεως*, Rom. iii. 22. *By faith, and through faith*. And thus much of the nature and excellency of saving faith.

* Because faith receives Christ our righteousness, and ascribes all to the grace of God in him; therefore we are said to be justified by it, only on account of Christ, and not as it is our work. *Confes. Helv.*

SERMON VII.

JOHN i. 12.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name.

THE nature and excellency of saving faith, together with its relation to justification, as an instrument in receiving Christ and his righteousness, having been discoursed doctrinally already; I now come to make application of it, according to the nature of this weighty and fruitful point.

And the uses I shall make of it will be for our,

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| 1. Information, | | 3. Exhortation, and, |
| 2. Examination, | | 4. Direction. |

First Use of Information.

Use 1. And in the first, this point yields us many great and useful truths for our information: As,

Inference 1. Is the receiving of Christ the vital and saving act of faith, which gives the soul right to the person and privileges of Christ? Then it follows, *That the rejecting of Christ by unbelief, must needs be the damning and soul-destroying sin, which cuts a man off from Christ, and all the benefits purchased by his blood.* If there be life in receiving, there must needs be death in rejecting Christ.

There is no grace more excellent than faith; no sin more execrable and abominable than unbelief. Faith is the saving grace, and unbelief the damning sin, Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned." See John iii. 18, 36. and John viii. 24.

And the reason why this sin of unbelief is the damning sin is this, because, in the justification of a sinner, there must be a co-operation of all the con-causes that have a joint influence on that blessed effect. As there must be free grace for an impulsive cause, the blood of Christ as the meritorious cause, so, of necessity, there must be faith, the instrumental cause, to receive and apply what the free grace of God designed, and the blood of Christ purchased for us. For where there are many social causes, or con-causes to produce one effect, there the effect is not produced till the last cause be in act.

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts x. 43. Faith in its place is as necessary as the blood of Christ in its place: "It is Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. Not Christ in the *womb*, not Christ in the *grave*, nor Christ in *heaven*, except he be also *Christ in you*.

Though Christ be come in the flesh; though he died and rose again from the dead; yet if you believe not, you must for all that *die in your sins*, John viii. 24. And what a dreadful thing is this! better die any death whatever than die in your sins. If you die in your sins, you will also rise in your sins, and stand at the bar of Christ in your sins: you can never receive remission, till first you have received Christ. O cursed unbelief, which *damns* the soul: *dishonours* God, 1 John v. 10. *slights* Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, as if that glorious design of redemption by his blood, the triumph and master-piece of divine wisdom, were mere *foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. *frustrates* the great design of the gospel, Gal. iv. 11. and consequently it must be the sin of sins; the worst and most dangerous of all sins; leaving a man under the guilt of all his other sins.

Inf. 2. If such a receiving of Christ, as hath been described, be saving and justifying faith, *then faith is a work of greater difficulty than most men understand it to be, and there are but few sound believers in the world.*

Before Christ can be received, the heart must be emptied and opened: but most men's hearts are full of self-righteousness and vain confidence: this was the case of the Jews, Rom. x. 3. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

Man's righteousness was once in himself, and what liquor is first put into the vessel, it ever afterwards savours of it. It is with Adam's posterity as with *bees*, which have been accustomed to go to their own hive, and carry all thither; if the *hive* be removed to another place, they will still fly to the old place, hover up and down about it, and rather die there than go to a new place. So it is with most men. God hath removed their righteousness from *doing* to *believing*; from *themselves* to *Christ*; but who shall prevail with them to forsake self? Nature will venture to be damned rather than do it: there is much submission in believing, and great self-denial: a proud self-conceited heart will never stoop to live upon the stock of another's righteousness.

Besides, it is no easy thing to persuade men to receive Christ as their Lord in all things, and submit their necks to his strict and holy precepts, though it be a great truth that "** Christ's yoke doth not gall, but grace and adorn the neck that bears it;*" that the truest and sweetest liberty is in our freedom from our lusts, not in our fulfilling them; yet who can persuade the carnal heart to believe this? And much less will men ever be prevailed withal,

* *Jugum Christi non deterit, sed honestat colla.* Bern.

to forsake father, mother, wife, children, inheritance, and life itself, to follow Christ: and all this upon the account of spiritual and invisible things: and yet this must be done by all that receive the Lord Jesus Christ upon gospel terms; yea, and before the soul hath any encouraging experience of its own, to balance the manifold discouragements of sense, and carnal reason, improved by the utmost craft of Satan to dismay it: for experience is the fruit and consequent of believing. So that it may well be placed among the great *mysteries* of godliness, that Christ is believed on in the world, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Inf. 3. Hence it will follow, *That there may be more true and sound believers in the world, than know, or dare conclude themselves to be such.*

For, as many ruin their own souls by placing the essence of saving faith in naked assent, so some rob themselves of their own comfort, by placing it in full assurance. Faith, and sense of faith, are two distinct and separable mercies: you may have truly received Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it, Isa. l. 10. Some there be that say, *Thou art our God*, of whom God never said, *You are my people*: these have no *authority* to be called the sons of God: others there are, of whom God saith, *These are my people*, yet dare not call *God their God*: these have authority to be called the sons of God, but know it not. They have received Christ, that is their *safety*, but they have not yet received the knowledge and assurance of it; that is their *trouble*: the Father owns his child in the cradle, who yet knows him not to be his Father.

Now there are two reasons why many believers, who might argue themselves into peace, do yet live without the comforts of their faith: and this may come to pass, either from,

First, The invidence of the *premises*.

Secondly, Or the weighty importance of the *conclusion*.

First, It may come to pass from the invidence of the premises. Assurance is a practical *sylogism*, and it proceeds thus:

All that truly have received Christ Jesus, they are the children of God.

I have truly received Jesus Christ.

Therefore I am the child of God.

The major proposition is found in the scripture, and there can be no doubt of that. The *assumption* depends upon experience, or internal sense; *I have truly received Jesus Christ*; here usually is the stumble: many great objections lie against it, which they cannot clearly answer: As,

Obj. 1. Light and knowledge are necessarily required to the right receiving of Christ, but I am dark and ignorant; many car-

nal, unregenerate persons know more than I do, and are more able to discourse of the mysteries of religion than I am.

Sol. But you ought to distinguish of the *kinds* and *degrees* of knowledge, and then you would see that your bewailed ignorance is no bar to your interest in Christ. There are two kinds of knowledge :

1. Natural. | 2. Spiritual.

There is a *natural knowledge*, even of spiritual objects, a spark of nature blown up by an advantageous education ; and though the objects of this knowledge be spiritual things, yet the light in which they are discerned is but a mere natural light.

And there is a *spiritual knowledge* of spiritual things, the *teaching of the anointing*, as it is called, 1 John ii. 27. i. e. the effect and fruit of the Spirit's sanctifying work upon our souls, when the experience of a man's own heart informs and teacheth his understanding, when by feeling the workings of grace in our own souls, we come to understand its nature ; this is spiritual knowledge. Now, a little of this knowledge is a better evidence of a man's interest in Christ, than the most raised and excellent degree of natural knowledge : As the philosopher truly observes ; *Præstat pauca de meliori scientia degustasse, quam de ignobiliori multa* : One dram of knowledge of the best and most excellent things, is better than much knowledge of common things. So it is here, a little spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ, that hath life and savour in it, is more than all the natural, sapless knowledge of the unregenerate, which leaves the heart dead, carnal, and barren : it is not the *quantity*, but the *kind*, not the *measure*, but the *savour* : If you know so much of the evil of sin, as renders it the most bitter and burdensome thing in the world to you, and so much of the necessity and excellency of Christ, as renders him the most sweet and desirable thing in the world to you, though you may be defective in many degrees of knowledge, yet this is enough to prove yours to be the fruit of the Spirit : you may have a sanctified heart, though you have an irregular or weak head : many that knew more than you are in *hell* : and some that once knew as little as you, are now in *heaven* : *In absoluto et facili stat æternitas* : God hath not prepared heaven only for clear and subtle heads. A little sanctified and effectual knowledge of Christ's person, offices, suitableness, and necessity, may bring thee thither, when others, with all their curious speculations and notions, may perish for ever.

Obj. 2. But you tell me, that *assent* to the truths of the gospel is necessarily included in saving faith, which, though it be not the justifying and saving act, yet it is pre-supposed and required to it. Now I have many staggerings and doubtings about the certainty and reality of these things ; many horrid atheistical thoughts,

which shake the assenting act of faith in the very foundation, and hence I doubt I do not believe.

Sol. There may be, and often is, a true and sincere *assent* found in the soul, that is assaulted with violent atheistical suggestions from Satan; and thereupon questions the truth of it. And this is a very clear evidence of the reality of our assent, that whatever doubts, or contrary suggestions there be, yet we dare not in our practice contradict or slight those truths or duties which we are tempted to disbelieve, *ex. gr.* We are assaulted with atheistical thoughts, and tempted to slight and cast off all fears of sin, and practice of religious duties, yet when it comes to the point of practice, we dare not commit a known sin, the awe of God is upon us; we dare not omit a known duty, the tie of conscience is found strong enough to hold it close to it: in this case, it is plain we do really assent, when we think we do not. A man thinks he doth not love his child, yet carefully provides for him in health, and is full of griefs and fears about him in sickness: why now, so long as I see all fatherly duties performed, and affections to his child's welfare manifested, let him say what he will as to the want of love to him, whilst I see this, he must excuse me if I do not believe him, when he saith he hath no love for him. Just so is it in this case, a man saith I do not assent to the being, necessity, or excellency of Jesus Christ; yet, in the mean time, his soul is filled with cares and fears about securing his interest in him, he is found panting and thirsting for him with vehement desires, there is nothing in all the world would give him such joy, as to be well assured of an interest in him; while it is thus with any man, let him say or think what he will of his assent, it is manifest by this he doth truly and heartily assent, and there can be no better proof of it than these real effects produced by it.

Secondly, But if these, and other objections were never so fully answered for the clearing of the *assumption*, yet it often falls out, that believers are afraid to draw the *conclusion*; and that fear partly arises from,

First, The weighty importance of this matter.

Secondly, The sense of the deceitfulness of their own hearts.

First, The conclusion is of infinite importance to them, it is the everlasting happiness of their souls, than which nothing is, or can be of greater weight upon their spirits: things in which we are most deeply concerned, are not lightly and hastily received by us: it seems so great and so good, that we are still apt (if there be any room for it) to suspect the truth and certainty thereof, as never being sure enough.

Thus when the women that were the first messengers and witnesses of Christ's resurrection, Luke xxiv. 10, 11. came and told

the disciples those wonderful and comfortable tidings, it is said, "That their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." They thought it was too good to be true; too great to be hastily received; so it is in this case.

Secondly, The sense they have of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and the daily workings of hypocrisy there, makes them afraid to conclude in so great a point as this is.

They know that very many daily cozen and cheat themselves in this matter; they know also that their own hearts are full of falsehood and deceit; they find them so in their daily observations of them; and what if they should prove so in this? Why then they are lost for ever! They also know there is not the like danger in their fears and jealousies, that would be in their vain confidences and presumptions; by the one, they are only deprived of their present comfort, but by the other, they would be ruined for ever: and therefore chuse rather to dwell with their own fears (though they be uncomfortable companions) than run the danger of so great a mistake, which would be infinitely more fatal. And this being the common case of most Christians, it follows that there must be many more believers in the world than do think, or dare conclude themselves to be such.

Inf. 4. If the right receiving of Jesus Christ, be true, saving, and justifying faith, *then those that have the least, and lowest degree and measure of saving faith, have cause for ever to admire the bounty and riches of the grace of God to them therein.*

If you have received never so little of his bounty by the hand of providence, in the good things of this life, yet if he have given you any measure of true saving faith, he hath dealt bountifully indeed with you: this mercy alone is enough to balance all other wants and inconveniences of this life, "poor in the world, rich in faith," James ii. 5. O, let your hearts take in the full sense of this bounty of God to you; say with the apostle, Eph. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" and you will in this one mercy, find matter enough of praise and thanksgiving, wonder and admiration to your dying day, yea, to all eternity: for, do but consider,

First, The smallest measure of saving faith which is found in any of the people of God, receives Jesus Christ; and in receiving him, what mercy is there which the believing soul doth not receive in him, and with him? Rom. viii. 32.

O believer, though the arms of thy faith be small and weak, yet they embrace a great Christ, and receive the richest gift that ever God bestowed upon the world: no sooner art thou become a believer, but Christ is in thee the hope of glory; and thou hast au-

thority to become a son or daughter of God; thou hast the broad seal of heaven to confirm thy title and claim to the privileges of adoption, for "to as many as received him, to them gave he power "to become the sons of God." [*To as many*] be they strong, or be they weak, provided they really receive Christ by faith; there is authority or power given, so that it is no act of presumption in them to say, God is our Father, heaven is our inheritance. O precious faith! the treasures of ten thousand worlds cannot purchase such privileges as these: all the crowns and sceptres of the earth, sold at full value, are no price for such mercies.

Secondly, The least degree of saving faith brings the soul into a state of perfect and full justification. For if it receives Jesus Christ, it must needs therefore in him, and with him, receive a free, full, and final pardon of sin: the least measure of faith receives remission for the greatest sins. "By him all that believe "are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39. It unites thy soul with Christ, and then, as the necessary consequent of that union, there is no condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. *οὐδεν κατακριμμα*, not one condemnation, how many soever our sins have been.

Thirdly, The least measure or degree of saving faith, is a greater mercy than God hath bestowed, or ever will bestow upon many that are far above you in outward respects: *All men have not faith*: nay, it is but a remnant among men that believe. Few of the *nobles* and *potentates* of the world have such a gift as this: they have houses and lands, yea, crowns and sceptres, but no faith, no Christ, no pardon; they have authority to rule over men, but no authority to become the sons of God, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27.

Say therefore in thy most debased, straitened, afflicted condition, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

Fourthly, The least degree of saving faith is more than all the power of nature can produce. There must be a special revelation of the arm of the Lord in that work, Isa. liii. 1. Believers are not "born of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but "of God," John i. 12, 13. All believing motions towards Christ, are the effects of the Father's drawing, John vi. 44. A glorious and irresistible power goes forth from God to produce it, whence it is called "the faith of the operation of God," Col. ii. 12.

So then, let not believers despise the day of small things, or overlook that great and infinite mercy which is wrapt up in the least degree of saving faith.

Infer. 5. Learn hence the impossibility of their salvation, who neither know the nature, nor enjoy the means of saving faith.

My soul pities and mourns over the infidel world. Ah! what

will become of the millions of poor unbelievers! there is but one door of salvation, viz. Christ; and but one key of faith to open that door: and as that key was never given to the Heathen world: so it is laid aside, or taken away from the people by their cruel guides, all over the Popish world; were you among them, you should hear nothing else pressed as necessary to your salvation but a blind, implicit faith, to believe as the church believes; that is, to believe they know not what.

To believe as the *pope* believes; that is as an infidel believes, for so they confess he may be,* and though there be such a thing as an explicit faith sometimes spoken of among them, yet it is very sparingly discoursed, very falsely described, and exceedingly slighted by them as the merest trifle in the world.

First, It is but sparingly discoursed of: they love not to accustom the people's ears to such a doctrine; one of themselves confesses that there is so deep a silence of explicit, particular faith in the *Romish church*, that you may find many every where, that believe no more of these things than *Heathen philosophers* †.

Secondly, When it is preached or written of, it is falsely described: for they place the whole nature and essence of justifying and saving faith in a naked assent, which the devils have as well as men, James ii. 19. No more than this is pressed upon the people at any time, as necessary to their salvation.

Thirdly, And even this particular explicit faith, when it is spoken or written of, is exceedingly slighted. I think if the *devil* himself were in the *pulpit*, he could hardly tell how to bring men to a more low and slight esteem of faith; to represent it more as a very trifle, or a quite needless thing, than these his agents have done. Some ‡ say if a man believe with a particular explicit faith, i. e. if he actually assent to the scripture-truths once in a year, it is enough. Yea, and others § think it too much to oblige people to believe once in twelve months; and, for their ease, tell them, if they believe once in twelve years it is sufficient; and, lest this should be too great a task, others || affirm, that if it be done but once in their whole life, and that at the point of death too, it is enough, especially for the rude and common people. Good God! what a doctrine is here! It was a saying long ago of Gregory (as I remember,) *Malus minister est nisius diaboli*: A wicked minister is the devil's *gooshawk*, that goes a birding for hell; and O what

* For the pope's internal faith is not necessary to the church. *Canus in loc. Theol. p. 344.*

† Navarr. cap. 11. p. 142.

‡ Petr. a S. Joseph. sum. Art. i. p. 6.

§ Bonacina. Tom. 2. in 1 precept.

|| Jo. San. Disp. 41. n. 52.

game have these hawks of hell among such numerous flocks of people! O, bless God while you live for your deliverance from popery; and see that you prize the gospel, and means of grace you enjoy at an higher rate, lest God bring you once more under that yoke, which neither you nor your fathers could bear.

Second use for examination.

Doth saving faith consist in a due and right receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ? Then let me persuade you to examine yourselves in this great point of faith. Reflect solemnly upon the transactions that have been betwixt Christ and your souls; think close on this subject of meditation.

If all you were worth in the world lay in one precious stone, and that stone were to be tried by the skilful *Lapidary*, whether it were true or false, whether it would fly or endure under the smart stroke of his hammer, sure your thoughts could not be unconcerned about the issue. Why all that you are worth in both worlds depends upon the truth of your faith which is now to be tried.

O therefore read not these lines with a running, careless eye, but seriously ponder the matter before you. You would be loth to put to sea, though it were but to cross the *channel*, in a rotten leaky bottom: And will you dare to venture into the ocean of eternity in a false rotten faith! God forbid. You know the Lord is coming to try every man's faith as by fire, and that we must stand or fall for ever with the sincerity or hypocrisy of our faith. Surely, you can never be too exact and careful about that, on which your whole estate depends, and that for ever.

Now there are three things upon which we should have a very tender and watchful eye, for the discovery of the sincerity of our faith, and they are,

The { Antecedents
Concomitants
Consequents } of Faith.

As these are, so we must judge and reckon our faith to be. And, accordingly, they furnish us with three general marks or trials of faith.

First, If you would discern the sincerity of your faith, examine whether those *antecedents*, and preparative works of the spirit, were ever found in your souls, which use to introduce and usher it into the souls of God's elect: Such are illumination, conviction, self-despair, and earnest cries to God.

First, *Illumination* is a necessary antecedent to faith: You cannot believe till God hath opened your eyes to see your sin, your misery by sin, and your remedy in Jesus Christ alone: You find this act of the Spirit to be the first, in order both of nature and

time, and introductive to all the rest, Acts xxvi. 18. "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." As faith without *works* (which must be a *consequent* to it) is *dead*, so faith without *light*, which must be an *antecedent* to it, is *blind*: Faith is the *hand* by which Christ is received, but knowledge is the *eye* by which that hand is directed.

Well then, hath God opened your eyes to see sin and misery in another manner than ever you saw them before? For certainly, if God hath opened your eyes by saving illumination, you will find as great a difference betwixt your former and present apprehensions of sin and danger, as betwixt the painted *lion* upon the wall or a sign-post, and the real living *lion* that meets you roaring in the way.

Secondly, *Conviction* is an *antecedent* to believing: Where this goes not before, no faith can follow after: The Spirit first convinces of sin, then of righteousness, John xvi. 8. So Mark i. 15. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel:" Believe it, O man! that breast of thine must be wounded, that vain and frothy heart of thine must be pierced and stung with conviction, sense, and sorrow for sin: Thou must have some sick days, and restless nights for sin, if ever thou rightly close with Christ by faith. It is true, there is much difference found in the strength, depth, and continuance of conviction, and spiritual troubles in converts; but sure it is, the child of faith is not ordinarily born without some pangs. Conviction is the application of that light which God makes to shine in our minds, to our particular case and condition by the conscience; and sure, when men come to see their miserable and sad estate by a true light, it cannot but wound them, and that to the very heart.

Thirdly, *Self-despair*, or a total and absolute loss in ourselves about deliverance, and the way of escape, either by ourselves, or any other mere creature, doth, and must go before faith.

So it was with those believers, Acts ii. 37. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They are the words of men at a total loss: It is the voice of poor distressed souls, that saw themselves in misery, but knew not, saw not, nor could devise any way of escape from it, by any thing they could do for themselves, or any other creature for them: And hence the apostle uses that emphatical word, Gal. iii. 23. *συγκλεισμένοι*, i. e. *shut up to the faith*, i. e. as men besieged and distressed in a garrison in a time of storm, when the enemy pours in upon them through the breaches, and overpowers them: There is but one *sally-port* or gate, at which they can escape, and to that they all throng, as despairing of life, if they take any other course. Just so do men's convictions besiege them, distress them, beat them off from all their holds and intrench-

ments, and bring them to a pinching distress in themselves, shutting them up to Christ as the only way to escape. Duties cannot save me, reformation cannot save me; nor angels, nor men can save me; there is no way but one, *Christ*, or condemnation for ever.

I thought once, that a little repentance, reformation, restitution, and a stricter life, might be a way to escape the wrath to come; but I find the bed is too short, and the covering too narrow: All is but loss, dung, dross, in comparison with Jesus Christ; if I trust to those *Egyptian reeds*, they will not only fail me, but pierce and wound me too: I see no hope within the whole *Horizon* of sense.

Fourthly, Hence come *vehement and earnest cries to God* for faith, for Christ, for help from heaven, to transport the soul out of this dangerous condition, to that strong rock of salvation; to bring it out of this furious, stormy sea of trouble, where it is ready to wreck every moment, into that safe and quiet harbour, Christ.

O when a man shall see his misery and danger, and no way to escape but Christ, and that he hath no ability himself to come to Christ, to open his heart thus to receive him, but that this work of faith is wholly supernatural, the operation of God; how will the soul return again, and again upon God, with such cries as in Mark ix. 24. "Lord, help my unbelief?" "Lord, enable me to come to Christ; give me Christ or I perish for ever; What profit is there in my blood? Why should I die in the sight and presence of a Saviour? O Lord, it is thine own work, a most glorious work: Reveal thine arm in this work upon my soul, I pray thee; give me Christ, if thou deny me bread? give me faith, if thou deny me breath. It is more necessary that I believe, than that I live."

O Reader, reflect upon the days and nights that are past, the places where thou hast been conversant: Where are the bed-sides, or the secret corners where thou hast besieged heaven with such cries? If God have thus enlightened, convinced, distressed thy soul, and thus set thee a mourning after Christ, it will be one good sign that faith is come into thy soul; for here are certainly the *harbingers* and forerunners of it, that ordinarily make way for faith into the souls of men.

Secondly, If you would be satisfied of the sincerity and truth of your faith, then examine what *concomitants* it is attended with in your souls. I mean, what frames and tempers your souls were in, at that time when you think you received Christ. For certainly, in those that receive Christ, (excepting those into whose hearts God hath in a more still and insensible way infused faith betimes, by his blessing upon pious education) such concomitant frames of spirit may be remarked as these following.

First, The heart is deeply *serious*, and as much in earnest in this matter, as ever it was, or can be, about any thing in the world. This you see in that example of the gaoler, Acts xvi. 29. "He came in trembling and astonished:" It is the most solemn and important matter that ever the soul had before it in this world, or ever shall, or can have: How much are the hearts of men affected in their outward straits and distresses, about the concernments of the body? Their hearts are not a little concerned in such questions as these, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink?" wherewithal shall I and mine be fed and cloathed? but certainly the straits that souls are in about salvation, must be allowed to be greater than these; and such questions as that of the gaoler's, "Sirs! What must I do to be saved?" make deeper impressions upon the heart, than what shall I eat or drink? Some indeed have their thoughts sinking deeper into these things than others: These thoughts lie with different degrees of weight upon men: but all are most solemnly and awfully concerned about their condition: All frothiness and frolics are gone, and the heart settles itself in the deepest earnest about its eternal state.

Secondly, The heart that receives Jesus Christ is in a frame of deep humiliation and self-abasement. O, when a man begins to apprehend the first approaches of grace, pardon, and mercy by Jesus Christ to his soul: When a soul is convinced of its utter unworthiness and desert of hell; and can scarce expect any thing else from the just and holy God but damnation, how do the first dawnings of mercy melt and humble them! "O Lord, what am I that thou shouldst feed me, and preserve me! that thou shouldst but for a few years spare me and forbear me! but that ever Jesus Christ should love me, and give himself for me; that such a wretched sinner as I should obtain union with his person, pardon, peace, and salvation by his blood! Lord, whence is this to such a worm as I? and will Christ indeed bestow himself upon me? shall so great a blessing as Christ ever come within the arms of such a soul as mine? will God in very deed be reconciled to me in his Son? what, to me! to such an enemy as I have been! shall my sins which are so many, so horrid, so much aggravated, beyond the sins of most men, be forgiven? O what am I, vile dust? base wretch, that ever God should do this for me!" And how is that scripture fulfilled and made good, Ezek. xvi. 63. "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Thus, that poor broken-hearted believer stood behind Christ weeping, and washing his feet with tears, as one quite

melted down, and overcome with the sense of mercy to such a vile sinner, Luke vii. 38.

Thirdly, The soul that receives Jesus Christ is in a *weary condition*, restless, and full of disquietness, neither able to bear the burden of sin, nor knowing how to be discharged from it, except Christ will give it ease, Mat. xi. 28. "Come unto me," that is, believe in me, "you that are weary and heavy laden:" If they do not look into their own souls, they know there is no *safety*, and if they do, there is no *comfort*. O! the burdensome sense of sin overweighs them; they are ready to fall, to sink under it.

Fourthly, The soul that rightly receives Christ, is not only in a weary, but in a *longing condition*: never did the *hart* pant more earnestly for the water-brooks: never did the *hireling* desire the shadow: never did a *condemned person* long for a pardon more than the soul longs after Jesus Christ. O, said David, that one would give me of the water of the well of Bethlehem to drink. O, saith the poor humbled sinner, that one would give me of the opened fountain of the blood of Christ to drink! O for one drop of that precious blood! O for one encouraging smile from Christ! O now were ten thousand worlds at my command, and Christ to be bought, how freely would I lay them all down to purchase him! but he is the *gift* of God. O that God would give me Christ, if I should go in rags, and hunger and thirst all my days in this world!

Fifthly, The soul in the time of its closing with, or receiving Christ, is in a *state of conflict*: It hangs between hopes and fears, encouragements and discouragements, which occasions many a sad stand and pause in the way of Christ; sometimes the number and nature of its sins discourage it, then the riches and freeness of the grace of Christ erects his hopes again: there is little hope, saith unbelief; nay, it is utterly impossible, saith Satan, that ever such a wretch as thou shouldst find mercy; now the hands hang down. O but then there is a necessity, an absolute necessity; I have not the choice of two, but am shut up to one way of deliverance; others have found mercy, and the invitation is to all that are weary, and to all that are athirst: he saith, him that cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out: now new hopes inspire the soul, and the hands that did hang down are strengthened.

These are the *concomitant frames* that accompany faith.

3. *Mark*. Lastly, Examine the *consequents* and effects of faith, if you would be satisfied of the truth and sincerity of it: And such are,

First, *Evangelical meltings*, and ingenuous thawings of the heart under the apprehensions of grace and mercy: Zech. xii. 10. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall "mourn."

Secondly, Love to Christ, his ways and people, Gal. v. 6. Faith worketh by love, i. e. represents the love of God, and then makes use of the sweetness of it by way of argument, to constrain the soul to all acts of obedience, where it may testify the reality of its love to God and Christ.

Thirdly, Heart-purity, Acts xv. 9. "Purifying the hearts by "faith:" It doth not only cleanse the hands but the heart. No principle in man, besides faith, can do this: Morality may hide corruption, but faith only purifies the heart from it.

Fourthly, Obedience to the commands of Christ, Rom. xvi. 26. The very name of faith is called upon obedience: for it accepts Christ as Lord, and urges upon the soul the most powerful arguments in the world to draw it to obedience.

In a word, let the poor doubting believer, that questions his faith, reflect upon those things that are unquestionable in his own experience, which being well considered, will greatly tend to his satisfaction in this point.

It is very doubtful to you whether you believe, but yet in the mean time, it may be past doubt, (being a matter of clear experience) that you have been deeply convinced of sin, struck off from all carnal props and refuges, made willing to accept Jesus Christ upon what terms soever you might enjoy him. You doubt whether Christ be yours, but it is past doubt that you have a most high and precious esteem of Christ, that you heartily long for him, that you prize and love all, whether persons or things, that bear his image: that nothing in the world would please your hearts like a transformation into his likeness: that you had rather your souls should be filled with his Spirit, than your houses with gold and silver. It is doubtful whether Christ be yours, but it is past doubt that one smile from Christ, one token of his love would do you more good than all the honours and smiles of the world; and nothing so grieves you, as your grieving him by sin doth. You dare not say that you have received him, nor can you deny but that you have had many sick days and nights for him; that you have gone into many secret places with yearning bowels after him. Whether he be yours or not, you cannot tell; but that you are resolved to be his, that you can tell. Whether he will save you is but a doubt, but that you resolve to lie at his feet, and wait only on him, and never look to another for salvation, is no doubt.

Well, well; poor pensive soul, if it be so, arise, lift up thy dejected head, take thine own Christ into thine arms. These are undoubted signs of a real closure with Christ; thou makest thyself poor, and yet hast great riches: Such things as these are not found in them that despise and reject Christ by unbelief.

3. Use of Exhortation.

3. *Use.* This point is likewise very improveable by way of exhortation, and that both to

Unbelievers and Believers.

First, To unbelievers, who from hence must be pressed, as ever they expect to see the face of God in peace, to receive Jesus Christ as he is now offered to them in the gospel. This is the very scope of the gospel; I shall therefore press it by three great considerations, *viz.*

First, What is in Christ whom you are to receive.

Secondly, What is in the offer of Christ by the gospel.

Thirdly, What is in the rejecting of that offer.

First Motive.

First, Consider well what is in Christ, whom I persuade you this day to receive: Did you know what is in Christ, you would never neglect or reject him as you do: For,

First, "God is in Christ," 2 Cor. v. 19. the Deity hath chosen to dwell in his flesh; he is "God manifest in flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. a Godhead dwelling in flesh is the world's wonder; so that in receiving Christ, you receive God himself.

Secondly, The authority of God is in Christ, Exod. xxiii. 21. "My name is in him: Him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27. he hath the commission, the great seal of heaven to redeem and save you. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, Matth. xxviii. 18. he comes in his Father's name to you, as well as in his own name.

Thirdly, The wisdom of God is in Christ, 1 Cor. i. 24. "Christ the wisdom of God," yea, "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. Never did the wisdom of God display itself before the eyes of angels and men as it hath done in Christ. The "angels desire to look into it," 1 Pet. i. 12. yet they are not so much concerned in the project and design of this wisdom in redemption as you are.

Fourthly, The *fulness of the Spirit* is in Christ; yea, it fills him so as it never did, nor will fill any creature, John iii. 34. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him:" all others have their limits, stints, and measures; some more, some less; but the Spirit is in Christ without measure. O how lovely and desirable are those men that have a large measure of the Spirit in them! but he is anointed with the Spirit of holiness *above all his fellows*, Psal. xlv. 2, 7. Whatever grace is found in all the saints, which makes them desirable and lovely, wisdom in one, faith in another, pa-

tience in a third; they all centre in Christ as the rivers do in the sea, *quæ faciunt divisa beatum, in hoc mixta fluunt.*

Fifthly, The righteousness of God is in Christ, by which only a poor guilty sinner can be justified before God, 2 Cor. v. 21. we are "made the righteousness of God in him:" he is יְהוָה צְדָקָנוּ "the Lord our righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. i. e. "* the author "of our righteousness," or the Lord who justifies us; by that name he will be known, and called by his people, than which none can be sweeter.

Sixthly, The love of God is in Christ; yea, the very yearning bowels of divine love are in him: What is Christ, but the love of God wrapt up in flesh and blood? 1 John iv. 9, 10. "In this was "manifested the love of God towards us:" and herein is love, that God sent his Son; this is the highest flight that ever divine love made; and higher than this it cannot mount. O love, unparalleled and admirable!

Seventhly, The mercies and compassions of God are all in Christ, Jude, ver. 21. Mercy is the thing that poor sinners want, it is that they cry for at the last gasp; it is the only thing that can do them good. O what would they give to find mercy in that great day? Why, if you receive Christ, you shall with him receive mercy; but out of him there is no mercy to be expected from the hands of God; for God will never exercise mercy to the prejudice of his justice; and it is in Christ that justice and mercy meet and embrace each other.

Eighthly, To conclude, The salvation of God is in Christ, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Christ is the *door* of salvation, and faith is the *key* that opens that door to men. If you therefore believe not, i. e. if you so receive not Jesus Christ, as God hath offered him, you exclude yourselves from all hopes of salvation. The devils have as much ground to expect salvation as you. You see what is in Christ to induce you to receive him.

Motive 2.

Next, I beseech you, consider what there is in the offer of Christ to sinners, to induce you to receive him. Consider well to *whom* and *how* Christ is offered in the gospel.

First, To *whom* is he offered; not to the fallen angels, but to you; they lie in chains of darkness, Jude, ver. 6. as he took not their nature, so he designs not their recovery; and therefore will have no treaty at all with them: but he is offered to you, creatures of an inferior rank and order by nature; nor is he offered to the *damned*, the treaty of peace is ended with them: Christ will never

* *Autorem justitiæ nostræ.* Calv. in loc.

make them another tender of salvation; nor is he offered to millions as good as you, now living in the world. The sound of Christ and salvation is not come to their ears, but he is offered to you by the special favour and bounty of heaven; and will you not receive him? Oh! then how will the devils, the damned, and the Heathen upbraid your folly! and say, had we had one such tender of mercy, of which you have had thousands, we would never have been now in this place of torments.

Secondly, Consider how Christ is offered to you, and you shall find that he is offered,

1. Freely, *as the gift of God*, to your souls; you are not to *purchase* him, but only to *receive* him, Isa. lv. i. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him come," &c.

2. Christ is offered importunately, by repeated intreaties, 2 Cor. v. 20. "As though God did beseech you, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." O! what amazing condescension is here in the God of mercy! God now beseeches you, will you not yield to the intreaties of your God? O then what wilt thou say for thyself, when God will not hear thee, when thou shalt intreat and cry for mercy? Which brings us to

Motive 3. Consider the sin and danger that there is in refusing or neglecting the present offers of Christ in the gospel, and surely there is much sin in it; the very malignity of sin, and the sum of all misery lies here; for in refusing Christ,

1. You put the greatest contempt and slight upon all the attributes of God that is possible for a creature to do: God hath made his justice, his mercy, his wisdom, and all his attributes to shine in their brightest glory in Christ. Never was there such a display of the glory of God made to the world in any other way.

O then, what is it to reject and despise Jesus Christ, but to offer the greatest affront to the glory of God that it is possible for men to put upon it?

2. You hereby frustrate and evacuate the very design and importance of the gospel to yourselves; you "receive the grace of God in vain," 2 Cor. vi. 1. As good, yea, better had it been for you, that Christ had never come into the world, or, if he had, that your lot had fallen in the dark places of the earth, where you had never heard his name; yea, good had it been for that man if he had never been born.

3. Hereby a man murders his own soul. "I said therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. Unbelief is self-murder; you are guilty of the blood of your own souls; life and salvation were offered you, and you rejected them. Yea,

4. The refusing of Christ by unbelief will aggravate your damnation above all others that perish in ignorance of Christ. O, it will be more tolerable for Heathens than for you; the greatest measures of wrath are reserved to punish the worst of sinners; and among sinners, none will be found worse than unbelievers.

Secondly, To believers, this point is very useful to persuade them to divers excellent duties; among which, I shall single out two principal ones, viz.

1. To bring up their faith of acceptance, to the faith of assurance.

2. To bring up their conversations to the principles and rules of faith.

1. You that have received Jesus Christ truly, give yourselves no rest till you are fully satisfied that you have done so; acceptance brings you to heaven hereafter, but assurance will bring heaven into your souls now. O, what a life of delight and pleasure doth the assured believer live! What pleasure is it to him to look back and consider where he once was, and where he now is? To look forward, and consider where he now is, and where shortly he shall be! I was in my sins, I am now in Christ; I am in Christ now, I shall be with Christ, and that for ever, after a few days. I was upon the brink of hell, I am now upon the very borders of heaven; I shall be in a very little while among the innumerable company of angels and glorified saints, bearing part with them in the song of Moses, and of the Lamb, for evermore.

And why may not you that have received Christ, receive the comfort of your union with him? There be all the grounds and helps of assurance furnished to your hand; there is a real union betwixt Christ and your souls, which is the very ground-work of assurance. * You have the scriptures before you which contain the signs of faith, and the very things within you that answer those signs in the word. So you read, and so, just so, you might feel it in your own hearts, would you attend to your own experience. The Spirit of God is ready to seal you, it is his office and his delight so to do. O therefore, give diligence to this work, attend the study of the scriptures and of your own hearts more, and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, and you may arrive to the very desire of your hearts.

2. Bring up your conversations to the excellent principles and rules of faith; "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him," Col. ii. 6. Live as you believe; you received Christ sincerely in your first close with him, O maintain the like seriousness and sincerity in all your ways, to the end of your lives:

* The power and constancy of a firm hope reigns in us. *Cypr. Serm. de patientia.*

you received him intirely and *undividedly* at first, let there be no exceptions against any of his commands afterward. You received him *exclusively* to all others, see that you watch against all self-righteousness and self-conceitedness now, and mingle nothing of your own with his blood, whatever gifts or enlargements in duty God shall give you afterwards.

You received him *advisedly* at first, weighing and considering the self-denying terms upon which he was offered to you; O shew that it was real, and that you see no cause to repent the bargain, whatever you shall meet with in the ways of Christ and duty afterwards: convince the world of your constancy and cheerfulness in all your sufferings for Christ, that you are still of the same mind you were, and that Christ, with his cross, Christ, with a prison, Christ, with the greatest afflictions, is worthy of all acceptation: "As ye have received him, so walk ye in him." Let him be as sweet, as lovely, as precious to you now, as he was in the first moment you received him; yea, let your love to him, delights in him, and self-denial for him, increase with your acquaintance with him, day by day.

Use of direction.

Use: Lastly, I will close all with a few words of *direction* to all that are made willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ; and sure it is but needful that help were given to poor Christians: in this matter, it is a time of trouble, fear, and great temptation; mistakes are easily made of dangerous consequence; attend heedfully, therefore, to a few directions.

Direction 1. First, In your receiving Christ, *Beware you do not mistake the means for the end.* Many do so, but see you do not. Prayer, sermons, reformations, are means to bring you to Christ, but they are not Christ; to close with those duties is one thing, and to close with Christ is another thing. If I go into a *boat*, my design is not to dwell there, but to be carried to the place whereon I desire to be landed: so it must be in this case, all your duties must land you upon Christ; they are means to bring you to Christ.

Direct. 2. Secondly, *See that you receive not Christ for a present help, but for your everlasting portion.* Many do so; they will enquire after Christ, pray for Christ, cast themselves (in their way) upon Christ, and the satisfaction of his blood, when the efficacy and terror of conscience is upon them, and they feel the sting of guilt within them; but as soon as the storm is over, and the rod that conscience shaked over them laid by, there is no more talk of Christ then: alas! it was not Christ, but quietness that they sought; beware of mistaking peace for Christ.

Direct. 3. Thirdly, *In receiving Christ, come empty-handed unto*

him: "believing on him who justifies the ungodly," Rom. iv. 5. and know that the deepest sense of your own vileness, emptiness, and unworthiness, is the best frame of heart that can accompany you to Christ. Many persons stand off from Christ for want of fit qualifications; they are not prepared for Christ as they should be, i. e. they would not come naked and empty, but have something to commend them to the Lord Jesus for acceptance. O! this is the pride of men's hearts, and the snare of the devil. Let him that hath no money come: You are not to come to Christ because you are qualified, but that you may be qualified with whatever you want; and the best qualification you can bring with you, is a deep sense that you have no worth nor excellency at all in you.

Direct. 4. Fourthly, *In receiving Christ, beware of dangerous delays.* O follow on that work till it be finished. You read of some that are almost persuaded, and of others not far from the kingdom of God; O take heed of what the prophet says, Hosea xiii. 13. Delays here are full of danger, life is uncertain, so are means of grace too. The man-slayer needed no motives to quicken his flight to the city of refuge.

Direct. 5. Fifthly, *See that you receive all Christ, with all your heart.* To receive all Christ, is to receive his person clothed with all his offices; and to receive him with all your heart, is to receive him into your understanding, will, and affections, Acts viii. 37. As there is nothing in Christ that may be refused, so there is nothing in you from which he must be excluded.

Direct. 6. Lastly, Understand that the opening of your hearts to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, is not a work done by any power of your own, but the arm of the Lord is revealed therein, Isa. liii. 1. It is therefore your duty and interest to be daily at the feet of God, pouring out your souls to him in secret, for abilities to believe. And so much, as to our actual reception of Christ.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.