

thing promised: Ps. lvi. 4, 'In God I will praise his word.' When you can praise God for his word, though as yet you have not the performance; you see the blessing in the root, and this bears up your hearts.

THE LIFE OF FAITH IN HEARING THE WORD.

But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.—HEB. iv. 2.

I AM now to show you the use of faith in hearing of the word.

It hath been sometimes said that there are many good laws, but there wanteth one good law to put them all in execution; so it may be said you often hear good sermons, but there wanteth one good sermon to persuade you to put the rest in practice. This is the design of this text.

The apostle is proving in the context that it concerneth us to take heed, by the example of the Israelites, that we do not miscarry through unbelief. The ground of the argument is, that we have an offer of rest as well as they, a merciful tender of eternal life, which he calleth 'a promise of entering into God's rest,' ver. 1. Though many occasions of getting and doing be spent and gone, yet whilst it is to-day this offer is continued to us; and therefore we should stir up ourselves to lay hold of it in time. For we are in danger as well as the Israelites. Those that have like privileges may expect like judgments if they presume upon them or do not improve them. Yea, we are rather more in danger; the gospel was preached to them but darkly and implicitly, to us more clearly and fully. Canaan was but a type and figure of the heavenly inheritance or eternal rest to be obtained by Jesus Christ; yet their unbelief was heinous, and cost them dear. The sum of the apostle's reasoning is, they had gospel as well as we, and we shall have judgments as well as they; he giveth a reason of their judgment for our warning,—though they had gospel in the wilderness, 'yet the word preached did not profit them,' &c.

In the words take notice—(1.) Of an event; (2.) The reason of it.

1. The event,—*The word preached did not profit them*; in which assertion we have—

[1.] The subject,—*The word preached, λόγος ἰκοῆς*, the word of hearing, they did, or might hear it,

[2.] The predicate,—*Did not profit them*; that is, they got neither title to nor possession of eternal rest by it. That deserveth the name of profit, because it is the greatest good that God did ever give or man is capable of; and all is nothing without this, loss rather than profit to the soul, whatever we get by it. If a man get knowledge by the word, or honour and credit by the word, by professing or preaching it, yet if he doth not get a title to heaven, or a right to enter into God's rest, he doth not profit by it—'The word did not profit them.'

2. The reason of the event. Some read the text, 'Because they were not united by faith to it;' so is the marginal note, and Chrysostom and many others go that way, and they explain it thus: the greatest part of Israel were not of the mind whereof Caleb, and Joshua, and others were, who believed God's promise of bringing them into Canaan, and thereupon received no benefit by the promise. But I rather choose the text-reading,—*Not being mingled with faith, μὴ συγκεκραμένους*, the word is taken from a potion, which, according to the ingredients put into it, is medicinal or mortal. The word is the potion; if it hath all its ingredients, if mixed with faith, it produceth its effect, and becometh the power of God to salvation; if not, it doth us no good, but hurt rather; or as any liquor mingleth with the thing on which it is poured; or, as to make the seed fruitful it must be incorporated with the earth, and receive of the virtue and fatness of it; so the word must not only be heard, but digested by faith, or it will not be profitable, or stand them in any stead that hear it.

Doct. That though the word of God be so great a blessing, and so excellent a means of salvation, yet it doth no good, where it is not mixed with faith in the hearing: Rom. i. 16, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.'

Consider here—(1.) The things mixed; (2.) The necessity of this mixture in order to profit.

First, The things mixed; they are the word of God, and faith.

1. The word of God. A divine revelation is the proper object of faith; there is a human credulity when we believe anything spoken by man for the authority of the speaker; but no authority of man can be such a firm and sure ground of faith as the testimony of God, who neither can deceive nor be deceived. Therefore, 'if we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater,' 1 John v. 9. Now the whole word is to be received and apprehended by faith; but chiefly the doctrine of the gospel, which containeth the offer of Christ and all his benefits. The whole word is to be received, for faith hath a respect to all truths; there is the same reason for one as for all, because they are all revealed by God: Ps. cxix. 160, 'Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.' From beginning to ending there is nothing but truth; whatever is contained in the word is either history or doctrine, or precepts, or promises, or threatenings; faith mingleth with all these.

[1.] The historical part of the word. These must be believed, because the doctrinal part dependeth thereupon: as the creation of the world, the fall of man, the promise of the Messiah to Adam, the covenant made with Abraham. There is a harmony in the scripture, as in a concert all the notes agree, and suit one with another. The whole scripture suiteth with these historical passages, because they conduce much to our profit; for they are pawns and evidences of the possibility, yea, certainty of other things that are to come: Ps. cxxi. 2, 'My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.' The scripture is not only a register of what is past, but a prognostication of what is to come. Yea, it serves for our caution—'Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition,' 1 Cor. x. 11.

Now faith looketh upon these things in the word as if a-doing before our eyes.

[2.] Doctrines ; as the mystery of the trinity, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, the benefit of imputed righteousness, that we are healed by another's stripes, the doctrine of the resurrection, &c. All these mystical verities we receive them upon God's revelation. They are properly the objects of faith, because without God's revealing them they cannot be understood and found out by the light of natural reason, and in these things, though we cannot so presently and fully see the reason of what we believe, yet we see reason enough why we should believe them, because they are revealed in the word of God, which no otherwise appeareth to us to be his word. In these things reason must not be heard against scripture, or be set up as the highest judge in matters of religion. As reason corrects sense, so faith reason. To appearance a star is but a little spark or spangle ; but reason will tell us it is much bigger, because of its distance from us. The work of grace is to captivate the pride of our thoughts and prejudices against God's revelation : 2 Cor. x. 5, 'Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' Reason must be captivated to faith, though not to fancy. If it be revealed it must be believed, how absurd and unlikely soever it seem to us ; this is 'receiving the kingdom of God as a little child,' Mat. xviii. 3. A child believeth as he is taught ; I mean by God, not men. Thou art neither fit for heaven, nor the understanding of heavenly things, till thou hast denied thine own wisdom. That which is above reason cannot be comprehended by reason ; all lights must keep their place, sense is the light of beasts, reason of men, and faith of the church ; to consult with nature in supernatural things, it is all one as if you did seek the judgment of reason among the beasts, and determine of human affairs by brutish instinct. There are many things necessary to religion which the angels themselves could not know if they had not been revealed : Eph. iii. 10, 'That unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' The way of salvation by Christ is such a mystery as could not have entered into the heart of any creature, no, not an angel. In these things, believe God upon his word ; pills are to be swallowed, not chewed ; if the sick man cheweth them, he spits them up when he tasteth the bitterness of them, and so loseth a wholesome remedy. Or to use Chrysostom's comparison—'A smith that taketh up his red-hot iron with his hands, and not with his tongs, what can he expect but to burn his fingers ?' So we destroy our souls when we judge of mysteries of faith by the laws of common reason.

[3.] Precepts. That is another part of the word to be propounded not only to our obedience, but to our faith ; and first to our faith, and then to our obedience : Ps. cxix. 66, 'Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandments.' It is not enough to grant them rational or wise directions, or good rules for the regulating of human nature, but we must see them as God's laws, as injunctions from the glorious and powerful sovereign of the world, which we cannot neglect with-

out the greatest hazard; that is to believe the commandments. Many will catch at promises, but do not regard precepts; they smile upon the promise, but frown when the command puts them in mind of their duty. Faith owneth our obligation to God, and maketh us see the necessity of obedience, as well as it representeth the comfort of the promises, and to perform our duty, how contrary soever it be to our interest and carnal affections. But otherwise, without faith, when the commandments are crossing to our corrupt humours, they are questioned, slighted, and shifts studied by defiled consciences to divert the thoughts of duty. Therefore we need expressly to see that this is the will of God.

[4.] Promises; these are only received by faith: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for;' so the promissory part of the word is there in brief described. These are a principal object of faith: 2 Peter i. 4, 'To us are given exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be made partakers of the divine nature.' The Lord worketh saving grace at first by these promises, enabling the guilty, graceless, and cursed sinner to believe, and apply the pardon, grace, and blessedness freely offered in them; and as soon as he gets grace to believe and apply these promises, God beginneth to apply and make out upon his heart the things promised, stamping his own image upon him, that the sinner beginneth to look like God his Father for holiness, wisdom, and purity. These promises have a fitness to purify the heart as well as pacify the conscience, and must be used to both ends. If we respect promises, we must respect all promises; the honour of God is as deeply engaged to perform one promise as another. God's failing in any one promise would be the breaking of the whole covenant; as on our part the breach of one point maketh us guilty of the breach of the whole law: James ii. 10, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' Promises for pardon, and promises for sanctification, you must regard both, and put both in suit; promises for this life, and of a better. Many live by their wits in the world, and yet pretend to live by faith for heaven. You must trust God for all things, your names and estates as well as for your souls; only you must not be a stranger to the main promises, for herein lieth the life and heart of religion.

[5.] There are threatenings in the word of God, and these are part of the object of faith; for God is faithful and true in his threats as well as his promises, and therefore equally to be believed in both. The threatenings should work with us as if already accomplished. Josiah rent his clothes when he heard the words of the law: 2 Chron. xxxiv. 19, 'And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.' We are not like affected when the judgment is threatened, as when it is come upon us—'But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word,' Isa. lxvi. 2. So Noah prepared for a flood many years before it came: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house.' Tell many of the wrath of God, and they look upon it as a vain scarecrow; tell them of judgment to come, which is enough to make a heathen tremble, Acts xxiv. 25, but they are no more moved at it than with a dream or a vain fable. All is for want of faith; but they that will not believe, shall feel.

Thus you see the whole word is the object of faith: faith in the histories, for our warning and caution; faith in the doctrines, to increase our reverence and admiration; faith in the threatenings, for our humiliation; faith in the precepts, for our subjection; and faith in the promises, for our consolation. They all have their use: the histories to make us wary and cautious; the doctrines to enlighten us with a true sense of God's nature and will; the precepts to direct us, and to try and regulate our obedience; the promises to cheer and comfort us; the threatenings to terrify us, to run anew to Christ, to bless God for our escape, and to add spurs to our duty. Thus faith maketh use of the word of God, and all things contained therein.

But especially the truths of the gospel, and that good thing which is offered in those truths is that mainly which saving faith doth close with and rely upon, and is fully satisfied withal. This is that which is most mysterious in itself, and remote from vulgar knowledge: Mat. xvi. 17, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven;' most profitable to lost sinners: Tit. ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity,' &c.; doth most set forth the praise of God: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'All the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us;' that to which all the rest tendeth: Rev. xix. 10, 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,' the life and heart of religion, the most blessed news that could come from heaven. Faith findeth death in the threatenings, a burden of work in the precepts; but in Christ and the gospel it findeth the way to heaven laid open, a way how a sinner may be saved and divine justice not wronged. This is that which 'the angels desire to look into,' 1 Peter i. 12. So excellent and ravishing is the saving of lost sinners by Christ incarnate, they study it and pry into it.

Once more, the word is considered as dispensed in the ordinance of teaching and hearing—'The word preached did not profit them.' God doth not only work by the word, but by the word preached: 1 Cor. i. 21, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' To hope to gain the world by the preaching of a few contemptible persons was looked upon as a ridiculous confidence; but it pleased God to make use of that way, which pierced farther and conquered more than the Roman armies ever could. *Britannorum inaccessibleis Romanis loca, Christo tamen patuere.* Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' The hearing of the word is the ordinary means whereby faith is wrought and exercised; so 1 Peter i. 25, 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.' That word is the seed of the spiritual life, that word endureth for ever in the effects of it, that word must be mingled with faith in the hearing; not only the scripture in the general, but the particular messages that are brought to you, and delivered from and according to that word by the Lord's servants, whom he hath sent. Many men will not declaim against the written word, but they have a slender esteem of those portions of truth which God carveth out to them by the messengers whom he sendeth to them. God, that instituted prophets and apostles to write scripture, did also institute pastors and teachers to explain and apply scripture: Eph. iv. 11, 'He gave

some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.' And when they go to work, *clave non errante*, their messages are the word of God.

But you will say, Must we believe all the dictates of fallible men?

Ans. Yes, in what accordeth with scripture, and is rightly deduced and inferred thence. Consequences are the word of God, and bind as well as the express scripture, Mat. xxii. 32. Jesus Christ proves the resurrection by this consequence, that 'God was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;' only we are to search: Acts xvii. 11, 12, 'They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scripture daily whether those things were so;' therefore many of them believed. The scriptures we receive upon their divine evidence, and other doctrines upon their consonancy to the scripture: Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' We must not be light of belief, but weigh things in the balance of the sanctuary; nor yet obstinate and contemptuous of what is delivered in the way of an ordinance.

2. Faith. Nothing less will serve the turn. That whereby the soul receiveth the word is faith; that whereby it receiveth it effectually is sincere faith. There ever have been and still are three sorts of men in the world.

[1.] Some that break out into open opposition of the gospel; that are so far from being christians, that they are scarce men: 2 Thes. iii. 2, 'That we may be delivered from unreasonable, and wicked men, for all men have not faith.' Infidels are unreasonable and absurd, and never oppose the laws of Christ but they also violate the principles of nature.

[2.] There are some that are neither hot nor cold, that do not oppose the gospel nor yet accept it; that assent which they seem to have, is not so much an actual assent as a non-refusal, or non-opposition, or rejection of the counsel of the word. Some indeed stand in full contradiction, and actually reject the counsels of God: Luke vii. 30, 'But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves;' and Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.' But these though they make some profession of the gospel, yet they are careless, idle, and secure. These the apostle speaketh of, Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation,' compared with Mat. xxii. 5, 'And they made light of it.' They do not deny, but excuse themselves. *Non vacat* is the sinner's plea; but *non placet* is the real disposition of his heart.

[3.] There is a third sort, that do not only make profession of the name of Christ, but receive the truth in the love of it and in the power of it, and transfer it into practice: 2 Thes. ii. 10, 'They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.' There is a receiving truth in the light of it by conviction, but there follows no conversion. And then they receive the truth not only in love, but in power. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit and power: 1 Thes. i. 5, 'Our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;' 1 Cor. ii. 4, 'My speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in

demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.' And they transfer it into practice: John viii. 31, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;' and Mat. vii. 21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' Christ's real worshippers are known, not by compliments and external respects, but the inward constitution of their hearts, and the course and uniformity of their practice and conversations; they are those that do so carefully and constantly attend unto God's word that they lay it up in their hearts: Ps. cxix. 11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee;' and make it the rule of their whole lives: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule;' so as to obey his commands: Rom. vi. 17, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered you;' rely upon his promises: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope;' fear his threats: Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' A carnal man doth not tremble under his strokes, but they tremble under his word, and engage themselves to continue with God in well-doing, and in the pursuit of everlasting happiness: Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, eternal life.'

To make this evident unto you, I shall show you—

(1.) How many things come short of faith, or that true and unfeigned assent that must be mingled with the word, to make it a sovereign remedy for our souls.

(2.) What is that true faith that doth so.

1st. Many things come short of faith, or that true and unfeigned assent which maketh the word effectual. There are several degrees of assent.

[1st.] There is conjecture, or a lighter inclination and propension of the mind to the gospel or word of God, as possibly or probably true; a suspicious knowledge or guess at things, when we go no higher than an 'it may be so.' The generality of careless professors go no further. It may be true, for aught they know, that there is a rest remaining for the children of God: and these do walk according to the trade of Israel, and conform to the current opinions and practices that are a-foot.

[2d.] There is beyond this opinion, when the mind is strongly inclined to think it true, but not without fear of the contrary; they are so rationally convinced of the truth of the gospel that they are not able rationally to contradict it; yea, they can dispute for it, but it is but opinion; they can plead for it, and defend it, as a dead, rotten post may support a living tree; yet it doth not sink so deep unto them as to enter into the heart: Prov. ii. 10, 'When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul.' They live in suspense and uncertainty in matters of religion, and do not know ἀληθῶς, 'Surely, that Christ came out from God:' John xvii. 8, and ἀσφαλῶς, Acts ii. 36, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

[3d.] There is a higher degree, and that is dogmatical faith or a

naked assent unto, or a persuasion of the truth of God's word; but it is such an enlightening as is without taste and without power; it worketh no thorough change in the heart or practice: as many men that make no doubt of the truth of the gospel, yet do not feel the power of it. This is spoken of, James ii. 19, 20, 'Thou believest that there is one God, thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?' They have so much light as may disturb their peace, but not so much as doth comfort the conscience and overpower their carnal affections. Well then, this is not it that must be mingled with the word; not the word and conjecture; not the word and opinion; not the word and dogmatical faith that rests in a dead naked assent, but it must be a believing with all the heart, a cordial assent: Acts viii. 37, 'If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest be baptized.'

[4th.] There is presumption, or a snatching at the promises, without considering the terms. 'There is no man that hath a conscience, and some loose persuasion of the truths of the gospel, but he apprehends it to be a good word, suitable to the necessities and desires of a guilty and indigent creature; but it hath no prevailing efficacy to purge the heart and subdue him to God: Micah iii. 11, 'Yet they will lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil shall come upon us.' The leaning of a carnal presumer, and the leaning of a broken heart, differ, as the leaning of a drunkard that is not able to go alone, and the leaning of a wounded man that is ready to faint. Now a man that in compassion would lend his arm to one wounded, and whose life is dropping out by degrees, would not lend his arm to a reeling drunkard that is defiled with his own vomit; so the claims of mercy that a bold sinner maketh to the grace of God in Christ are rejected, when the dependence of a broken-hearted creature is justified. We have a comfortable promise: Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee;' but a guard is set about it, that no disobedient wretch should gather its sweet fruit: vers. 16, 17, 'But unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?' The like you have in Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation, Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.' We can never speak enough of the mercy of God to poor broken-hearted sinners; it is here twice repeated; but bold and daring sinners, that continue in their rebellion and enmity against God, have no share in it, nor can they lay claim to it; ver. 21, 'But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.' Christians that live loosely, as pagans, they shall not find grace to be a sanctuary to them. It was Origen's answer to Celsus, who said that christianity was a sanctuary for wicked profligate persons,—No! saith he, it is not a sanctuary for them, but an hospital to cure them.

2d. What is the true faith that must be mingled with the word?

[1st.] It is a lively faith, or assent to the doctrine of God. The scripture speaketh of a dead faith; James ii. 20; and a lively faith,

and of a lively hope: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope;' such as quickens them to the use of all due means to attain what they believe and hope for: Acts xxiv. 14-16, 'But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets: and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow; that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.' A drowsy inattentive assent prevaileth nothing, but such as hath life and affection in it. To many faith is no more than non-denial, or a negative assent; they do not contradict the truth, but it doth not affect the heart, and excite them to pursue and look after the things represented to them. Faith is acted and exercised about what we hear, as about matters wherein we are deeply concerned. It is not enough to have faith, but it must be exercised and put forth—such a faith as engrafteth the word into us: James i. 21, 'Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.' It is not only pleased with the notions as matter of opinion, but receiveth and layeth up the word as the seed of life, yea, changeth the disposition of the soul into the nature of the word: Rom. vi. 17, 'But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered to you,' *εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδασχῆς*, into which form of doctrine ye were delivered; its lively character is stamped upon us. 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.' What effect hath the word upon the soul, to transform us into the image of God?

[2*d.*] It is an applicative faith. We do not only believe God's word and all things contained therein, to be a truth, but we believe it as a truth that concerneth us in particular, and thereupon apply it to ourselves. Meat will feed, if it be eaten; water will quench thirst, if we drink it, and receive it into our bodies; yet if we neither eat the one, nor drink the other, we may perish for hunger and thirst. So the applying and urging the heart with the word preached doth profit us: Job v. 27, 'Hear it, and know thou it for thy good;' and Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things?' and Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?'

[3*d.*] It is an obediential confidence, such as doth not take one part of the word and set it against the other; the precept against the promise, or the promise against the precept, that hope to take liberty now and then, to break a commandment without forfeiting a claim to the promises, or, like mountebanks, that drink poison in confidence of an antidote: Rom. vi. 1, 2, 'What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?' They are not encouraged to duty, but to sin by hopes of grace: Jude 4, 'Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness;' these debauch the principles of the gospel. It teacheth other things, where it is rightly apprehended: Titus ii. 11, 12, 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we

should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world ;' others are not sensible of the necessity of yielding obedience to God.

Secondly, The necessity of this mixture in order to profit. This I shall make good, for otherwise the ends of the gospel cannot be obtained. I prove it thus—

1. It is agreeable to the wisdom of God, that as there should be a means to offer, so there should be a means to receive his grace. The word doth only offer grace, but it is faith doth receive it ; therefore, as without the word there can be no faith, so without faith the word can have no power. To a good crop, or a fruitful harvest, there is required, not only good seed, but *subactum solum*, a prepared soil and ground, Mat. xiii. The seed was the same, but the ground was different : some fell on the highway, some on the stony ground, some on the thorny ground, some on the good ground, which only thrived and prospered : ver. 23, 'He that receiveth the seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred, some sixty, some thirty-fold.' Well then, there must be receiving as well as offering, and a kindly receiving. A plaster doth not heal at a distance till it be applied to the sore. It is our souls were wounded, and our souls must have the cure ; the light that illuminateth must shine into the place that is enlightened ; the life that quickeneth must be in the substance which is quickened by it. If the bare discovery and offer of grace, without the applying of grace, or receiving of grace, were enough, the gospel would save all alike, the despisers of it as well as those that submit to it. Therefore there must be receiving ; Christ must not only be offered, but received : John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' And the covenant is not only tendered to us, but accepted by us : Acts ii. 41, 'Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.' Blood shed will not avail us, unless it be blood sprinkled : Heb. xii. 24, 'And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' Christ's making the atonement is not effectual to salvation, unless it be received, owned, and applied : Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.' General grace must some way be made particular, or else it cannot profit us. Christ doth not save us at a distance, but as received into our hearts, or else why are not all justified, all adopted, all saved ? There is the same merciful God, the same sufficient Saviour, the same gracious covenant : the reason is, some apply this grace, others do not : Eph. i. 13, 'After ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' It is not enough to know the gospel to be a doctrine of salvation in the general. but we must look to this, that it be a doctrine of salvation to ourselves in particular. What doth it profit us, if it be a doctrine of salvation to others, and not to ourselves ? therefore we must receive and apply the promises to our own souls, that they may stir up joy, and thankfulness, and praise, and may quicken and enliven our obedience, and in time our interest in them may be determined to our joy and comfort.

2. That the proper grace to receive is faith. Here I shall show—

[1.] The necessity of it.

[2.] The efficacy of it, that without it the ends of the gospel cannot

be obtained ; that by it they are powerfully and effectually obtained.

First, The necessity of it,—because without it the ends of the gospel cannot be obtained ; and this with respect to God, Christ, the gospel, or christian religion, and the believer himself.

1. With respect to God. Holiness and love to God is required *sub ratione finis*, and faith *sub ratione mediæ*, as a means to make us holy and to love God. That this is the great end of the gospel institution is plain from scripture : 1 Tim. i. 5, ‘ Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.’ The end and scope of the gospel is love to God, and faith in Christ our Redeemer is the great means which conduceth to it. So Christ giveth us an account of the words which he heard from his Father; and the sum of it is, that our great duty is that we love God, and our great happiness to be beloved by him, John xiv. 21–23. The gospel revelation was set up for this end and purpose, to represent to us the goodness and amiableness of God, that he might be more lovely to us and be loved by us. The great design of reconciling and saving lost man by Christ, and his wonderful condescension in his incarnation, life, sufferings, and death, is all to reveal this love of God in Christ, and to work up our hearts to love God again. To this end also tend his merciful covenant and promises, all the benefits given to his church, and the privileges of the saints, the Spirit, pardon, peace, glory ; all these tend to warm our hearts with love to God ; and faith is appointed to look upon all these, to consider them, and improve them : Gal. v. 6, ‘ Faith worketh by love.’ The principal use of faith is to kindle the love of God in our souls, that knowing and believing the love which God hath to us in Christ, we may love him again, and thankfully obey him. Now if this be not enough to you, take an argument or two, thus—

If the great end of Christ’s coming is to bring us to God : 1 Peter iii. 18, ‘ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God ;’ John xiv. 6, ‘ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth and the life ; no man cometh to the Father but by me ;’ and Heb. vii. 25, ‘ Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,’—I say, if this be the end of Christ’s coming, to bring us to God—that is, to turn us in heart and life to him from whom we had fallen, surely love to God is the great end of the christian religion ; and therefore faith, which is to receive and improve it, is the means to this end.

Again, if heaven and eternal blessedness be but perfect love, then the end of the gospel is love ; for the gospel is appointed to make us everlastingly happy. Therefore was it written, therefore did the Son of God come to bring us to this perfect estate. But now heaven is but the love of God, and perfection in holiness ; and to be blessed in heaven is to be happy in the perfect love of God, to see him as he is, and to be like him. A perfect love to God is maintained by perfect vision, and on our part a perfect receiving his love to us. Then surely that is the end, and faith is the means, to take notice of, and be persuaded of the love of God that shineth to us so gloriously in Christ.

Well now. how can the end of the gospel be obtained, which is to love God, and be beloved of him, if either we have no faith, and do not believe this wonderful demonstration of God’s love in Christ ; or but a dead faith, and do but slightly reflect upon it, with cold and narrow

thoughts? surely, though the gospel be such a notable institution to teach us the art of loving God, and so sovereign a remedy against our corrupt self-love, yet it will not profit unless it be mixed with faith in the hearing

2. With respect to Christ, who in the gospel is represented as clothed with the office of a mediator between God and us, which he executeth in that three-fold function of a prophet, priest, and king. Now the great duty of the gospel is to own him in all these, and to submit to him, that they may have their perfect effect upon us. To hear him as a prophet: Mat. xvii, 5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.' To receive him as lord and king: Col. ii, 6, 'As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' Consider him as a priest: Heb. iii, 1, 'Consider the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.' Now, how can any of this be done without faith, or a sound belief that he is the Son of God, that cometh in all these qualities to us? Can we learn of him whom we take to be a deceiver? or obey him whom we believe not to be our true and rightful Lord? and if we believe not his merits and sacrifice as a priest, can we be comforted with his glorious promises and covenant, and come to God with the more boldness and hope of mercy upon that account, especially in a dying hour? Surely Christ must lie by, and the fruits of his offices be neglected, unless we believe that he is authorised and fitted for all these things; that he is the teacher sent from God to show us the way of life; that his sacrifice offered through the eternal Spirit is of full merit and value to expiate our sins; and that he is lord of life and glory, and able to protect us till he hath brought us to heaven: 2 Tim. i, 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' We must be persuaded of his authority, sufficiency, readiness, willingness to do us good, before we can trust ourselves and our eternal interests in his hands. Who will take physic of a physician that he trusteth not? or go to sea with a pilot whose skill he questioneth? Surely before we can heartily consent, or resolvedly put ourselves into his hands, to be reconciled to God, and saved from sin and punishment, and finally brought to perfect happiness and glory, we must be persuaded what he is, and that he is able to do all this for us: Mat. ix, 28, 'Believe ye then that I am able to do this?' Christ puts the question to the blind men; they answer, 'Yea, Lord.' So when you consider of Christ's glorious offices, and the blessed effects of them, think you that he is able to do these things. Pose your hearts, will he indeed show me the way to heaven? hath he paid such a ransom for my captive soul? will he protect me so powerfully in the way of salvation? let faith work such a thorough persuasion of his ability and fidelity, as may extort a full resignation from you of yourselves into his hands, that by his own methods he may lead you to everlasting glory.

3. With respect to the word itself, or those sacred oracles wherein the gospel or the christian religion is contained, you will see the truths there recorded cannot well be apprehended and digested without faith, because there are things written which do concern matters past, present and to come; and all these have difficulties which can be only removed by faith.

[1.] Matters past; as the creation of the world; the providence of God towards his church and people throughout all successions of foregoing ages, till the scriptures were written and completed; the keeping of the promise of the Messiah still a-foot till his coming in the flesh; the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These were things of necessity to be confined to some determinate time and place, it was not necessary that Christ should be always dying and always rising, in every age and place, and in the view of every man. These things can therefore only be apprehended by faith, for we saw them not; they are believed upon some competent and sufficient testimony.

[2.] Things present are those which concern our present duty; suppose accepting of Christ and self-denying obedience, both require faith, yea, a strong faith.

(1.) The accepting of Christ for our Lord and Saviour. Now this is hard, yea, impossible to be done, without a sound persuasion of the truth of that doctrine which concerneth our redemption by Christ; for this is a rare and wonderful mystery. 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'Great is the mystery of godliness.' Those natural apostles, which are gone forth into all lands to preach up an infinite and eternal power, I mean the sun, moon, and stars, these natural preachers are dumb and silent, say not a word concerning Christ, or God manifested in the flesh. Angels could not find out this mystery by all their excellency of wisdom and knowledge; but they admire it, as they study it, and see it in God's dispensations to the church: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God;' and 1 Peter i. 12, 'Which things the angels desire to look into.' Yea, the blessed virgin, when a messenger was sent from heaven to tell her of this mystery, though an extraordinary messenger, and she so nearly concerned, said Luke i. 34, 'How shall this be?' The conception of a virgin, the death of the Son of God, who was life itself, are not matters so easily apprehended and improved, unless the Lord give us faith. How can we build upon this foundation with any confidence?

(2.) Self-denying obedience. Men are addicted to their own wills and lusts, and will not easily suffer themselves to be persuaded to change heart and life, especially when this change is like to cost them dear in the world, and they must forfeit those things which they see and love for a God and glory which they never saw. Naturally the spirits of men are yokeless and libertine: Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.' And when temptations come, we consult with the flesh, and so will not easily believe the necessity of this self-denying obedience, but cavil and wriggle, and distinguish ourselves out of our duty. Unless a firm assent lay a strong obligation upon us, we shall cast off yoke after yoke, till we leave Christ but an empty name.

[3.] Things future in the unseen world. We have to do with an invisible God, who hath propounded hopes in an invisible world. Now what shall we do without faith, which is 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1. We are apt to take up with things present, and are little affected with things unseen, and above our senses. Nothing but a strong faith will engage us to look after these things, and to venture all depending upon these things.

4. With respect to the party who is to receive these truths, faith is necessary; who may be considered as to his mind, heart, and life, all which are to be bettered and profited by the word.

[1.] As to his mind, which must be enlightened and awakened. Corrupt and carnal reason is such a stranger to God and heavenly things that unless the Lord give us a new light, which may direct and quicken us, we shall not much mind either God or heaven. Therefore for our cure the understanding must be enlightened and awakened, and it is both by faith.

(1.) Enlightened rightly to the discerning of these things: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Supernatural matters must be discerned by a supernatural light, spiritual matters by a spiritual light; other things are determined by sense and reason, but our light in these things is by faith, by which we see those excellent and high things which are above the reach of the natural man. It serveth for the government of the soul, as the eye for the body; by it we see God: Heb. xi. 27, 'By faith he saw him that is invisible.' Hereby we see Christ: John, vi. 40, 'That every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;' and we see heaven: 1 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' Till God openeth the eye of our minds, we neither see God: Heb. xi. 6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is;' nor do we see Christ: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto you therefore which believe he is precious;' nor do we see heaven: 2 Peter i. 9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' Therefore must we mind this, to get a spiritual sight; seriously deal with God about it: Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of your understandings being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.'

(2.) The understanding or mind must be excited and awakened to regard and consider these things which we see and are convinced of. For otherwise, in seeing we see not, and in hearing we hear not. As when you tell a man of a business whose mind is taken up about other things, he mindeth it not, regardeth it not, or carrieth himself as if he minded it not. They do not think of God, and Christ, and heavenly things; they mourn for sin as if they mourned not, rejoice in God as if they rejoiced not, seek after heaven as if they sought not after it. Now to cure this inadvertency, or to bring us to a more attentive consideration of these things, requireth a lively faith. The same light and Spirit that doth open the eyes of the mind to discern heavenly things doth also awaken us to the minding of them: Acts xvi. 14, 'Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul.' Many precious truths lie by, and are lost for want of consideration. Non-attendency is the bane of the professing world: Mat. xxii. 5, 'They made light of it;' when men will not suffer their minds to dwell upon these things, that they may consider what is true misery, and what is true happiness.

[2.] That which is next to be considered in the entertainment of truth, or of the gospel is the heart, which is to be subdued to God: Rom. vi. 17, 'But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you.' Now how shall this be done without faith? to gain the heart to a holy and heavenly life, which is naturally so averse from it. The credulity and belief required of christians is as the matters which are presented to our belief. Christianity, which is mostly conversant about things practical, must be received not only with the mind, but the heart: Rom. x. 9, 10, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;' so Acts viii. 37, 'If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest be baptized.' You must receive the truth in the love of it: 2 Thes. ii. 10, 'They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.' That which was made for the heart must be admitted into the heart; till it is there it is not in its proper place, it is rejected where it seemeth to be received. For if you be convinced of the truths of the gospel, and do not admit them to come into your hearts, you are false to them and yourselves, and cannot expect they should profit you. This is the difference between the unsanctified and the regenerate: the one receiveth the truth in the light of it, by a mere speculation, but shuts up his heart against it; the other receiveth it in the love of it, openeth his heart to it, and admitteth it to its proper place and work; the one imprisoneth it in unrighteousness, the other entertaineth it with love and regard. Now this is the true receiving, and that which is proper to faith, to receive all holy truths with a practical intent, to work them upon your hearts according to their nature, weight, and use. Now if it be so, we may see how little we profit by the gospel till we mingle it with faith in the hearing; that is, so apprehend and believe the truth as to get the heart affected with it.

[3.] The life is bettered and overruled by the word received. For a believer is to be considered as to his head, heart, and life. When the mind is enlightened and the heart sanctified, the truth is to break out into the conversation; the life must be holy and obedient: 1 Peter i. 14, 15, 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' Now how shall this be done without faith? By a lively faith it may be done. How dare you neglect Christ if you believe that he is the Son of God, who must be your judge? or indulge the flesh, be mindless of heavenly things, if you believe the necessity of self-denial, and the reality of the world to come? There is a great deal of difference between the name, title, and profession of a believer, and the real efficacy of true faith. A true believer is to get the truth of the gospel into his mind, heart, and life: that truth which enlighteneth his mind, doth also purify his heart: Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith;' so that by it not only mistakes are discovered, but lusts subdued. And it doth not only purify the heart, but overcome the world: 1 John v. 4, 'This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith.' And it pro-

duceth a good conversation, not discouraged with tribulations, nor diverted from the pursuit of eternal happiness by the baits and allurements of the flesh. Yea, it putteth us upon a bold and an open profession of the name of Christ, and respect to his ways, however discountenanced in the world: 2 Cor. iv. 13, 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.' Now this being the case of the person who is to receive and entertain the gospel, to receive it into his mind, and heart, and life, certainly there is a necessity of faith, for it is the office of faith to do all these things.

Secondly, The efficacy of faith. To this end I shall show—

1. That all efficacy is ascribed to faith.

2. Whence it hath its power and force.

[1.] That all efficacy is ascribed to faith; for till the gospel be owned as a divine and infallible truth, it hath no effect upon us: 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'Ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' The truths of the gospel concerning God, Christ, sin, grace, hell, and heaven, are of such weight and moment as that they might move a rock; yet they shake not, they stir not the heart of a carnal professor, because they receive the word in word only; but where it is received in faith, it is not received in word only, but in power. And there it worketh effectually: 1 Thes. i. 5, 'Our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.' To believe the truth of God's word is the ready way to make it effectual; it is slighted, because it is not credited. A man may give high and cogent reasons against his lusts, and yet follow them, if the truth be not rooted in his heart. All graces are set a-work by faith, as reverence to the word; some 'tremble at the word' when it convinceth of sin, Isa. lxvi. 2, because they know it is the word by which they shall be judged at the last day: so for repentance; some humble themselves at God's warnings and threatenings, it is the fruit of their faith; Jonah iii. 5, 'The people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth.' Some prize Christ as he is offered in the new covenant, but this is from faith: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'To you that believe he is precious.' When faith representeth him in all his loveliness, then the soul prizeth him. Some are ready to the duties enjoined: Ps. cxix. 66, 'I have believed thy commandments.' Faith doth all, and enliveneth all truths, and maketh them operative.

[2.] Whence hath faith this power?

(1.) Because it qualifyeth us for the gift of the Holy Spirit: Gal. iii. 14, 'That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;' and John vii. 39, 'This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe in him should receive.' The Spirit begets faith and actuateth faith, and then faith doth enliven all truths.

(2.) From the matter propounded to faith and apprehended by it, which is God's word, and hath a stamp of his wisdom, goodness, and power left upon it. There we see his divine authority, charging and commanding us under pain of his displeasure to mind and regard such things. It is the Lord hath spoken it: 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'Ye received

it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in them that believe.' And it is enforced upon us in the most strong and potent way of argumentation, as from the equity and excellency of what he hath commanded: Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing,' from his great love in Christ: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us;' from the strict day of accounts, as we will answer it to him another day: Rom. ii. 16, 'In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel;' from the importance and unspeakable concernment of those things to us, our salvation or damnation depending thereupon: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' The danger of refusing him is no less than everlasting death, and the happiness of complying with his motions no less than everlasting life and complete blessedness. Now everlasting life and death being in the case, we had need be serious.

(3.) The way of faith's working about these things. The apprehension is clear, the consideration serious, the assent strong, the application close, so that men are pierced to the quick where this faith prevaileth, and are deeply affected with what they hear. The apprehension is clear: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.' The consideration serious; they attend, they search: Acts xvii. 11, 'They searched the scriptures daily.' The assent strong: Acts ii. 36, 'Let the house of Israel know assuredly;' and John xvii. 8, 'They have known surely.' And the application close: Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we say to these things'?

Obj. How can faith be necessary to make the word effectual, since itself cometh by hearing, and is ordinarily wrought by the word: Rom. x. 17, 'So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'?

Ans. At first God by his preventing grace taketh hold of the heart, and maketh it to believe; as at the first creation light was made before the sun; and the first man was made out of the dust of the ground, afterwards he propagateth and bringeth forth after his kind; so that the first work might be exempted from the common rule, yet not the subsequent works.

2. Even then there is a faith wrought in and by the hearing, as the gospel doth propound and make known to the understanding the object of saving faith; the Lord doth at the same time work the grace of faith in the hearts of the elect: Acts xvi. 14, 'And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things spoken by Paul.' Without this the word would not profit.

3. One faith maketh way for another, the dogmatical faith for the saving faith, and common and general grace for a particular and saving work of God's Spirit; as the priming of the post maketh it receptive of other colours.

Use 1. Is information, to show the reason why there is so little profiting under so much means; there is no faith, the cause is from ourselves or in ourselves. Alas! we may complain: Isa. liii. 1, 'Who

hath believed our report?' Most men have not that general faith so as to incline their hearts and ears to take notice of what God saith.

Use 2. Is reproof of divers sorts.

1. Some do not hear; they neglect the seasons of grace, and refuse to come there where the sound of the gospel may be heard; whereas we are comanded 'to be swift to hear,' James i. 19. Others sleep while the word is preaching; as Eutychus fell asleep—'While Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead,' Acts xx. 9. It was a sin, and God punished him, though he was a youth, and the sermon was after supper, and of great length, even till midnight; it was an infirmity, but infirmities are punished by God. Others talk, or suffer their minds to be diverted by every trifle: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 'And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness;' as a child's eye is off his book if a butterfly do but come by. The devil findeth them other work; how often do we mingle sulphur with our incense! Those that hear in jest will find hell hot in good earnest. Well then, Rev. ii. 7, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.'

2. Some do not understand what is outwardly heard by the ears of the body: Mat. xiii. 19, 'When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart;' and Jer. v. 21, 'Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding! which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not.'

3. Some do not believe what they understand; that is the great requisite, Acts xv. 7, 'That the gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe.'

4. Some do not obey what they seem to believe: Rom. x. 16, 'But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?' and Mat. vii. 26, 27, 'And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man that built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.'

5. Some do not persevere in what they undertake to obey: Deut. v. 27-29, 'Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken. Oh that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever.'

Use 3. Is to press and excite you—

First. In the general, to entertain the gospel with a sound and lively faith.

1. Without it there is no sin to be conquered. The first sin was unbelief: Gen. iii. 1, 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' and still unbelief is the cause of transgressing, for the flesh is importunate to be pleased, and the temptations of the world will hurry us to evil: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' The flesh is fed with the baits of sense, but the spirit is encouraged and strengthened by the supports of faith.

2. Without it no grace can be thoroughly exercised: Heb. xi. 6, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' All graces are set a-work by faith; repentance: Jonah iii. 5, 'The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth.' To believe the truth of God's word when it is spoken is the ready way to make it effectual. Their repentance was no more than legal, but it was as good as their faith was. All is quiet in the soul, no news of repentance, nor noise of any complaining against sin, till faith sets the conscience a-work; so there is no prizing of Christ without faith. He and all his graces lie by as a neglected thing till we believe: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'To them that believe he is precious.' When faith represents him in his loveliness to the soul, then the affections are stirred.

3. No worship can be seriously performed without it. For prayer: Ps. lxxv. 2, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' When we believe him to be a God hearing prayer, then we come cheerfully into his presence. So for hearing the word, it is this bindeth the ear to hear: Acts x. 33, 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God;' and it bindeth the heart to reverence: Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To him will I look, who is of a humble and contrite heart, and trembleth at my word.'

4. Without it no acts of justice and mercy can be well done: Acts xxiv. 14-16, 'But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets; and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.'

But how shall we do to get this faith?

[1.] Beg it of God, it is his gift: Eph. ii. 8, 'By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.' He must open the eyes of our minds: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understandings being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.'

[2.] Study the grounds of faith. Many truths revealed in scripture are agreeable to the light of nature, and known by it: as that there is one God, the first cause of all things, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; that it is reasonable that he should be worshipped and served, and that according to his will; that we have faulted with him, and have rebelled against his will declared in his law, and so are ob-

noxious to his wrath and displeasure; that reasonable creatures have immortal souls, and die not as the brute beasts; that true happiness is not found in those things wherein men ordinarily seek it, namely, in things grateful to the animal life; all these things, and such like, nature teacheth. The business of the christian religion must needs lie in three things.

(1.) In declaring to us more fully the nature, will, and worship of God.

(2.) In finding out a remedy for the fall, or expiating the faults and sins of men, which is done by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ.

(3.) In propounding a fit happiness for an immortal soul. Now think with yourselves with what congruity and evidence these things are done in the gospel; here are prophecies to usher in this doctrine, miracles to confirm it, valuable testimony to recommend it to us; and how agreeable all these are to the nature of God and our necessities.

[3.] Attend upon the means whereby faith is wrought, as the ministry of the word: 1 Cor. iii. 5, 'Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?' There is some consideration or other given out to beget or strengthen our faith, for God is not wanting to his ordinances, and we go on by degrees in believing, the sincere soul still finding more evidence in the word continually, and more experience in his own heart: John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.'

[4.] Get a prepared heart. To this end—

(1.) See that there be no carnal bias: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe that seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' Indulgence to any sensual affection, to the honours, riches, and pleasures of the world, maketh men unfit either to believe or consider the truths of the gospel.

(2.) Let there be no wilful, heinous sin: 1 Tim. iii. 9, 'Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' Men are loth to believe to their torment, as malefactors cannot endure to think of the assizes. An honest and good heart doth best receive the good seed. Sin doth weaken our faith, and wilful sins breed horror in our minds, and make us wish the gospel were not true, that there were no God, no day of judgment, no hell for the wicked and ungodly; if so, then it is your interest to be an unbeliever.

[5.] Are you willing or unwilling to believe? If willing, wait upon God, he will not fail the waiting soul: John i. 17, 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;' if unwilling, Christ will not give his grace to them that despise it, or make folks believe whether they will or no, or when they had rather not believe; or if God out of his secret grace will surprise you, you cannot expect it.

Secondly, In every particular message that is brought to you in the way of an ordinance, regard God's providence in it; Christ hath a greater share in it than the teacher. Remember now that in every important truth your faith is tried: John xi. 26, 'Believest thou this?' and in every duty pressed your obedience is tried. Now let faith be lively and applicative, and the closer the application the better. The promise of pardon and life is universal, and includeth you as well as

others, if you will believe in Christ, for all true believers shall be saved ; but this is to excite your faith and obedience, not to assure your interest, which dependeth upon your sincerity in faith, love and obedience. There is the application of faith and the application of assurance. The application of faith is a particular application of Christ and the promise to ourselves, so as to excite us to look after the benefits and ends for which Christ is appointed : Acts xiii. 26, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent.' It is our duty to make general grace particular. The application of assurance is, when I actually determine that my own sins are pardoned, that I am adopted into God's family, and appointed to eternal life, which cannot be without some sense of my sincerity, because the promises of God require a qualification and performance of duty in the party to whom the promise is made : 1 John iii. 14, 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' And as you are to stir up your faith, so you are to set about the duties which the word calleth for. On the first opportunity fall a-practising, for this is a message sent from God to try your obedience ; by doing this continually you will insensibly habituate yourselves to the practice of godliness, and so grow up into comfort and peace.

See the Use of Faith in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, handled in the Sermon on Heb. xi. 23.
