

SERMONS OF RICHARD SIBBES

by Richard Sibbes

Sibbes' sermons exploring the difficulty of salvation and assurance, examining what it means to be saved and discussing the challenges and grace involved in the Christian journey toward God.

14 Chapters

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Christ, Our Surety

Christ, Our Surety

(Surety: "One who acts in the place of another")

Extracted from the sermon "Christ's Sufferings for Man's Sin" from the Works of Richard Sibbes, Banner of Truth Trust. Dr. Sibbes was a great Puritan preacher of Cambridge from 1626 to his death. But how could Christ be forsaken of God, especially so forsaken as to suffer the anger of his father, being an innocent person?

I answer, first, the Paschal lamb was an innocent creature, yet if the Paschal lamb be once made a sacrifice, it must be killed. Though Christ were never so unblameable, yet, if he will stoop to the office of a surety, he must pay our debt, and do that which we should have done. If a prince's son become a surety, though his father love him and pity him never so much, yet he will say, Now you have taken this upon you, you must discharge it.

Secondly, as in natural things the head is punished for the fault of the body, so Christ, by communicating his blessed nature with ours, made up one mystical body, and suffered for us.

But upon what ground should Christ become our surety?

Because he was able to discharge our debt to the uttermost. He was more eminent than all mankind, having two natures in one, the manhood knit to the Godhead.

Christ most willingly gave himself a sacrifice for us.

He was designed and predestined to this office, yea, he was anointed, set out, and sealed for this business by God himself; and is not this sufficient ground why he should become our surety? especially if we consider,

That Christ took the communion of our nature upon him for this very end, that he might be a full surety, that his righteousness being derived to us, and our guilt to him, God's wrath might be satisfied in the self-same nature that offended. You see in societies and cities, if some people offend, the whole city is oftentimes punished. Though perhaps many are guiltless in it, yet by reason of the communion, all are punished. So likewise a traitor's son, that never had any hand in his father's sin, but behaved himself as an honest subject should do, yet, having communion with the person of his father, being indeed a piece of him, is thereupon justly disinherited by all law.

But how could Christ take our sins upon him and not be defiled therewith?

He took not the stain of our sins, but the guilt of them. Now in guilt there is two things.

A worthiness and desert of punishment.

An obligation and binding over thereunto.

Christ took not the desert of punishment upon him, from any fault in himself; he took whatsoever was penal upon him, but not culpable. As he was our surety, so he every way discharged our debt, being bound over to all judgments and punishments for us.

Now we owe unto God a double debt.

A debt of obedience; and if that fail,

A debt of punishment.

And both of these hath Christ freed us from; first, by obeying the will of his Father in everything; and, secondly, by suffering whatsoever was due to us for our transgressions.

Some heretics that would shake the foundation of our faith, will grant Christ to be a Mediator to intercede for us, and a Redeemer to set us at liberty from slavery, etc., but not to be a surety to pay our debt, by way of satisfaction to God for us.

Let us remember, that God's pleasure to redeem lost mankind, is not so much by way of power and strength, as by way of justice, and therefore it is said, Hebrews 7:22, "Christ is become our surety;" and Paul, when he became a mediator to Philemon for Onesimus, a fugitive servant, did it by way of surety, "If he owe thee anything I will discharge it," Philemon 1:18; and Christ Jesus our Mediator blessed for ever, so intercedeth unto God for us, as that he fully satisfies his justice for our offences.

But why was Christ thus forsaken of his Father?

To satisfy God for our forsaking of him. Christ's forsaking was satisfactory for all our forsakings of God. Beloved, we all forsook God in Adam, and indeed what do we else in every sin we commit, but forsake the Lord, and turn to the creature? What are all our sins of pleasure, profit, ambition, and the like, but a leaving of the fountain of living waters, to fetch contentment from "broken cisterns," Jeremiah 2:13.

But Christ was chiefly forsaken, that he might bring us home again to God, that there might be no more a separation betwixt his blessed Majesty and us.

Some shallow heretics there are, that would have Christ to be an example of patience and holiness in his life and death, and do us good that way only.

Oh no, beloved, the main comfort we receive from Christ is by way of satisfaction. There must be first grace, and then peace in our agreement with God. Sweetly, saith Bernard, I desire indeed to follow Christ as an example of humility, patience, self-denial, etc., and to love him with the same affection that he hath loved me; but I must eat of the Passover-Lamb, that is, I must chiefly feed on Christ dying for my sins. So every true Christian soul desires to follow Christ's obedience, humility, patience, etc., and to be transformed into the likeness of his blessed Saviour.

Whom should I desire to be like more than him, that hath done so much for me? But yet the main comfort I receive from Christ, is by eating his body and drinking his blood; my soul feeds and feasts itself most of all upon the death of Christ, as satisfying for my sins. And what a comfort is it that Christ being our surety, hath made full satisfaction for all our sins. Surely we shall never be finally and wholly forsaken, because Christ was forsaken for us.

Now we may think of God without discomfort, and of sin without despair. Now we may think of the law of death, the curse and all, and never be terrified -- why? Christ our surety hath given full content of divine justice for wrath and law, sin and curse, etc. They are all links of one chain, and Christ hath dissolved them all. Now sin ceaseth, wrath ceaseth, the law hath nothing to lay to our charge; death's sting is pulled out. How comfortably, therefore, may we appear before God's tribunal!

Oh, beloved, when the soul is brought as low as hell almost, then this consideration will be sweet, that Christ was forsaken as a surety for me; Christ overcame sin, death, God's wrath, and all for me; in him I triumph over all these. What welcome news is this to a distressed sinner!

Whenever thy soul is truly humbled in the sense of sin, look not at sin in thy conscience (thy conscience is a bed for another to lodge in), but at Christ. If thou be a broken-hearted sinner, see thy sins in Christ thy Saviour taken away; see what he hath endured and suffered for them; see not the law in thy conscience, but see it discharged by Christ; see death disarmed through him, and made an entrance into a better life for thee.

Whatsoever is ill, see it in Christ before thou seest it in thyself; and when thou beholdest it there, see not only the hurt thereof taken away, but all good made over to thee; for "all things work together for the best to them that love God," Romans 8:28. The devil himself, death, sin, and wrath, all help the main; the poison and mischief of all is taken away by Christ, and all good conveyed to us in him.

We have grace answerable to his grace. He is the first seat of God's love, and it sweetens whatever mercy we enjoy, that it comes from the fountain, God the father, through Christ unto us. I beseech you embrace the comfort that the Holy Ghost affords us from these sweet considerations.

Barely Saved?

Barely Saved?

We often heard 1 Peter 4:18, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear?" to mean that some Christians may be barely saved, "saved by the skin of their teeth". Read what Richard Sibbes has to say about this in excerpts from his sermon, "The Difficulty of Salvation", published in *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Banner of Truth Trust. Dr. Sibbes was a great Puritan preacher of Cambridge from 1626 to his death.

What is meant here by righteousness, to wit, a man endued with evangelical righteousness?

By "righteous" here, is meant that evangelical righteousness which we have in the state of the gospel, namely, the righteousness of Christ imputed to us; for Christ himself being ours, his obedience and all that he hath becomes ours also; and whosoever partaketh of this righteousness which is by faith, hath also a righteousness of sanctification accompanying the same, wrought in his soul by the Spirit of God, whereby his sinful nature is changed and made holy; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The same Spirit that assures us of our interest in Christ, purifies and cleanseth our hearts, and worketh a new life in us, opposite to our life in the first Adam; from whence flows new works of holiness and obedience throughout our whole conversation.

There must be an inward inherent righteousness, before there can be any works of righteousness. An instrument must be set in tune before it will make music; so the Spirit of God must first work a holy frame and disposition of heart in us, before we can bring forth any fruits of holiness in our lives.

For we commend not the works of grace as we do the works of art, but refer them to the worker. All that flows from the Spirit of righteousness are works of righteousness. When the soul submits itself to the spirit, and the body to the soul, then things come off kindly.

Take a man that is righteous by the Spirit of God: he is righteous in all relations; he gives every one his due; he gives God his due; spiritual worship is set up in his heart above all; he gives Christ his due by affiance in him; he gives the holy angels their due, by considering he is always in their presence, that their eye is upon him in every action he doth, and every duty he performs; the poor have their due from him; those that are in authority have their due.

If he be under any, he gives them reverence and obedience, etc; "he will owe nothing to any man but love," Romans 13:8; he is righteous in all his conversation; he is a vessel prepared for every good work. I deny not but he may err in some particular; that is nothing to the purpose. I speak of a man as he is in the disposition and bent of his heart to God and goodness, and so there is a thread of a righteous course, that runs along through his whole conversation.

The constant tenure of his life is righteous. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and labours to be more and more righteous still, every way, both in justification, that he may have a clearer evidence of that, as also in sanctification, that he may have more of the "new creature" formed in him, that so he may serve God better and better all his days.

Now, if this man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear? Where you have two branches.

The righteous shall scarcely be saved.

The terrible end of sinners and ungodly, where shall they appear?

Now in that the righteous man thus described by me shall scarcely be saved, consider two things.

That the righteous shall be saved.

That they shall scarcely be saved.

The righteous are saved. What do I say? The righteous shall be saved? He is saved already. "This day is salvation come to thine house," saith Christ to Zaccheus, Luke 19:9. "We are saved by faith, and are now set in heavenly places together with him," Ephesians 2:6. We have a title and interest to happiness already. There remains only a passage to the crown by good works. We do not, as the papists do, work to merit that we have not, but we do that we do in thankfulness for what we have. Because we know we are in the state of salvation; therefore we will shew our thankfulness to God in the course of our lives.

How can we miss of salvation when we are saved already? Christ our head being in heaven, will draw his body after him. What should hinder us? The world? Alas! we have that faith in us, "which overcometh the world," 1 John 5:4. As for the flesh, you know what the apostle saith, "We are not under the law, but under grace," Romans 6:14. The spirit in us always lusteth against the flesh, and subdues it by little and little; neither can Satan or the gates of hell prevail against us; for the grace we have is stronger than all enemies against us.

God the Father is our Father in Christ, and his love and gifts are without repentance, Romans 11:29. When once we are in the state of salvation, "He will preserve us by faith to salvation," 1 Peter 1:5; and we are knit to God the Son, who will lose none of his members. The marriage with Christ is an everlasting union; whom he loves, "He loves to the end," John 13:1. As for God the Holy Ghost, saith Christ, "I will send the Comforter, and he shall be with you to the end," John 6:14, John 6:16. The blessed Spirit of God never departs where he once takes up his lodging. There is no question, therefore, of the salvation of the righteous; they are, as it were, saved already.

Let this teach us thus much, that in all the changes and alterations which the faith of man is subject unto, he is sure of one thing: all the troubles, and all the enemies of the world shall not hinder his salvation. "If it be possible the elect should be deceived," Matthew 24:24; but it is not possible.

O what a comfort is this, that in the midst of all the oppositions and plottings of men and devils, yet notwithstanding, somewhat we have, that is not in the power of any enemy to take from us, nor in

our own power to lose, namely, our salvation. Set this against any evil whatsoever, and it swallows up all. Put case a man were subject to an hundred deaths, one after another, what are all these to salvation? Put case a man were in such grief, that he wept tears of blood; alas! in the day of salvation all tears shall be wiped from his eyes.

Set this, I shall be saved, against any misery you can imagine, and it will unspeakably comfort and revive the soul beyond all.

But it is here said, he shall scarcely be saved.

This is not a word of doubt, but of difficulty. It is not a word of doubt of the event, whether he shall be saved or no -- there is no doubt at all of that -- but it is a word of difficulty in regard of the way and passage thither. So it is here taken, which leads me to a second point, that

The way to come to salvation is full of difficulties

1. Because there is much ado to get Lot out of Sodom, to get Israel out of Egypt. It is no easy matter to get a man out of the state of corruption. O the sweetness of sin to an unregenerate man! O how it cuts his very heart to think what pleasures and what profits, and what friends, and what esteem amongst men he must part withal! What ado is there to pull him out of the kingdom of Satan, wherein the strong man, Luke 11:21, held him before!

2. Again, it is hard in regard of the sin that continually cleaves to them in this world, which doth, as it were, shackle them, and compass them about in all their performances. "They would do well, but sin is at hand," Romans 7:21, ready to hinder and stop them in good courses; so that they cannot serve God with such cheerfulness and readiness as they desire to do. Every good work they do, it is, as it were, pulled out of the fire; they cannot pray, but the flesh resists; they cannot suffer, but the flesh draws back. In all their doing and suffering they carry an enemy in their own bosoms that hinders them. Behold, this is no small affliction to God's people. How did this humble Paul, when no other affliction lay upon him! "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Romans 7:24. It was more troublesome to him than all his irons and pressures whatsoever.

3. Besides, it is hard in regard of Satan; for he is a great enemy to the peace of God's children. When they are once pulled out of his kingdom, he sends floods of reproaches and persecutions after them, and presently sends hue and cry, as Pharaoh after the Israelites. Oh, how it spites him! What! shall a piece of dust and clay be so near God, when I am tumbled out of heaven myself! Though I cannot hinder him from salvation, I will hinder his peace and joy; he shall not have heaven upon earth. I will make him walk as uncomfortably as I can. Thus the devil, as he is a malignant creature, full of envy against God's poor saints, so he is a bitter enemy of the peace and comfort which they enjoy; and therefore troubles them with many temptations from himself and his instruments, to interrupt their peace, and make the hearts of God's people sad all he can.

4. Then, by reason of great discouragements and ill-usage which they find in the world from wicked men, who are the devil's pipes, led with his spirit to vex and trouble the meek of the earth; for, though they think not of it, Satan is in their devilish natures; he joins and goes along with their spirits in hating and opposing the saints of God; for, indeed, what hurt could they do but by his instigation? How are good men despised in the world! How are they made the only butt to shoot at!

Alas! beloved, we should rather encourage men in the ways of holiness. We see the number of such as truly fear God is but small, soon reckoned up. They are but as grapes after the vintage, or a few berries after the shaking; one of a city, two of a tribe, Micah 7:1, Jeremiah 3:14. They have little encouragements from any, but discouragements on all sides.

5. Besides this, scandal makes it a hard matter to be saved; to see evil courses and evil persons flourish and countenanced in the world. Oh, it goes to the heart of God's people, and makes them stagger at God's providence. It is a bitter temptation, and shakes the faith of holy men, as we see, Psalms 73:1-28, Jeremiah 12:1-2. Again, it makes the heart of a good Christian bleed within him, to see scandals arise from professors of the gospel, when they are not so watchful as they should be, but bring a reproach upon religion by their licentious lives. Yea, God's children suffer much for their friends, whose wicked courses are laid to their charge, and sometimes even by their friends; for whilst they live here, the best of all are subject to some weakness or other, which causeth even those that are our encouragers, through jealousy or corruption, one way or another, to dishearten and trouble us in the way to heaven.

6. This, likewise, makes the way difficult; we are too apt to offend God daily, giving him just cause to withdraw his Spirit of comfort from us, which makes us go mourning all the day long; wanting those sweet refreshments of spiritual joy and peace we had before. the more comfort God's child hath in communion with God, the more he is grieved when he wants it. When Christ wanted the sweet solace of his Father upon the cross, how did it trouble him! "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46. How did he sweat water and blood in the garden, Luke 22:44, when he felt but a little while his Father's displeasure for sin! Thus is it with all God's children; they are of Christ's mind in their spiritual desertions. And when they have gotten a little grace, how difficult is it to keep it! to keep ourselves in the sense of God's love! to manage our Christian state aright! to walk worthy of the gospel, that God may still do us good, and delight to be present with us! What a great difficulty is it to be always stringing against the stream, and when we are cast back to get forward still, and not be discouraged till we come to the haven! None comes to heaven but they know how they come there.

Why God will have the righteous with such difficulty saved

Now, God will have it thus to sweeten heaven unto us. After a conflicting life peace is welcome; heaven is heaven indeed after trouble. We can relish it then. Because God will discard hypocrites in this life, who take up so much of religion as stands with their ease and credit in the world, avoiding every difficulty which accompanies godliness, but, so they may swim two ways at once, go on in their lusts still and be religious withal. This they approve of. Therefore God will have it a hard matter to be saved, to frustrate the vain hopes of such wretches. Alas! it is an easy matter to be an hypocrite, but not to live godly.

Where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?

What he means by sinner? By sinner he means him that makes a trade of sin. As we say, a man is of such a trade, because he is daily at work of it, and lives by it, so a man is a trader in sin, that lives in corrupt courses. For it is not one act that denominates a sinner, but the constant practice of his life.

Now this question, Where shall the ungodly appear? implies a strong denial. He shall be able to appear nowhere; especially in these three times.

1. In the day of public calamity, when God's judgments are abroad in the world. The wicked are as chaff before the wind, as wax before the sun, as stubble before the fire...

2. But where shall they stand in the hour of death? when the world can hold them no longer; when friends shall forsake them; when God will not receive them; when hell is ready to devour them, etc.

3. And lastly, where shall the sinner appear at the day of judgment, that great and terrible day of account, when they shall see all the world in a combustion round about them, and the Lord Jesus coming in flaming fire, "with his might angels, to take vengeance on such as obey not the gospel?" 2 Thessalonians 1:8. How will they then call for "the mountains to cover them, and the hills to fall upon them to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," Revelation 6:16.

Believe Christ, Not Satan

Believe Christ, Not Satan

by Richard Sibbes

Since Christ is thus comfortably set out to us, let us not believe Satan's representations of him. When we are troubled in conscience for our sins, Satan's manner is then to present Christ to the afflicted soul as a most severe judge armed with justice against us. But then let us present him to our souls as offered to our view by God himself, holding out a scepter of mercy, and spreading his arms to receive us.

HOW WE SHOULD THINK OF CHRIST

When we think of Joseph, Daniel, John the Evangelist, we frame conceptions of them with delight, as of mild and sweet persons. Much more when we think of Christ, we should conceive of him as a mirror of all meekness. If the sweetness of all flowers were in one, how sweet must that flower be? In Christ all perfections of mercy and love meet. How great then must that mercy be that lodges in so gracious a heart? Whatever tenderness is scattered in husband, father, brother, head, all is but a beam from him; it is in him in the most eminent manner. We are weak, but we are his; we are deformed, but yet carry his image upon us. A father looks not so much at the blemishes of his child as at his own nature in him; so Christ finds matter of love from that which is his own in us. He sees his own nature in us: we are diseased, but yet his members. Who ever neglected his own members because they were sick or weak? None ever hated his own flesh. Can the head forget the members? Can Christ forget himself? We are his fullness, as he is ours. He was love itself clothed with man's nature, which he united so near to himself, that he might communicate his goodness the more freely to us. And he took not our nature when it was at its best, but when it was abased, with all the natural and common infirmities it was subject to.

Let us therefore abhor all suspicious thoughts, as either cast in or cherished by that damned spirit who, as he labored to divide between the Father and the Son by jealousies, by saying, 'If thou be the Son of God' (Matthew 4:6), so his daily study is to divide between the Son and us by breeding false opinions in us of Christ, as if there were not such tender love in him to such as we are. It was Satan's art from the beginning to discredit God with man, by calling God's love into question with our first father Adam. His success then makes him ready at that weapon still.

WHEN CHRIST SEEMS TO BE AN ENEMY

'But for all this, I feel not Christ so to me,' says the smoking flax, 'but rather the clean contrary. He seems to be an enemy to me. I see and feel evidences of his just displeasure.'

Christ may act the part of an enemy a little while, as Joseph did, but it is to make way for acting his own part of mercy in a more seasonable time. He cannot restrain his bowels of mercy long. He seems to wrestle with us, as with Jacob, but he supplies us with hidden strength to prevail at length. Faith pulls off the mask from his face and sees a loving heart under contrary appearances.

Fides Christo larvam detrahit (Faith pulls away the mask from Christ). At first he answered the woman of Canaan, who was crying after him, not a word. Then he gave her a denial. After that he gave an answer tending to her reproach, calling her a dog, as being outside the covenant. Yet she would not be so beaten off, for she considered the end of his coming. As his Father was never nearer him in strength to support him than when he was furthest off in sense of favor to comfort him, so Christ is never nearer us in power to uphold us than when he seems most to hide his presence from us. The influence of the Sun of righteousness pierces deeper than his light. In such cases, whatever Christ's present bearing is towards us, let us oppose his nature and office against it. He cannot deny himself, he cannot but discharge the office his Father has laid upon him. We see here the Father has undertaken that he shall not 'quench the smoking flax', and Christ has also undertaken to represent us to the Father, appearing before him for us until he presents us blameless before him (John 17:6, John 17:11). The Father has given us to Christ, and Christ gives us back again to the Father.

WHEN DOUBT ASSAILS US

'This would be good comfort,' says one, 'if I were but as smoking flax.' It is well that this objection pinches on yourself, and not on Christ.

It is well that you give him the honor of his mercy towards others, though not to yourself. Yet do not wrong the work of his Spirit in your heart. Satan, as he slanders Christ to us, so he slanders us to ourselves. If you are not so much as smoking flax, then why do you not renounce your interest in Christ, and disclaim the covenant of grace? This you dare not do. Why do you not give yourself up wholly to other pleasures? This your spirit will not allow you to do. Where do these restless groanings and complaints come from? Lay your present state alongside the office of Christ to such, and do not despise the consolation of the Almighty nor refuse your own mercy. Cast yourself into the arms of Christ, and if you perish, perish there. If you do not, you are sure to perish. If mercy is to be found anywhere, it is there.

In this appears Christ's care to you, that he has given you a heart in some degree sensitive. He might have given you up to hardness, security and profaneness of heart, of all spiritual judgments the greatest. He who died for his enemies, will he refuse those, the desire of whose soul is towards him? He who, by his messengers, desires us to be reconciled, will he put us off when we earnestly seek it at his hand? No, doubtless, when he goes before us by kindling holy desires in us, he is ready to meet us in his own ways. When the prodigal set himself to return to his father, his father did not wait for him, but met him in the way. When he prepares the heart to seek, he causes his ear to hear (Psalms 10:17). He cannot find in his heart to hide himself long from us. If God should bring us into such a dark condition as that we should see no light from himself or the creature, then let us remember what he says by the prophet Isaiah, 'Who is among you...that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?'—no light of comfort, no light of God's countenance—'let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God' (Isaiah 50:10). We can never be in such a condition that there will be just cause of utter despair. Therefore let us do as mariners do, cast anchor in the dark. Christ knows how to pity us in this case. Look what comfort he felt from his Father when he was broken (Isaiah 53:5). This is what we shall feel from himself in our bruising.

The sighs of a bruised heart carry in them a report, both of our affection to Christ, and of his care to us. The eyes of our souls cannot be towards him unless he has cast a gracious look upon us

first. The least love we have to him is but a reflection of his love first shining upon us. As Christ did, in his example to us, whatever he charges us to do, so he suffered in his own person whatever he calls us to suffer, so that he might the better learn to relieve and pity us in our sufferings. In his desertion in the garden and on the cross he was content to be without that unspeakable solace which the presence of his Father gave, both to bear the wrath of the Lord for a time for us, and likewise to know the better how to comfort us in our greatest extremities. God sees fit: that we should taste of that cup of which his Son drank so deep, that we might feel a little what sin is, and what his Son's love was. But our comfort is that Christ drank the dregs of the cup for us, and will succor us, so that our spirits may not utterly fail under that little taste of his displeasure which we may feel. He became not only a man but a curse, a man of sorrows, for us. He was broken that we should not be broken; he was troubled, that we should not be desperately troubled; he became a curse, that we should not be accursed. Whatever may be wished for in an all-sufficient comforter is all to be found in Christ:

1. Authority from the Father. All power was given to him (Matthew 28:18).
2. Strength in himself. His name is 'The mighty God' (Isaiah 9:6).
3. Wisdom) and that from his own experience, how and when to help (Hebrews 2:18).
4. Willingness, as being bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh (Genesis 2:23; Ephesians 5:30).

Taken from The Bruised Reed. Updated.

Duties and Discouragement

Duties and Discouragement

[It will not be difficult] to resolve that question which some require help in, namely, whether we ought to perform duties when our hearts are altogether averse to them. To be satisfied on this point, we must take account of certain things.

WE SHOULD PERSIST IN DUTIES

Our hearts of themselves are reluctant to give up their liberty, and are only with difficulty brought under the yoke of duty. The more spiritual the duty is, the more reluctance there is. Corruption gains ground, for the most part, in every neglect. It is as in rowing against the tide, one stroke neglected will not be gained in three; and therefore it is good to keep our hearts close to duty, and not to listen to the excuses they are ready to frame.

As we set about duty, God strengthens the influence that he has in us. We find a warmness of heart and increase of strength, the Spirit going along with us and raising us up by degrees, until he leaves us as it were in heaven. God often delights to take advantage of our averseness, that he may manifest his work the more clearly, and that all the glory of the work may be his, as all the strength is his.

Obedience is most direct when there is nothing else to sweeten the action. Although the sacrifice is imperfect, yet the obedience with which it is offered is accepted.

What is won as a spoil from our corruptions will have as great a degree of comfort afterwards as it has of obstruction for the present. Feeling and freeness of spirit are often reserved until duty is discharged. Reward follows work. In and after duty we find that experience of God's presence which, without obedience, we may long wait for, and yet go without. This does not hinder the Spirit's freedom in blowing upon our souls when he pleases (John 3:8), for we speak only of such a state of soul as is becalmed and must row, as it were, against the stream. As in sailing the hand must be to the helm and the eye to the star, so here we must put forth that little strength we have to duty and look up for assistance, which the Spirit, as freely as seasonably, will afford.

Yet in these duties that require the body as well as the soul there may be a cessation till strength is restored. Whetting a tool does not hinder, but prepares. In sudden passions, also, there should be a time to compose and calm the soul, and to put the strings in tune. The prophet asked for a minstrel to bring his soul into frame (2 Kings 3:15).

OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENTS

Suffering brings discouragements, because of our impatience. "Alas!" we lament, "I shall never get through such a trial" But if God brings us into the trial he will be with us in the trial, and at length bring us out, more refined. We shall lose nothing but dross (Zechariah 13:9). From our own strength we cannot bear the least trouble, but by the Spirit's assistance we can bear the greatest.

The Spirit will add his shoulders to help us to bear our infirmities. The Lord will give his hand to heave us up (Psalms 37:24). “Ye have heard of the patience of Job,” says James (James 5:11). We have heard of his impatience too, but it pleased God mercifully to overlook that. It yields us comfort also in desolate conditions, such as contagious sicknesses and the like, in which we are more immediately under God’s hand, that then Christ has a throne of mercy at our bedside and numbers our tears and our groans. And, to come to the matter we are now about, the Sacrament (A marginal note in early editions reads, “This was preached at the Sacrament”), it was ordained not for angels, but for men; and not for perfect men, but for weak men; and not for Christ, who is truth itself, to bind him, but because we are ready, by reason of our guilty and unbelieving hearts, to call truth itself into question.

Therefore it was not enough for his goodness to leave us many precious promises, but he gives us confirming tokens to strengthen us. And even if we are not so prepared as we should be, yet let us pray as Hezekiah did: “The good LORD pardon everyone that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary” (2 Chronicles 30:18-19). Then we come comfortably to this holy sacrament, and with much fruit. This should carry us through all duties with much cheerfulness, that, if we hate our corruptions and strive against them, they shall not be counted ours. “It is no more I that do it,” says Paul, “but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:17). For what displeases us shall never hurt us, and we shall be esteemed by God to be what we love and desire and labor to be. What we desire to be we shall be, and what we desire truly to conquer we shall conquer, for God will fulfill the desire of them that fear him (Psalms 145:19). The desire is an earnest of the thing desired. How little encouragement will carry us to the affairs of this life! And yet all the helps God offers will hardly prevail with our backward natures.

THE SOURCE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS

Where, then, do these discouragements come from?

Not from the Father, for he has bound himself in covenant to pity us as a father pities his children (Psalms 103:13) and to accept as a father our weak endeavors. And what is wanting in the strength of duty, he gives us leave to take up in his gracious indulgence. In this way we shall honor that grace in which he delights as much as in more perfect performances. *Possibilitas tua mensura tua* (What is possible to you is what you will be measured by).

Not from Christ, for he by office will not quench the smoking flax. We see how Christ bestows the best fruits of his love on persons who are mean in condition, weak in abilities, and offensive for infirmities, nay, for grosser falls. And this he does, first, because thus it pleases him to confound the pride of the flesh, which usually measures God’s love by some outward excellency; and secondly, in this way he delights to show the freedom of his grace and confirm his royal prerogative that “he that glorieth” must “glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, among that cloud of witnesses, we see Rahab, Gideon and Samson ranked with Abraham, the father of the faithful (Hebrews 11:31-32). Our blessed Savior, as he was the image of his Father, so in this he was of the same mind, glorifying his Father for revealing the mystery of the gospel to simple men, neglecting those that carried the chief reputation of wisdom in the world (Matthew 11:25-26).

It is not unworthy of being recorded, what Augustine speaks of a simple man in his time, destitute almost altogether of the use of reason, who, although he was most patient of all injuries done to himself, yet from a reverence of religion he would not endure any injury done to the name of Christ, so much so that he would cast stones at those that blasphemed, not even sparing his own governors. This shows that none have abilities so meagre as to be beneath the gracious regard of Christ. Where it pleases him to make his choice and to exalt his mercy he passes by no degree of understanding, though never so simple.

Neither do discouragements come from the Spirit. He helps our infirmities, and by office is a comforter (Romans 8:26; John 14:16). If he convinces of sin, and so humbles us, it is that he may make way for his office of comforting us. Discouragements, then, must come from ourselves and from Satan, who labors to fasten on us a loathing of duty.

SOME SCRUPLES REMOVED

Among other causes of discouragement, some are much vexed with scruples, even against the best duties; partly by disease of body, helped by Satan's malice in casting dust in their eyes in their way to heaven; and partly from some remainder of ignorance, which, like darkness, breeds fears—ignorance especially of this merciful disposition in Christ, the persuasion of which would easily banish false fears. They conceive of him as one on watch for all advantages against them, in which they may see how they wrong not only themselves but his goodness. This scrupulosity, for the most part, is a sign of a godly soul, as some weeds are of a good soil. Therefore they are the more to be pitied, for it is a heavy affliction, and the ground of it in most is not so much from trouble of conscience as from a disordered imagination. The end of Christ's coming was to free us from all such groundless fears. There is still in some such ignorance of that comfortable condition we are in under the covenant of grace as to discourage them greatly. Therefore we must understand that:

Weaknesses do not break covenant with God. They do not break the covenant between husband and wife, and shall we make ourselves more pitiful than Christ who makes himself a pattern of love to all other husbands?

Weaknesses do not debar us from mercy; rather they incline God to us the more (Psalms 78:39). Mercy is a part of the church's marriage inheritance. Christ betroths her to him "in mercy," (Hosea 2:19). The husband is bound to bear with the wife, as being the "weaker vessel," (1 Peter 3:7), and shall we think Christ will exempt himself from his own rule, and not bear with his weak spouse?

If Christ should not be merciful to our weaknesses, he should not have a people to serve him. Suppose therefore we are very weak, yet so long as we are not found amongst malicious opposers and underminers of God's truth, let us not give way to despairing thoughts; we have a merciful Savior.

But lest we flatter ourselves without good grounds, we must know that weaknesses are to be reckoned either imperfections cleaving to our best actions, or actions proceeding from immaturity in Christ, whilst we are babes, or the effects of want of strength, where ability is small, or sudden unintended breakings out, contrary to our general bent and purpose, whilst our judgment is overcast with the cloud of a sudden temptation, after which we feel our infirmity, grieve for it and from grief, complain, and, with complaining, strive and labor to reform; finally, in laboring, we make

some progress against our corruption.

Weaknesses so considered, although a matter of humiliation and the object of our daily mortification, yet may be consistent with boldness with God, nor is a good work either extinguished by them or tainted so far as to lose all acceptance with God. But to plead for an infirmity is more than an infirmity; to allow ourselves in weaknesses is more than a weakness. The justification of evil shuts our mouths, so that the soul cannot call God Father with childlike liberty, or enjoy sweet communion with him, until peace be made by shaming ourselves, and renewing our faith. Those that have ever been bruised for sin, if they fall, are soon recovered. Peter was recovered with a gracious look of Christ, David by Abigail's words. If you tell a thief or a vagrant that he is out of the way, he pays no heed, because his aim is not to walk in any particular way, except as it suits his purpose.

WHAT ARE SINS OF INFIRMITY?

To clarify this further, we must understand that:

Wherever sins of infirmity are in a person, there must be the life of grace begun. There can be no weakness where there is no life.

There must be a sincere and general bent to the best things. Though a godly man may suddenly be drawn or driven aside in some particulars, yet, by reason of that interest the Spirit of Christ has in him, and because his aims are right in the main, he will either recover of himself, or yield to the counsel of others.

There must be a right judgment, allowing of the best ways, or else the heart is rotten. Then it will infuse corruption into the whole conversation, so that all men's actions become infected at the spring-head. They then justify looseness and condemn God's ways as too much strictness. Their principles whereby they work are not good.

There must be a conjugal love to Christ, so that there are no terms on which they will change their Lord and husband, and yield themselves absolutely over to be ruled by their own lusts, or the lusts of others.

A Christian's behavior towards Christ may in many things be very offensive, and cause some strangeness; yet he will own Christ, and Christ him; he will not resolve upon any way wherein he knows he must break with Christ.

Where the heart is thus in these respects qualified, there we must know this, that Christ counts it his honor to pass by many infirmities, nay, in infirmities he perfects his strength. There are some almost invincible infirmities, such as forgetfulness, heaviness of spirit, sudden passions and fears which, though natural, yet are for the most part tainted with sin. Of these, if the life of Christ be in us, we are weary, and would fain shake them off, as a sick man his fever; otherwise it is not to be esteemed weakness so much as willfulness, and the more will, the more sin. And little sins, when God shall awaken the conscience and 'set them in order' before us (Psalms 50:21) will prove great burdens, and not only bruise a reed, but shake a cedar. Yet God's children never sin with full will, because there is a contrary law in their minds by which the dominion of sin is broken and which always has some secret working against the law of sin. Nevertheless there may be so much will in a sinful action as may destroy our comfort to a remarkable degree afterwards and keep us long on

the rack of a disquieted conscience, God in his fatherly dispensation suspending the sense of his love. To the extent that we give way to our will in sinning, to that extent we set ourselves at a distance from comfort. Sin against conscience is as a thief (A flaw in a candlewick which causes guttering) in the candle, which spoils our joy, and thereby weakens our strength. We must know, therefore, that willful breaches in sanctification will much hinder the sense of our justification.

What course shall such take to recover their peace? They must condemn themselves sharply, and yet cast themselves upon God's mercy in Christ, as at their first conversion. And now they must embrace Christ the more firmly, as they see more need in themselves; and let them remember the mildness of Christ here, that he will not quench the smoking flax. Often we see that, after a deep humiliation, Christ speaks more peace than before, to witness the truth of this reconciliation, because he knows Satan's enterprises in casting such down lower, because they are most abased in themselves and are ashamed to look Christ in the face, because of their ingratitude.

We see that God did not only pardon David but, after much bruising, gave him wise Solomon to succeed him in the kingdom. We see in Son_6:4 that, after the church has been humbled for her slighting of Christ, he sweetly entertains her again, and begins to commend her beauty. We must know for our comfort that Christ was not anointed to this great work of Mediator for lesser sins only, but for the greatest, if we have but a spark of true faith to lay hold on him. Therefore, if there be any bruised reed, let him not make an exception of himself, when Christ does not make an exception of him. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," (Matthew 11:28). Why should we not make use of so gracious a disposition? We are only poor for this reason, that we do not know our riches in Christ. In time of temptation, believe Christ rather than the devil. Believe truth from truth itself. Hearken not to a liar, an enemy and a murderer.

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Grace Shall Reign

Grace Shall Reign

by Richard Sibbes

WHY CHRIST'S KINGDOM MUST PREVAIL

1. Christ has conquered all in his own person first, and he is 'over all, God blessed for ever' (Romans 9:5), and therefore over sin, death, hell, Satan and the world. And, as he has overcome them in himself, so he overcomes them in our hearts and consciences. We commonly say that conscience makes a man kingly or contemptible, because it is planted in us to judge for God, either with us or against us. Now if natural conscience be so forcible, what will it be when, besides its own light, it has the light of divine truth put into it? It will undoubtedly prevail, either to make us hold up our heads with boldness, or abase us beneath ourselves. If it subjects itself, by grace, to Christ's truth, then it boldly faces death, hell, judgment and all spiritual enemies, because then Christ sets up his kingdom in the conscience and makes it a kind of paradise.

The sharpest conflict which the soul has is between the conscience and God's justice. Now if the conscience, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, has prevailed over assaults fetched from the justice of God, now satisfied by Christ, it will prevail over all other opposition whatsoever.

2. We are to encounter accursed and damned enemies; therefore, if they begin to fall before the Spirit in us, they shall fall. If they rise up again, it is to have the greater fall.

3. The Spirit of truth, to whose tuition Christ has committed his church, and the truth of the Spirit, which is the scepter of Christ, abide forever; therefore the soul begotten by the immortal seed of the Spirit (1 Peter 1:23), and this truth, must not only live for ever, but also prevail over all that oppose it, for both the Word and the Spirit are mighty in operation (Hebrews 4:12). And, if the wicked spirit is never idle in those whom God has delivered up to him, we cannot think that the Holy Spirit will be idle in those whose leading and government is committed to him. No, as he dwells in them, so he will drive out all that rise up against him, until he is all in all. What is spiritual is eternal. Truth is a beam of Christ's Spirit, both in itself and as it is engrafted into the soul. Therefore it, and the grace wrought by it, though little, will prevail. A little thing in the hand of a giant will do great things. A little faith strengthened by Christ will work wonders.

4. 'Unto everyone that hath shall be given' (Matthew 25:29). The victory over corruption or temptation is a pledge of final victory. As Joshua said when he set his foot upon the five kings whom he conquered, 'Thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies' (Joshua 10:25). Heaven is ours already, only we strive till we have full possession.

5. Christ as king brings in a commanding light into the soul and bows the neck, and softens the iron sinew of the inner man; and where he begins to rule, he rules for ever, 'of his kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke 1:33).

6. The purpose of Christ's coming was to destroy the works of the devil, both for us and in us; and the purpose of the resurrection was, as well as sealing to us the assurance of his victory, so also (1) to quicken our souls from death in sin; (2) to free our souls from such snares and sorrows of spiritual death as accompany the guilt of sin; (3) to raise them up more comfortable, as the sun breaks forth more gloriously out of a thick cloud; (4) to raise us out of particular slips and failings stronger; (5) to raise us out of all troublesome and dark conditions of this life; and (6) at length to raise our bodies out of the dust. For the same power that the Spirit showed in raising Christ, our Head, from the sorrows of death and the lowest degree of his abasement, that power, obtained by the death of Christ from God, now appeased by that sacrifice, the Spirit will show in the church, which is his body, and in every particular member thereof.

And this power is conveyed by faith, by which, after union with Christ in his estates both of humiliation and of exaltation, we see ourselves, not only dead with Christ, but risen and sitting together with him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). Now we, apprehending ourselves to be dead and risen, and therefore victorious over all our enemies in our Head, and apprehending that his scope in all this is to conform us to himself, we are by this faith changed into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18), and so become conquerors over all our spiritual enemies, as he is, by that power which we derive from him who is the storehouse of all spiritual strength for all his people. Christ at length will fulfil his purpose in us, and faith rests assured of it, and this assurance is very operative, stirring us up to join with Christ in his purposes.

And so, as to the church in general, by Christ it will have its victory. Christ is that little 'stone cut out without hands' which broke in pieces the goodly image (Daniel 2:34), that is, all opposite government, until it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth' (Daniel 2:35). So that the stone that was cut out of the mountain becomes a mountain itself at length. Who art thou, then, oh, mountain, that thinks to stand up against this mountain? All shall lie flat and level before it. He will bring down all mountainous, high, exalted thoughts, and lay the pride of all flesh low. When chaff strives against the wind, or stubble against the fire, when the heel kicks against the pricks, when the potsherd strives with the potter, when man strives against God, it is easy to know on which side the victory will be. The winds may toss the ship wherein Christ is, but not overturn it. The waves may dash against the rock, but they only break themselves against it.

WHY THE ENEMY SEEMS VICTORIOUS

Objection: If this is so, why is it thus with the church of God, and with many a gracious Christian? The victory seems to be with the enemy.

To understand this, we should remember, firstly, that God's children usually, in their troubles, overcome by suffering. Here lambs overcome lions, and doves, eagles, by suffering, that herein they may be conformable to Christ, who conquered most when he suffered most. Together with Christ's kingdom of patience there was a kingdom of power.

Secondly, this victory is by degrees, and therefore they are too hasty-spirited that would conquer as soon as they strike the first stroke, and be at the end of their race at the first setting forth. The Israelites were sure of their victory in their journey to Canaan, yet they must fight it out. God would not have us quickly forget what cruel enemies Christ has overcome for us. 'Slay them not, lest my people forget,' says the Psalmist (Psalms 59:11), so that, by the experience of that annoyance we

have by them, we might be kept in fear to come under their power.

Thirdly, God often works by contraries: when he means to give victory, he will allow us to be foiled at first; when he means to comfort, he will terrify first; when he means to justify, he will condemn us first; when he means to make us glorious, he will abase us first. A Christian conquers, even when he is conquered. When he is conquered by some sins, he gets victory over others more dangerous, such as spiritual pride and security.

Fourthly, Christ's work, both in the church and in the hearts of Christians, often goes backward so that it may go forward better. As seed rots in the ground in the winter time, but after comes up better, and the harder the winter the more flourishing the spring, so we learn to stand by falls, and get strength by weakness discovered—*virtutis custos infirmitas* (weakness is the keeper of virtue). We take deeper root by shaking. And, as torches flame brighter by moving, thus it pleases Christ, out of his freedom, in this manner to maintain his government in us. Let us herein labor to exercise our faith, so that it may answer Christ's way of dealing with us. When we are foiled, let us believe we shall overcome; when we have fallen, let us believe we shall rise again. Jacob, after he received a blow which made him lame, yet would not give over wrestling (Genesis 32:25) till he had obtained the blessing. So let us never give up, but, in our thoughts knit the beginning, progress and end together, and then we shall see ourselves in heaven out of the reach of all enemies. Let us assure ourselves that God's grace, even in this imperfect state, is stronger than man's free will in the state of original perfection. It is founded now in Christ, who, as he is the author, so will he be the finisher, of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We are under a more gracious covenant.

What some say of rooted faith, *fides radicata*, that it continues, while weak faith may come to nothing, seems to be contradicted by this Scripture; for, as the strongest faith may be shaken, so the weakest, where truth is, is so far rooted that it will prevail. Weakness with watchfulness will stand, when strength with too much confidence fails. Weakness, with acknowledgement of it, is the fittest seat and subject for God to perfect his strength in; for consciousness of our infirmities drives us out of ourselves to him in whom our strength lies.

From this it follows that weakness may be consistent with the assurance of salvation. The disciples, notwithstanding all their weaknesses, are bidden to rejoice that their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20). Failings, with conflict, in sanctification should not weaken the peace of our justification and assurance of salvation. It matters not so much what ill is in us, as what good; not what corruptions, but how we regard them; not what our particular failings are so much as what the thread and tenor of our lives are, for Christ's dislike of that which is amiss in us turns not to the hatred of our persons but to the victorious subduing of all our infirmities.

Some have, after conflict, wondered at the goodness of God that so little and such trembling faith should have upheld them in so great combats, when Satan had almost caught them. And, indeed, it is to be wondered at, how much a little grace will prevail with God for acceptance, and over our enemies for victory, if the heart is upright. Such is the goodness of our sweet Savior that he delights to show his strength in our weakness.

CONSOLATION FOR WEAK CHRISTIANS

The first use of this is for the great consolation of poor and weak Christians. Let them know that a spark from heaven, though kindled under green wood that sobs and smokes, yet it will consume all at last. Love once kindled is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench it, and therefore it is called a vehement flame, or flame of God (Son_8:6), kindled in the heart by the Holy Ghost. That little that is in us is fed with an everlasting spring. As the fire that came down from heaven in Elijah's time (1 Kings 18:38) licked up all the water, to show that it came from God, so will this fire consume all our corruption. No affliction without or corruption within shall quench it. In the morning, we often see clouds gather about the sun, as if they would hide it, but the sun overcomes them little by little, till it comes to its full strength. At first, fears and doubts hinder the breaking out of this fire, until at length it gets above them all, and Christ prevails. And then he upholds his own graces in us. Grace conquers us first, and we, by it, conquer all else; whether corruptions within us, or temptations from outside us.

The church of Christ, begotten by the Word of truth, has the doctrine of the apostles for her crown, and tramples the moon, that is, the world and all worldly things, 'under her feet' (Revelation 12:1). Every one that is 'born of God overcometh the world' (1 John 5:4). Faith, whereby especially Christ rules, sets the soul so high that it looks down on all other things as far below, as having represented to it, by the Spirit of Christ, riches, honor, beauty and pleasures of a higher nature.

EVIDENCES OF CHRIST'S RULE IN US

Now, that we may not come short of the comfort intended, there are two things especially to be taken notice of by us: firstly, whether there is such a judgment or government set up in us to which this promise of victory is made, and secondly, how we are to conduct ourselves so that the judgment of Christ in us may indeed be victorious.

The evidences whereby we may come to know that Christ's judgment in us is such as will be victorious, are:

1. Being able from experience to justify all Christ's ways, let flesh and blood say what they can to the contrary, and willingly subscribing to that course which God has taken in Christ to bring us to heaven, still approving a further measure of grace than we have attained to, and projecting and planning for it. No other men can justify their courses, when their conscience is awakened.
2. Having reasons of religion the strongest reasons with us, prevailing more than reasons fetched from worldly policy.
3. Being so true to our ends and steadfast to our rule that no hopes or fears can sway us another way, but still we are inquiring what agrees with or differs from our rule.
4. Being able to 'do nothing against the truth, but for the truth' (2 Corinthians 13:8), the truth being dearer to us than our lives. Truth does not have this sovereignty in the heart of any carnal man.
5. If we had liberty to choose under whose government we would live, out of a delight in the inner man to Christ's government, making choice of him only to rule us before any other. This argues that we are like-minded to Christ, a free and a willing people, and not compelled to Christ's service otherwise than by the sweet constraint of love. When we are so far satisfied with the government of Christ's Spirit that we are willing to resign up ourselves to him in all things, then his kingdom is come to us, and our wills are brought to his will. It is the bent of our wills that makes us good or ill.

6. Having a well-ordered, uniform life, not consisting of fits and starts, shows a well-ordered heart; as in a clock, when the hammer strikes well, and the hand of the dial points well, it is a sign that the wheels are rightly set.

7. When Christ's will comes into competition with any earthly loss or gain, yet then, in that particular case, having the heart willing to stoop to Christ is a true sign; for the truest trial of the power of grace is in particular cases which touch us most closely, for there our corruption makes the greatest head. When Christ came nearest to home with the young man in the gospel, he lost a disciple of him (Matthew 19:22).

8. Being able to practice duties pleasing to Christ, though contrary to flesh and the course of the world, and being able to overcome ourselves in that evil to which our nature is prone and stands so much inclined, and which agrees to the ruling passion of the times, which others lie enthralled under, such as desire of revenge, hatred of enemies, private ends, etc., this shows that grace in us is above nature, heaven above earth, and will have the victory.

To make this clearer, and help us in our trial, we must know that there are three degrees of victory: first, when we resist though we are foiled; second, when grace gets the better, though with conflict; and third, when all corruption is perfectly subdued. When we have strength only to resist, we may know Christ's government in us will be victorious, because what is said of the devil is true of all our spiritual enemies, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7); because 'Greater is he that is in you', who takes the part of his own grace, 'than he that is in the world' (1 John 4:4). And if we may hope for victory from bare resistance, what may we not hope for when the Spirit has gained the upper hand?

Puritan Sweetness Extracts from "A Descripti

Puritan Sweetness Extracts from "A Description of Christ"

by Richard Sibbes

Coming to God in Him

And what a comfort is it now, in our daily approach to God, to minister boldness to us in all our perplexities, that we go to God in the name of one that he loves, 'in whom his soul delights,' that we have a friend in court, a friend in heaven for us, that is at the right hand of God, and interposeth himself there for us in all our suits, that makes us acceptable, that perfumes our prayers and makes them acceptable. He intercedes by virtue of his redemption. If God loves him for the work of redemption, he loves him for his intercession, therefore God is required to regard the prayers made by him, by virtue of his dying for us, when he loves him for dying for us. Be sure therefore, whenever we bring our needs to God, to take along our elder brother, to take our beloved brother, take Benjamin with us, and offer all to God in him, our persons to be accepted in him, our prayers, our hearing, our works, and all that we do, and we shall be sure to speed; for he is one in whom the soul of God delights. There must be this passage and repassage, as God looks upon us lovely in him, and delights in us as we are members of him. All God's love and the fruits of it come to us as we are in Christ, and are one with him. Then in our passage to God again we must return all, and do all, to God in Christ. Be sure not to go to a naked God; for so he is 'a consuming fire,' but go to him in the mediation of him whom he loves, 'and in whom his soul delighteth.'

Transformed by the Beholding of Christ

The very beholding of Christ is a transforming sight. The Spirit that makes us new creatures, and stirs us up to behold this Saviour, causes it to be a transforming beholding. If we look upon him with the eye of faith, it will make us like Christ; for the gospel is a mirror, and such a mirror, that when we a look into it, and see ourselves interested in it, we are changed from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. A man cannot look upon the love of God and of Christ in the gospel, but it will change him to be like God and Christ For how can we see Christ, and God in Christ, but we shall see how God hates sin, and this will transform us to hate it as God cloth, who hated it so that it could not be expiated but with the blood of Christ, God man. So, seeing the holiness of God in it, it will transform us to be holy. When we see the love of God in the gospel, and the love of Christ giving himself for us, this will transform us to love God. When we see the humility and obedience of Christ, when we look on Christ as God's chosen servant in all this, and as our surety and head, it transforms us to the like humility and obedience. Those that find not their dispositions in some comfortable measure wrought to this blessed transformation, they have not yet those eyes that the Holy Ghost requireth here. 'Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul delighteth.'

Concerning our own Reputations

And let us commit the fame and credit of what we are or do to God. He will take care of that. Let us take care to be and to do as we should, and then for noise and report, let it be good or ill as God will send it. We know oftentimes it falls out that that which is precious in man's eye is abominable in God's. If we seek to be in the mouths of men, to dwell in the talk and speech of men, God will abhor us, and at the hour of death it will not comfort us what men speak or know of us, but sound comfort must be from our own conscience and the judgement of God. Therefore, let us labour to be good in secret. Christians should be as minerals, rich in the depth of the earth. That which is least seen is his riches. We should have our treasure deep. For the discovery of it we should be ready when we are called to it, and for all other non-essential things, let them fall out as God in his wisdom sees good. So let us look through good report and bad report to heaven; let us do the duties that are pleasing to God and our own conscience, and God will be careful enough to get us applause. Was it not sufficient for Abel, that though there was no great notice taken what faith he had, and how good a man he was, yet that God knew it and discovered it? God sees our sincerity and the truth of our hearts, and the graces of our inward man, he sees all these, and he values us by these, as he did Abel. As for outward things there may be a great deal of deceit in them, and the more a man grows in grace, the less he cares for them. As much reputation as is fit for a man will follow him in being and doing what he should. God will look to that. Therefore we should not set up sails to our own imaginations, that unless we be carried with the wind of applause, to be becalmed and not go a whit forward, but we should be carried with the Spirit of God and with a holy desire to serve God and our brethren, and to do all the good we can, and never care for the speeches of the world, as St Paul saith of himself: 'I care not what ye judge of me, I care not what the world judgeth, I care not for man's judgement,' 1 Cor. iv. 3. This is man's day. We should, from the example of Christ, labour to subdue this infirmity which we are sick of naturally. Christ concealed himself till he saw a fitter time. We shall have glory enough, and be known enough to devils, to angels, and men ere long. Therefore, as Christ lived a hidden life, that is, he was not known what he was, that so he might work our salvation, so let us be content to be hidden men. A true Christian is hidden to the world till the time of manifestation comes. When the time came, Christ then gloriously discovered what he was; so we shall be discovered what we are. In the mean time, let us be careful to do our duty that may please the Spirit of God, and satisfy our own conscience, and leave all the rest to God. Let us meditate, in the fear of God, upon these directions for the guidance of our lives in this particular.

Means to Make Grace Victorious

Means to Make

Grace Victorious

by Richard Sibbes

As to directions on how we are to conduct ourselves so that the judgment of Christ in us may indeed be victorious, we must know that, though Christ has undertaken this victory, yet he accomplishes it by training us up to fight his battles. He overcomes in us by making us wise unto salvation' (2 Timothy 3:15); and, in the measure that we believe Christ will conquer, in that measure we will endeavor by his grace that we may conquer, for faith is an obedient and a wise grace. Christ makes us wise to ponder and weigh things, and to rank and order them accordingly, so that we may make the fitter choice of what is best. Some rules to help us in judging are these:

RULES FOR RIGHT JUDGMENT

1. We should judge of things as to whether they help or hinder our main purpose; whether they further or hinder our judgment; whether they make us more or less spiritual, and so bring us nearer to the fountain of goodness, God himself; whether they will bring us peace or sorrow at the last; whether they commend us more or less to God, and whether they are the thing in which we shall of sin for the greatest ill of punishment. 'In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird' (Proverbs 1:17). While the soul is kept aloft, there is little danger of snares below. We must lose our high estimation of things before we can be drawn to any sin.

2. And because knowledge and affection mutually help one another, it is good to keep up our affections of love and delight by all sweet inducements and divine encouragements; for what the heart likes best, the mind studies most. Those that can bring their hearts to delight in Christ know most of his ways. Wisdom loves him that loves her. Love is the best entertainer of truth; and when it is not entertained in the love of it (2 Thessalonians 2:10), lovely as it is, it leaves the heart, and will stay no longer. It has been a successful way of corrupting the judgment, to begin by withdrawing love, because, as we love, so we tend to judge. And therefore it is hard to be affectionate and wise in earthly things. But in heavenly things, where there has been a right informing of the judgment before, the more our affections grow, the better and clearer our judgments will be, because our affections, though strong, can never rise high enough to reach the excellency of the things. We see in the martyrs, when the sweet doctrine of Christ had once gained their hearts, it could not be removed again by all the torments the wit of cruelty could devise. If Christ has once possessed the affections, there is no dispossessing of him again. A fire in the heart overcomes all fires without.

3. Wisdom also teaches us where our weakness lies, and our enemy's strength. By this means a jealous fear is stirred up in us, whereby we are preserved; for out of this godly jealousy we keep those provocations, which are active and working, from that which is passive and approve

ourselves to him most. We should also judge of things now as we shall do hereafter when the soul shall be best able to judge, as when we are under any public calamity, or at the hour of death, when the soul gathers itself from all other things to itself. We should look back to former experience and see what is most agreeable to it, and what was best in our worst times. If grace is or was best then, it is best now. We should also labor to judge of things as he does who must judge us, and as holy men judge, who are led by the Spirit. More particularly, we should judge according to what those judge that have no interest in any benefit that may come by the thing which is in question; for outward things blind the eyes even of the wise. We see that papists are most corrupt in those things where their honor, ease, or profit is engaged; but in the doctrine of the Trinity, which does not touch on these things, they are sound. But it is not sufficient that judgment is right. It must also be ready and strong.

KEEPING OUR JUDGMENT CLEAR

1. Where Christ establishes his government, he inspires care to keep the judgment clear and fresh, for while the judgment stands straight and firm, the whole frame of the soul continues strong and impregnable. True judgment in us advances Christ, and Christ will advance it. All sin is either from false principles, or ignorance, or thoughtlessness, or unbelief of what is true. By lack of consideration and weakness of assent, Eve lost her hold at first (Genesis 3:6). It is good, therefore, to store up true principles in our hearts, and to refresh them often, that, in virtue of them, our affections and actions may be more vigorous. When judgment is fortified, evil finds no entrance, but good things have a side within us to entertain them. While true convincing light continues, we will not do the least ill of sin for the greatest ill of punishment. 'In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird' (Proverbs 1:17). While the soul is kept aloft, there is little danger of snares below. We must lose our high estimation of things before we can be drawn to any sin.

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3. Wisdom also teaches us where our weakness lies, and our enemy's strength. By this means a jealous fear is stirred up in us, whereby we are preserved; for out of this godly jealousy we keep those provocations, which are active and working, from that which is passive and catching in us, as we keep fire from powder. Those who wish to hinder the generation of noisome creatures will hinder the conception first, by keeping male and female apart. This jealous care will be much

furthered by observing strictly what has helped or hindered a gracious temper in us, and it will make us take heed that we consult not with flesh and blood in ourselves or others. Otherwise, how can we think that Christ will lead us out to victory, when we take counsel with his and our enemies?

4. Christ also makes us careful to use all means by which fresh thoughts and affections may be stirred up and preserved in us. Christ so honors the use of means, and the care he bestows on us, that he ascribes both preservation and victory to our care in keeping ourselves. 'He that is begotten of God keepeth himself' (1 John 5:18), though not by himself, but by the Lord, in dependence on him, in the use of means. We are only safe when we wisely make use of all good advantages that we have access to. By going out of God's ways we go out of his government, and so lose our good frame of mind, and find ourselves overspread quickly with a contrary disposition. When we draw near to Christ (James 4:8), in his ordinances, he draws near to us.

5. We must keep grace in exercise. It is not sleepy habits, but grace in exercise, that preserves us. While the soul is in some civil or sacred employment, corruptions within us are much suppressed, and Satan's ways of approach to us stopped. The Spirit then has a way open to enlarge his influence in us, and likewise the protection of angels is then closest to us. This course often prevails more against our spiritual enemies than direct opposition. Christ is in honor bound to maintain those that are in his work.

6. In following all these directions, we must look up to Christ, the quickening Spirit, and make our resolutions in his strength. Though we are exhorted to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart (Acts 11:23), yet we must pray with David, 'Keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee' (1 Chronicles 29:18). Our hearts are of themselves very loose and unsettled. 'Unite my heart to fear thy name' (Psalms 86:11), or else, without him, our best purposes will fall to the ground. It is a pleasing request, out of love to God, to beg such a frame of soul from him, that he may take delight in it; and therefore, in the use of all the means, we must send up our desires and complaints to him for strength and help, and then we may be sure that he will 'send forth judgment unto victory.'

7. Lastly, it furthers the state of the soul to know what frame it should be in, that so we may order our souls accordingly. We should always be fit for communion with God, and be heavenly-minded in earthly business, and be willing to be taken off from it to redeem time for better things. We should be ready at all times to depart hence, and to live in such a condition as we would be content to die in. We should have hearts prepared for every good duty, open to all good opportunities, and shut to all temptations, keeping our watch, and being always ready armed. So far as we come short of these things, so far we have just cause to be humbled, and yet we should press forward, so that we may gain more upon ourselves, and make these things more familiar and lovely to us. And when we find our souls at all declining, it is best to raise them up presently by some awakening meditations, such as of the presence of God, of the strict reckoning we are to make, of the infinite love of God in Christ and the fruits of it, of the excellency of a Christian's calling, of the short and uncertain time of this life, of how little good all those things that steal away our hearts will do us before long, and of how it shall be for ever with us hereafter, as we spend this short time well or ill. The more we make way for such considerations to sink into our hearts, the more we shall rise nearer to that state of soul which we shall enjoy in heaven. When we grow

careless of keeping our souls, then God recovers our taste of good things again by sharp crosses. Thus David, Solomon and Samson were recovered. This taste of good things is much easier kept than recovered.

REASONS FOR SEEMING LACK OF PROGRESS

Objection: But, notwithstanding my striving, I seem to remain at a standstill.

1. Grace, as the seed in the parable, grows, we know not how. Yet at length, when God sees fittest, we shall see that all our endeavor has not been in vain. The tree falls upon the last stroke, yet all the strokes help the work forward.

2. Sometimes victory is suspended because some Achan is not found out, or because we are not humble enough, as Israel had the worst against the Benjamites till they fasted and prayed (Judges 20:26); or because we betray our helps, and do not stand on our guard, and do not soon yield to the motions of the Spirit, who puts us in mind always of the best things, if we would regard his prompting. Our own consciences will tell us, if we give them leave to speak, that some sinful favoring of ourselves is the cause. The way in this case to prevail is, first, to get the victory over the pride of our own nature by taking shame to ourselves, in humble confession to God; and then, secondly, to overcome the unbelief of our hearts by yielding to the promise of pardon; and then, thirdly, in confidence of Christ's assistance, to set ourselves against those sins which have prevailed over us. So prevailing over ourselves, we shall easily prevail over all our enemies, and conquer all conditions we shall be brought into.

ALL SHOULD SIDE WITH CHRIST

The second use of the truth that Christ will have the victory is to establish the fact that the best course for nations and states is to 'kiss the Son' (Psalms 2:12), and to embrace Christ and his religion; to side with Christ, and to own his cause in the world. His side will prove the stronger side at last. Happy are we if Christ honors us so much as to use our help to fight his battle 'against the mighty' (Judges 5:23). True religion in a state is as the main pillar of a house and the post of a tent that upholds all. So also for families, let Christ be the chief governor of the family. And let every one be as a house of Christ, to dwell familiarly in, and to rule. Where Christ is, all happiness must follow. If Christ goes, all will go. Where Christ's government, in his ordinances and his Spirit, is, there all subordinate government will prosper. Religion inspires life and grace into all other things. All other virtues without it are but as a fair picture without a head. Where Christ's laws are written in the heart, there all other good laws are best obeyed. None despise man's law but those that despise Christ's first. *Nemo humanam auctoritatem cotitemnit, nisi qui divinam prius contempsit* (No one despises human authority unless he first despises divine authority). Of all persons, a man guided by Christ is the best; and of all creatures in the world, a man guided merely by will and affection, next to the devil, is the worst. The happiness of weaker things stands in being ruled by stronger. It is best for a blind man to be guided by him that has sight. It is best for sheep, and other feckless creatures, to be guided by man. And it is happiest for man to be guided by Christ, because his government is so victorious that it frees us from the fear and danger of our greatest enemies, and tends to bring us to the greatest happiness that our nature is capable of. This should make us rejoice when Christ reigns in us. When Solomon was crowned, the people rejoiced so that the city rang (1 Kings 1:45). Much more should we rejoice in Christ our king.

And likewise for those whose souls are dear to us, our endeavor should be that Christ may reign in them also, that they may be baptized by Christ with this fire (Matthew 3:11), that these sparks may be kindled in them. Men labor to cherish the spirit and mettle, as they term it, of those they train up, because they think they will have use of it in the manifold affairs and troubles of this life. Oh, but let us cherish the sparks of grace in them; for a natural spirit in great troubles will fail, but these sparks will make them conquerors over the greatest evils.

The third use of the truth of Christ's victory is to observe that if Christ's judgment shall be victorious, then popery, being an opposite frame, set up by the wit of man to maintain stately idleness, must fall. And it is fallen already in the hearts of those on whom the light of Christ has shone. It is a lie, and founded on a lie, on the infallible judgment of a man subject to sin and error. When that which is taken for a principle of truth becomes a principle of error, the more reliance on it, the more danger there is.

Taken from The Bruised Reed. Updated.

Richard Sibbes on Entertaining the Holy Spirit

Richard Sibbes on Entertaining the Holy Spirit

by Rev. Joel R. Beeke

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Word format PDF format("./pdf/beeke01.pdf") In his book *Preaching and Preachers*, Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote: "I shall never cease to be grateful to Richard Sibbes, who was balm to my soul at a period in my life when I was overworked and badly overtired, and therefore subject in an unusual manner to the onslaughts of the devil.... I found at that time that Richard Sibbes... was an unailing remedy. His books *The Bruised Reed* and *The Soul's Conflict* quietened, soothed, comforted, encouraged, and healed me."

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) was one of the greatest Puritans of his age. He greatly influenced the direction and content of Puritan preaching, theology, and writing in England and America. Sibbes's theology of the Holy Spirit is especially important because of its emphasis on how the Spirit operates in the daily life of the Christian. Sibbes winsomely referred to that process as "entertaining the Spirit" in the soul. For Sibbes, that entertaining meant to nurture the friendship and hospitality of an indwelling Spirit. "There is no one in the world so great and sweet a friend who will do us so much good as the Spirit, if we give him entertainment," Sibbes wrote.

Sibbes's teaching on entertaining the Holy Spirit can be divided into the following four categories: (1) the indwelling of the Spirit, (2) the sealing of the Spirit, (3) the comfort of the Spirit, and (4) grieving the Spirit. Before exploring Sibbes's work on the Holy Spirit, let's take a brief look at who Richard Sibbes was.

Synopsis of Richard Sibbes's Life

Richard Sibbes was a native of Suffolk, the Puritan county of old England that furnished numerous illustrious emigrants to New England. He was born a few miles from Bury St. Edmonds, in 1577, the year the Lutherans drafted their Formula of Concord. He was baptized in the parish church in Thurston, where he grew up and went to school. He was the oldest of six children.

As a young child, Sibbes loved books. His father, Paul Sibbes, who was a hardworking wheelwright and (according to Zachary Catlin, a contemporary biographer of Sibbes) "a good, sound-hearted Christian," became irritated with his son's book expenses. The father tried to cure his son of book-buying by offering him wheelwright tools. But the boy was not dissuaded. With the support of others, Sibbes was admitted to St. John's College in Cambridge at the age of eighteen. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in 1599, a fellowship in 1601, and a master of arts degree in 1602. In 1603 he was converted under the preaching of Paul Baynes, whom Sibbes called his "father in the gospel." Baynes, who is remembered most for his commentary on Ephesians, succeeded William Perkins (1558-1602) at the Church of St. Andrews in Cambridge.

Sibbes was ordained to the ministry of the Church of England in Norwich in 1607, was chosen as one of the college preachers in 1609, and received a bachelor of divinity degree in 1610. From 1611 to 1616 he served as lecturer at Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge. His preaching awakened Cambridge from the spiritual indifference into which it fell after the death of Perkins. A gallery had to be built to accommodate the visitors. John Cotton and Hugh Peters were converted under Sibbes's preaching. During his years at Holy Trinity, Sibbes also helped turn Thomas Goodwin from Arminianism, and moved John Preston from witty preaching to plain, spiritual preaching.

Sibbes came to London in 1617 as a lecturer for Gray's Inn, the largest of the four great Inns of Court, which still remains one of the most important centers in England for the study and practice of law. In 1626, Sibbes complemented this lectureship by becoming Master of Catharine Hall (now St. Catharine's College) at Cambridge. Under his leadership, the college returned to its former prestige. It graduated several men who would serve prominently at the Westminster Assembly, including John Arrowsmith, William Spurstowe, and William Strong. Soon after his appointment, Sibbes earned the doctor of divinity degree at Cambridge. He soon became known as "the heavenly Doctor," due to his godly preaching and heavenly conversation. Izaak Walton wrote of Sibbes:

Of this blest man, let this just praise be given,
Heaven was in him, before he was in heaven.

In 1633 King Charles I offered Sibbes the vicarage of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, which was the very church he had been forced to relinquish eighteen years earlier! Sibbes continued to serve as preacher at Gray's Inn, Master of St. Catharine's Hall, and Vicar of Holy Trinity until his death in 1635.

Sibbes never married, but he established an astonishing network of friendships that included a variety of godly ministers, illustrious lawyers, and parliamentary leaders of the early Stuart era. "Godly friends are walking sermons," he said. On thirteen occasions he wrote introductions to the writings of his Puritan colleagues.

Sibbes was a gentle and warm man who avoided the controversies of his day as much as possible. "Factions breed fractions," he insisted. His battles with Archbishop Laud, Roman Catholics, and Arminians were exceptions rather than the rule for him. He remained close friends with many pastors and leaders who espoused more radical reform than he did for the Church of England.

Sibbes was an inspiration to many of his brethren. He influenced Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, and Independency, the three dominant parties of the church in England at that time. He was a pastor of pastors, who lived a life of moderation. "Where most holiness is, there is most moderation, where it may be without prejudice of piety to God and the good of others," he wrote.

The historian Daniel Neal described Sibbes as a celebrated preacher, an educated divine, and a charitable and humble man, who repeatedly underestimated his gifts. Yet Puritans everywhere recognized Sibbes as a great Christ-centered, experiential preacher. Both learned and unlearned in upper and lower classes profited greatly from Sibbes, who was an alluring preacher.

Sibbes meant to woo. He wrote, "To preach is to woo.... The main scope of all [preaching] is, to allure us to the entertainment of Christ's mild, safe, wise, victorious government." Sibbes brought truth home, as Robert Burns would say, "to men's business and bosoms." Catlin wrote of Sibbes, "No man that ever I was acquainted with got so far into my heart or lay so close therein." Maurice Roberts adds, "His theology is thoroughly orthodox, of course, but it is like the fuel of some great combustion engine, always passing into flame and so being converted into energy thereby to serve God and, even more, to enjoy and relish God with the soul."

David Masson, known for his biography of John Milton wrote, "No writings in practical theology seem to have been so much read in the mid-seventeenth century among the pious English middle classes as those of Sibbes. "The twentieth-century historian William Haller judged Sibbes's sermons to be "the most brilliant and popular of all the utterances of the Puritan church militant."

Sibbes's last sermons, preached one week before his death, were expositions of John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many mansions.... I go to prepare a place for you." When asked in his final days how his soul was faring, Sibbes replied, "I should do God much wrong if I should not say, very well. "Sibbes's will and testament, dictated on July 4, 1635, the day before his death, commences: "I commend and bequeath my soul into the hands of my gracious Savior, who hath redeemed it with his most precious blood, and appears now in heaven to receive it."

The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, meticulously edited in seven volumes with a 110-page memoir by Alexander Grosart, was published by James Nichol of Edinburgh in the 1860s and reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust in the 1970s. Unfortunately, several of those volumes are out of print. Sibbes's most famous work, *The Bruised Reed*, which has done so much good in healing troubled souls, is now available in paperback from Banner of Truth Trust.

Let's turn now to Sibbes's teaching on the entertainment of the Spirit.

The Indwelling Spirit

The Spirit's indwelling is requisite to entertaining Him, Sibbes said. Sibbes taught that when the Spirit of God enters the heart of a sinner, regenerating him and persuading him of the truth of the gospel, the Spirit immediately begins to live within that person. The Spirit does not draw attention to Himself, however. Rather, the Spirit works to knit our hearts to God and to Jesus Christ. Sibbes wrote: "He, the Spirit, sanctifieth and purifieth, and doth all from the Father and the Son, and knits us to the Father and the Son — to the Son first, and then to the Father, because all the communion we have with God is by the Holy Ghost; all the communion that Christ as man had with God was by the Holy Ghost; and all the communion that God hath with us, and we with God is by the Holy Ghost. For the Spirit is the bond of union between Christ and us, and between God and us."

While the Father and Son perform no work without the Spirit, the Spirit also does no work apart from the Father and the Son. Sibbes explained, "As the Spirit comes from God — the Father and the Son — so he carries us back again to the Father and the Son. As he comes from heaven, so he carries us back to heaven again. The role of the Spirit is to introduce and intimately acquaint us with the Father and the Son."

Thus, if we are believers, the Spirit establishes communion between us and the other two Persons of the Trinity. It is as if He captures us and lifts us up. to know the Father and the Son's love for us. The Holy Spirit lifts us to see by faith the crucified and resurrected Jesus seated in glory. That is why the Spirit comes, and that is how He functions in our lives. Therefore we may say that while, in one sense, fellowship between ourselves and God is reestablished once and for all, yet in another sense the Spirit maintains and increases that fellowship during our entire lives.

Sibbes said that as the Spirit draws us to the Father and the Son, He confirms His government in our hearts. This government is not at odds with the Spirit's purpose of revealing the things of Christ to us; rather, His internal governing reveals Jesus Christ seated on the throne of grace. indeed, the Spirit helps us conform to the character and behavior of Christ. The Spirit lives in us to restore and transform our souls, and ripens us for glory. Submitting to the Spirit is thus critical, Sibbes said. In *A Fountain Sealed*, he wrote: "Let us give up the government of our souls to the Spirit. It is for our safety so to do, as being wiser than ourselves who are unable to direct our own way; it is our liberty to be under a wisdom and goodness larger than our own. Let the Spirit think in us, desire in us, pray in us, live in us, do all in us; labor ever to be in such a frame as we may be fit for the Spirit to work upon."

The believer is like a musical instrument, tuned and played by the Spirit. Sibbes wrote, "Let us lay ourselves open to the Spirit's touch. When the Spirit has ruling sway in our lives he fine-tunes our souls much like a musical instrument, and then he plays our lives as a piano concerto before God."

Sibbes went on to describe this process of tuning and the touch of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit must rule; he will have the keys delivered to him. We must submit to his government, and when he is in the heart he will subdue by little and little all high thoughts, rebellious risings, and despairing fears."

How may we know that we have this blessed, indwelling, governing Spirit? Sibbes said, "By living and moving, by actions vital, even so may a man know he hath the Spirit of God by its blessed effects in operations; it is not idle in us; but as the soul quickens the body, so doth the Spirit the soul. Every saving grace is a sign that the Spirit is within us." Wherever the indwelling Spirit is, He gradually transforms the soul to be holy and gracious like Himself. The government of the Spirit is not realized immediately. Sibbes wrote, "The revolution and overthrow of our old nature comes upon conversion, while the government of the Spirit is established only in a process as we may learn more of and abide more to the constitution of our new life in Jesus Christ."

Restored communion with God the Father and the Son by means of the government of the Spirit cannot but produce spiritual warfare. The transformation that the Holy Spirit effects in the believer is accompanied by external and internal struggle. Externally, we face the powers of darkness, even the prince of darkness himself, Sibbes warned, because the devil is profoundly envious of the man that walks in the Spirit. Satan will do all within his power to destroy that comfort.

Indeed, all spiritual graces meet with conflict, Sibbes said, "for that which is true is so with a great deal of resistance from that which is counterfeit." What is of the Spirit is always in conflict with what is not of the Spirit. Internally, our fleshly desires are continually at war with the Spirit, for when the Spirit comes to a person, He pulls down all strongholds. He carves out a path for Himself in the thick of battle.

Our soul is the battlefield upon which the Spirit marches and He will have the final victory, Sibbes said. For wherever the Spirit dwells, He also rules, for He will not be an underling to lusts. He repairs the breaches of the soul. In this battle we must submit to the Spirit in all things, however, for only then will we experience the victorious life that is the inheritance of believers in Jesus Christ. To be sure, the greatest battles were won on Calvary and in our hearts when we were brought to new birth, but we must also fight daily battles in our life of sanctification. Our ever present foes — our flesh, the world, and the devil — will unceasingly strive to tear up the foundation upon which we stand as children of the Most High.

Sibbes said that we must show that we treasure the indwelling power of the Spirit. We cannot value God's love and holiness granted to us in the Spirit without exercising self-denial. Life in the Spirit, while beginning at conversion, must continue to bear fruit. As Sibbes wrote, "We may know who dwells in a house by observing who goes in and when they come out; so we may know that the Spirit dwells in us by observing what sanctified speeches he sends forth and what delight he hath wrought in us to things that are special and what price we set upon them."

The believer's greatest encouragement in spiritual warfare is the abiding presence of the Spirit. "The Spirit is the leader and enabler of our soul," Sibbes wrote. It is through what Sibbes termed "the motions, or holy stirrings of the Spirit" that the Spirit enables us to overcome the sin that attacks us internally and the forces of darkness set against us externally. The Spirit of Christ is powerful and strong. Through His indwelling, we are able "to perform duties above nature, to overcome ourselves and injuries," Sibbes said. He added, "He makes us to be able to live and die, to do what others cannot do, just as he enabled Christ to do things that another man could not do."

Sibbes's conclusion was inevitable: "Where there is no conflict, there is no Spirit of Christ at all." In this he echoed the apostle Paul's teaching that if you mortify the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit, you are led by the Spirit (Romans 8:13). You then, by grace, entertain the Spirit. You befriend and show hospitality to that Spirit who gives you the victory over all enemies by faith (1 John 5:4).

But the Spirit does more than indwell the believer and give victory in spiritual warfare. He is also the sealer of our souls.

The Sealer of Our Souls

Sibbes often preached on the Spirit's sealing. A series of his sermons transcribed by a noblewoman, Lady Elizabeth Brooke, was published in 1637 as *A Fountain Sealed*. His sermons on 2 Corinthians 1:22-23, published in 1655 in *Exposition of Second Corinthians Chapter One*, were about the Spirit's sealing. So was a sermon on Romans 8:15-16, *The Witness of the Spirit*, which was published in 1692.

According to Sibbes and many other Puritans, looking at the role of the Spirit in sealing the soul of believers is very much like examining His work in personal assurance of faith and salvation. Sibbes did view sealing in the Spirit as two distinct matters, however. Sibbes distinguished between the office or function of the Spirit as a seal given in regeneration to a sinner and the work of the Spirit in applying that seal to the believer's consciousness.

John Owen would later call this distinction unbiblical, for he said we are sealed when we are born again, and the Bible gives no justification for a second kind of sealing. Owen, following the early

Reformers, taught a one-to-one correlation between those regenerated by the Spirit and those sealed by the Spirit. Calvin, for example, said that it was impossible to believe without being sealed by the Spirit. For Calvin, sealing represented the presence rather than the activity of the Spirit. Thus, the sealing work of the Spirit belongs to the essence of faith.

by the time of William Perkins, who was often called the father of Puritanism, more attention was devoted to the Spirit's activity in sealing the promises of the gospel to the believer. The focus was no longer on the Spirit Himself as the indwelling seal but on His activity in sealing or attesting the promises. Perkins's successor, Paul Baynes, attempted to reconcile the thoughts of Calvin and Perkins on the sealing of the Spirit. Baynes taught that sealing could be applied both to the Spirit as indweller and to the evidences of that sealing in the regenerate life. Baynes wrote, "The Holy Spirit and the graces of the Spirit are the seal assuring our redemption." Thus, Baynes distinguished between being sealed by the Spirit (which all believers possess) and being made conscious of such sealing (which only those who are conscious of the graces of the Spirit possess).

Sibbes agreed with his predecessor Baynes, though he emphasized the sealing of the Spirit as a "superadded work and confirmation" of the believer's faith. In so doing, Sibbes turned the doctrine of the sealing of the Spirit in a direction that would gain prominence among the Puritans for several decades.

As was already implied, Sibbes thought of the Spirit's sealing in two ways: (1) a one-time sealing, and (2) a sealing that came later as one matured in the Christian life.

The once-and-for-all sealing of salvation is granted when a person first believes in Christ and God's promises. Sibbes taught that as a king's image is stamped upon wax, so the Spirit stamps the believer's soul with the image of Christ from the very moment of believing. Such sealing produces in every believer a lifelong desire to be transformed fully into the image of Christ.

This seal, which every believer possesses, whether he is conscious of it or not, serves as a mark of authenticity. It distinguishes the believer from the world. As merchants mark their wares and herdsman brand their sheep, so God seals His people to declare that they are His rightful property and that He has authority over them, Sibbes said.

The second aspect of Sibbes's doctrine of sealing is more elusive. Owen argued that Sibbes said sealing had to occur twice in the life of the believer. But Sibbes was not arguing for a second measure of positional assurance, as if to imply that God was not altogether sure of our stance with Him or His stance towards us upon regeneration. Sibbes plainly stated: "Sealing of us by the Spirit is not in regard to God, but ourselves. God knoweth who are His, but we know not that we are His but by sealing. The sealing then is for our benefit exclusively, and not for God."

So the second kind of sealing Sibbes wrote about was a process. It was the kind of assurance that could increase gradually throughout our lives by means of singular experiences and by daily, spiritual growth. This sealing had degrees; it could grow with spiritual maturity. Sibbes wrote: "The Spirit sealet by degrees. As our care of pleasing the Spirit increaseth so our comfort increaseth. Our light will increase as the morning light unto the perfect day. Yielding to the Spirit in one holy motion will cause him to lead us to another, and so on forwards, until we be more deeply acquainted with the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation."

Sibbes learned through pastoral experience that many believers are content with the measure of faith and assurance they receive upon their conversion and do not labor for further growth. That prompted Sibbes to suggest that there are three kinds of Christians:

First, those who have saving faith, but live under a spirit of bondage. They are filled with doubts and fears. They lack the reflex act of faith which ascertains marks and evidences of the Spirit's saving work in their lives. Sibbes said that they ought to pray for more faith and light to discern the Spirit's work within them.

Second, some Christians are under the Spirit of adoption but still have fears. They are sealed with evidences of faith, but are often still beset with perplexity and doubt. Their degree of assurance is usually highest when their trials are greatest. Sibbes wrote, "For those who have been sealed by the Spirit and yet not so fully as to silence all doubts about their estate, those should, out of that beginning of comfort which they feel, study to be pliable to the Spirit for further increase."

Third, Sibbes said that some believers are "carried with large spirits to obey their Father" as the fruit of the superadded, direct seal of the Spirit that persuades them of their sonship to God. Those who experience the freedom of a "large spirit" receive a private seal—an unmistakable witness of the Spirit to their soul. The Spirit's private seal is a "stablishing, confirming grace," Sibbes said. He identified this sealing with the immediate testimony of the Holy Spirit, by which the Father's love is pronounced upon the believer in particular, usually through the application of such texts as "I am thy salvation" or "thy sins are pardoned." According to Sibbes, this establishing seal grants believers freedom to appropriate full assurance through the work of each Person in the Trinity, though the emphasis is on the Spirit in His saving activity. Sibbes wrote: "Every person in the blessed Trinity hath their several work. The Father chooseth us and passeth a decree upon the whole groundwork of our salvation. The Son executeth it to the full. The Spirit applieth it, and witnesseth our interest in it by leading our souls to lay hold upon him, and by raising up our souls in the assurance of it, and by breeding and cherishing sweet communion with Father and Son, who both of them seal us likewise by the Spirit. This joy and comfort is so appropriated to the Spirit, as it carrieth the very name of the Spirit."

Sibbes sounds mystical at times in describing this special sealing, particularly in statements such as "the Holy Ghost slides and insinuates and infuseth himself into our souls." But Sibbes warded off mysticism in two ways. First, he maintained that this special sealing must never be divorced from the Word of God. By speaking of sealing in degrees, Sibbes linked all advancement in grace to the Spirit and Word, for any consciousness of sealing by the Spirit is always through the applied Word.

Second, Sibbes said that the genuineness of such sealing may be readily examined. One may know the voice of the Spirit of God by inquiring what followed "this ravishing joy" of experimental sealing, Sibbes wrote. Fruits of sanctification, such as peace of conscience, the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father," prayers of fervent supplication, conformity with the heavenly image of Christ, and applying ourselves to holy duties rather than old lusts inevitably result from such "a secret whispering and intimation to the soul." Sibbes thus emphasized both the intuitive testimony of the Spirit and the sanctifying fruits of the Spirit. The Spirit's sealing is inward in its essence and outward in its fruit.

Sibbes taught that this special sealing was granted by the Spirit to saints particularly in times of great trial. He said that the Spirit gave such seals, even as parents [who] smile upon their children when they need it most." Such sealing was "a sweet kiss vouchsafed to the soul." Paul in the dungeon, Daniel in the lion's den, and his three friends in the fiery furnace all experienced that encouragement.

In summary, Sibbes's interest in sealing was more pastoral than academic. He knew that true assurance results in an increased desire for holiness and for more intimate communion with God. Sibbes's argument was clear: when the Holy Spirit puts His holy seal on a believer, that person will bear the fruits of holiness. Sealing prompts assurance, and the more assurance we have, the more love we will feel for God and the more we will obey Him. Consequently, all Christians ought to pray for "a spirit of revelation that we may be more sealed," Sibbes said.

Owen understood why Sibbes and other Puritans in his era proposed the notion of a sealing subsequent to regeneration. He recognized that Sibbes and others were attempting to call believers to a life of assuredness. Owen affirmed the call for this kind of assurance, yet he argued against equating full assurance with the sealing of the Spirit. He felt that the exegesis of Ephesians 1:13 didn't support such a view.

Though some of us may also fear that Sibbes went beyond Scripture at times in his doctrine of sealing, yet we should recognize that Sibbes was discussing a different sort of event than what Owen suggested. Sibbes had a dynamic view of sealing. Sealing is a continuous and progressive activity, Sibbes said. Owen held a more static view of sealing. He viewed the seal "as sealed," whereas Sibbes viewed the seal primarily as "a sealing." Sibbes was talking about an experiential, behavioral, and character-modifying realization of the depth of the love of God. Sibbes was saying that this kind of sealing is a great boost to our sanctification.

The Comforter

Sibbes taught that sanctification is not only promoted by the Spirit's indwelling and sealing, but also by the Spirit's activity as comforter. He wrote, "Is it not the greatest comfort to a Christian soul when God, in want of means, comes immediately Himself unto us and comforts us by His Spirit?"

If you are a Christian, you know that life and its difficulties can be discouraging. Especially when God's promises and providence seem to contradict each other, we are prone to lose our quiet confidence in God, and become, like David, cast down and disquieted within. We yield to the discouragements of the flesh. Sibbes said such disquiet and grief is "like lead to the soul, heavy and cold."

At those times especially we need the Holy Spirit to draw close to our souls. In his book *Yea and Amen*, Sibbes wrote, "It must needs be so because no less than the Spirit of God can quiet our perplexed spirits in times of temptation." He went on to say, "Spiritual comforts flow immediately from the Spirit of comfort who hath His office designed for that purpose."

Sibbes excelled in showing why the Spirit alone can comfort our battered souls. He wrote, "When the soul is distempered, it is like a distempered lock that no key can open. So when the conscience is troubled, what creature can settle the troubled conscience, can open the winding passages of a troubled conscience in such perplexity and confusion? And therefore to settle the

troubled conscience aright, it must be somewhat above conscience; and that which must quiet the spirit must be such a Spirit as is above our spirits."

Sibbes appreciated the complexity of individuals and understood how that complexity remains even after we become believers. Hardships are part of being a Christian, for a Christian is engaged in the pursuit of holiness. Yet the Spirit is able to give grace to the believer to rise above discouragements, no matter how great they are. Sibbes wrote: "Oh, therefore get this blessed Spirit to enlighten thee, to quicken thee, to support thee; and it will carry thy soul courageously along above all oppositions and discouragements whatsoever in the way to happiness. As surely as the difficulties of life are genuine, so too the comfort of the Spirit is genuine and able."

The Spirit is more than just a spiritual bandage. He is the Comforter, the healing balm for our hearts. We wholeheartedly agree with Sibbes that "the Holy Spirit is a Comforter, bringing to mind useful things at such times when we most need them. What are these useful things if not the profound love of the Lord for us in spite of our wretched state — a love which ushers us through suffering and gives purpose to all our life."

Sibbes also taught that the role of the Holy Spirit as comforter is tied to the Word of God. "If it be God's comfort, assure thyself God would have his word to make way unto it," Sibbes wrote. He said that in times of discouragement the believer must question his own soul about the causes of discontent. He must charge himself to trust God and His Word, recognizing that with the Spirit as his indwelling comforter, there is no good reason to be discouraged. He must "meditate on the promises of God, and wedge them home upon the heart," Sibbes said. By using the promises, he must labor for a calmed spirit by insisting that until the Spirit "meekens" the soul, it is not quiet enough to receive the seed of the Word. As Sibbes wrote, "It is ill sowing in a storm; so a stormy spirit will not suffer the word to take [its] place."

Sibbes taught that in applying the Word to the believer's troubled soul, the Spirit calls forth answering motions in the believer, leading him to find quiet and rest in God. Indeed, the believer must continue to examine his soul by faith until he finds rest in God. Perfect rest in God will only be found in heaven, Sibbes said. Here on earth, however, the believer can find rest by means of sanctifying and quieting graces."

Quieting the soul helps a believer recover some of the communion with God that was destroyed by the fall. Prior to the fall we were like "instruments in tune, fit to be moved to any duty; as a neat, clean glass, the soul represented God's image and likeness," Sibbes wrote. After the fall, the only way to find such harmony of a soul "fitted as a clean glass to receive light from above," is to depend on the Spirit and aim for peace and harmony with God who is "the God of peace, the God of order." Sibbes called believers to "the beauty of a well-ordered soul" that is in tune with the Spirit of God. Such a soul is comforted even in great trials, Sibbes said. It receives with meekness the engrafted Word and, by keeping its affections in due proportion, responds to the Holy Spirit's internal motions which lead the soul to find rest and peace in God. All such motions "tend to rest and end in God, the center and resting-place of the soul," Sibbes wrote. "Then whatsoever times come, we are sure of a hiding-place and sanctuary."

Would you be comforted and quieted in your soul? Labor to entertain the Spirit. Give room to His motions in your soul, remembering as Sibbes concluded, "The soul without the Spirit is darkness

and confusion, full of self-accusing and self-tormenting thoughts. If we let the Spirit come in, [he] will scatter all and settle the soul in a sweet quiet.

Grieving the Spirit

If the Spirit helps us commune with the Father and the Son, governs our spirit, defends us in spiritual conflict, leads us in faith, seals our souls, and comforts us until death, then what happens when we fail Him and succumb to our own sin and folly?

At such times we grieve the Spirit, Sibbes said in *A Fountain Sealed*. Sibbes cried, "What greater indignity can we offer to the Holy Spirit than to prefer base dust before his motions leading us to holiness and happiness. What greater unkindness, yea, treachery to leave directions of a friend to follow the counsel of an enemy; such as when we know God's will, yet will consent with flesh and blood in leaving a true guide and following a pirate."

Like his fellow Puritans, Sibbes was most critical of people in the established church who didn't exhibit the fruits of saving faith. He challenged those who claimed to have walked with God for many years but whose lives showed little effect of their relationship with the Almighty. He warned, "Of all the sins, the sins of professors [of religion] grieve the Spirit most. And of all professors, those that have most means of knowledge, because their obligations are deeper and their engagements greater. The offense of friends grieves more than the injuries of enemies."

Sibbes did not stop there. He went on to say that as the Holy Ghost is a Spirit, so spiritual sins like pride and envy and an evil spirit grieve Him most. Carnal sins grieve the Spirit, too, for they drown the soul in physical delights and defile the Spirit's temple. We need to be changed from the inside out by the Spirit of God. As long as we do not aim for a life of devotion and conformity to Jesus Christ, we grieve the Spirit.

Sibbes offered still more ways in which we grieve the Spirit. He wrote, "We commonly grieve the Spirit of God when the mind is troubled with a multitude of busyness; when the soul is like a mill where one cannot hear another; the noise is such as takes away all intercourse." That is to say, when we fill our lives with things other than spiritual concerns, we bring grief to the blessed Spirit. Activity is not synonymous with spirituality, as popular Christian culture would have us believe. Rather, we are called to humble dependence and meditation upon the Spirit. As Sibbes said, "This grieves the Holy Spirit also when men take the office of the Spirit from him," that is, when we will do things in our own strength and by our own light. We all too willingly, go about our Christian tasks in our own strength, never realizing that in doing so, we become our own end, and with a theft of God's honor our activities become meaningless.

Conclusion

According to Sibbes, the Spirit must be an integral part of our lives, our churches, and our world. The Spirit must be entertained in every facet of Christian life and experience. We must relish His indwelling, His sealing, and His comforting work, while striving not to grieve Him. Sibbes labored to make biblical theology relevant to the person in the pew. His books challenge us to pursue a biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit and to faithfully communicate that understanding to others in the body of Christ.

Today, the relationship between believers and the Holy Spirit is too often like a bad marriage in which a husband takes advantage of his wife's contributions but fails to appreciate and celebrate his relationship with her. To reverse this situation, Sibbes advised that we should make a daily effort to appreciate the Holy Spirit, and to share our thoughts and plans with Him in prayer as we gaze by faith into the face of God. We should walk in daily communication with the Spirit, through the Word, relying upon every office the Holy Spirit provides, as described in Scripture. In this way, the blessed Spirit, who speaks not of Himself, but of Christ and the Father, also reveals Himself to the believer, through display of His attributes, as true God, the third Person of the Holy Trinity. As Sibbes wrote: "The Holy Spirit being in us, after he that prepared us for a house for himself to dwell in and to take up his rest and delight in, he doth also become unto us a counselor in all our doubts, a comforter in all our distresses, a solicitor to all duty, a guide in the whole course of life, until we dwell with him forever in heaven, unto which his dwelling here in us doth tend."

Lord, ever more grant us to entertain Thy Holy Spirit. Sanctify us by Thy Spirit. Indwell us, seal our souls, comfort us, keep us from grieving Thy Spirit. Prepare us for eternal communion with Thee.

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Christ's Public Triumph

Christ's Public Triumph

by Richard Sibbes

It is not only said that judgment shall be victorious, but that Christ will bring it forth openly to victory. From this we observe that grace will become glory, and come forth into the sight of all. Now Christ conquers, and achieves his own ends, but he does so to some extent invisibly. His enemies in us and outside us seem to prevail. But he will bring forth judgment unto victory, in full view of all. The wicked that now shut their eyes to this shall see it to their torment. It shall not be in the power of subtle men to see or not see what they wish. Christ will have power over their hearts; and as his wrath shall immediately seize upon their souls against their wills, so will he have power over the eyes of their souls, that they may see and know what will increase their misery. Grief shall be fastened to all their senses, and their senses to grief.

Then all the false glosses which they put upon things shall be wiped off. Men are desirous to have the reputation of good, and yet the sweetness of ill; nothing is so cordially opposed by them as that truth which lays them open to themselves and to the eyes of others, their chief care being how to deceive the world and their own consciences. But the time will come when they shall be driven out of this fools' paradise, and the more subtle their manipulation of things has been, the more shall be their shame.

THE OPEN GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS MEMBERS

Christ, whom God has chosen to set forth the chief glory of his excellencies, is now veiled in relation to his body the church, but he will come before long to be glorious in his saints (2 Thessalonians 1:10), and not lose the clear manifestation of any of his attributes. He will declare to all the world what he is, and then there shall be no glory but that of Christ and his spouse. Those that are as smoking flax now shall then shine as the sun in the firmament (Matthew 13:43), and their judgment shall be brought forth as the noonday (Psalms 37:6).

The image of God in Adam had a commanding majesty in it, so that all creatures revered him. Much more shall the image of God in its perfection command respect from all. Even now there is a secret awe put into the hearts of the greatest towards those in whom they see any grace to shine. So it was that Herod feared John the Baptist; but what will this be in the day of their bringing forth, which is called 'the manifestation of the sons of God' (Romans 8:19)?

There will be more glorious times when the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. 1:1-5), and he shall reign forever. Then shall judgment and truth have their victory. Then Christ will plead his own cause. Truth shall no longer be called heresy and schism, nor heresy catholic doctrine. Wickedness shall no longer go masked and disguised. Goodness shall appear in its own luster, and shine in its own beams. Things shall be what they are, 'for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed' (Matthew 10:26).

Iniquity shall not be carried on in a mystery any longer. Deep dissemblers that think to hide their counsels from the Lord shall walk no longer invisible as in the clouds. As Christ will not quench the least spark kindled by himself, so will he damp the fairest blaze of goodly appearances which are not from above.

FOLLOW SINCERITY AND TRUTH

If this were believed, men would make more account of sincerity, which alone will give us boldness, and not seek for covers for their shame, confidence in which, as it makes men now more presumptuous, so it will expose them hereafter to the greater shame.

If judgment shall be brought forth to victory, then those that have been ruled by their own deceitful hearts and a spirit of error shall be brought forth to disgrace. The God that has joined grace and truth with honor has joined sin and shame together at last. All the wit and power of man will never be able to sever what God has coupled together. Truth and piety may be trampled upon for a time, but as the two witnesses (Revelation 11:11), after they were slain, rose again, and stood upon their feet, so whatever is of God shall at length stand upon its own foundation. There shall be a resurrection, not only of bodies but of reputations. Can we think that he that threw the angels out of heaven will suffer dust and worms' meat to run a contrary course, and to continue always so? No, as truly as Christ is 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (Revelation 19:16), so will he dash all those pieces of earth which rise up against him, 'as a potter's vessel' (Psalms 2:9). Was there ever anyone fierce against God and prospered (Job 9:4)? No, doubtless the wrath of man shall turn to Christ's praise (Psalms 76:10). What was said of Pharaoh shall be said of all heady enemies, who would rather lose their souls than their wills, that they are but raised up for Christ to get himself glory in their confusion.

Let us, then, take heed that we follow not the ways of those men whose ends we shall tremble at. There is not a more fearful judgment which can befall the nature of man than to be given up to a reprobate judgment of persons and things, because it comes under a woe: 'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil' (Isaiah 5:20).

How will those be laden with curses another day who abuse the judgment of others by sophistry and flattery, 'deceiving and being deceived' (2 Timothy 3:13)? Then the complaint of our first mother Eve will be taken up, but fruitlessly: 'The serpent beguiled me' (Genesis 3:13); Satan has deceived me in such and such; sin has deceived me; a foolish heart has deceived me. It is one of the highest points of wisdom to consider on what grounds we venture our souls. Happy men will they be who have, by Christ's light, a right judgment of things, and suffer that judgment to prevail over their hearts.

The souls of most men are drowned in their senses, and carried away with weak opinions, raised from vulgar mistakes and shadows of things. And Satan is ready to enlarge the imagination of outward good and outward ill, and make it greater than it is, and spiritual things less, presenting them through false glasses. And so men, trusting in vanity, vanquish themselves in their own apprehensions. A woeful condition, when both we and that which we highly esteem shall vanish together. And this will be, as truly as Christ's judgement will come to victory and in the measure that the vain heart of man has been enlarged to conceive a greater good in the things of this world than there is, by so much the soul shall be enlarged to be more aware of misery when it sees its

error. This is the difference between a godly, wise man and a deluded worldling: that which the one now judges to be vain the other shall hereafter feel to be so when it is too late. But this is the vanity of our natures, that though we shun above all things to be deceived and mistaken in present things, yet in the greatest matters of all we are willingly ignorant and misled.

CHRIST ALONE ADVANCES THIS GOVERNMENT

A further conclusion is this: that this government is set up and advanced by Christ alone. He brings judgment to victory. We both fight and prevail 'in the power of his might' (Ephesians 6:10). We overcome by the Spirit, obtained by 'the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 12:11).

It is he alone who teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight (Psalms 144:1). Nature, as corrupted, favors its own being, and will maintain itself against Christ's government. Nature, simply considered, cannot raise itself above itself to actions which are spiritual and of a higher order and nature. Therefore the divine power of Christ is necessary to carry us above all our own strength, especially in duties in which we meet with greater opposition; for there, not only nature will fail us, but ordinary grace, unless there is a stronger and a new supply. In taking up a burden that is weightier than ordinary, if there is not a greater proportion of strength than weight, the one who undertakes it will lie under the burden; so for every strong encounter there must be a new supply of strength, as in the case of Peter, who, when He was assaulted with a stronger temptation, being not upheld and shored up with a mightier hand, notwithstanding former strength, foully fell (Matthew 26:69-74). And being fallen, in our rising up again, it is Christ that must do the work, by (1) removing, or (2) weakening, or (3) suspending opposite hindrances; and (4) by advancing the power of his grace in us, to a further degree than we had before we fell. Therefore when we have fallen, and by falls have been bruised, let us go to Christ immediately to bind us up again.

WE MUST NOT LOOK TO OURSELVES

Let us know, therefore, that it is dangerous to look for that from ourselves which we must have from Christ. Since the fall, all our strength lies in him, as Samson's in his hair (Judges 16:17). We are but subordinate agents, moving as we are moved, and working as we are first wrought upon, free in so far as we are freed, no wiser nor stronger than he makes us to be for the present in anything we undertake. It is his Spirit who actuates and enlivens, and applies that knowledge and strength we have, or else it fails and lies useless in us. We work when we work from a present strength; therefore dependent spirits are the wisest and the ablest. Nothing is stronger than humility, which goes out of itself, or weaker than 'de, which rests on its own foundation. Frustra nititur qui non innititur (He strives in vain who is not dependent). And this should be particularly observed because naturally we aspire to a kind of divinity, in setting about actions in the strength of our own abilities; whereas Christ says, 'Without me ye', the apostles, who were in a state of grace, 'can do nothing' (John 15:5). He does not say, you can do a little, but nothing. Of ourselves, how easily are we overcome! How weak we are to resist! We are as reeds shaken with every wind. We shake at the very noise and thought of poverty, disgrace or losses. We give in immediately. We have no power over our eyes, tongues, thoughts or affections, but let sin pass in and out. How soon we are overcome by evil, whereas we should overcome evil with good. How many good purposes stick in the birth, and have no strength to come forth—all which shows that we are nothing without the Spirit of Christ. We see how weak the apostles themselves were, till they were endued with strength from above. Peter was blasted with the speech of a damsel (Matt. 20:69), but

after the Spirit of Christ fell upon them, the more they suffered, the more they were encouraged to suffer. Their comforts grew with their troubles. Therefore in all, especially difficult encounters, let us lift up our hearts to Christ, who has Spirit enough for us all, in all our exigencies, and say with good Jehoshaphat, 'We have no might...neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee' (2 Chronicles 20:12); the battle we fight is thine, and the strength whereby we fight must be thine. If thou goest not out with us, we are sure to be foiled. Satan knows that nothing can prevail against Christ, or those that rely upon his power. Therefore his study is how to keep us in ourselves, and in the creature. But we must carry this always in our minds, that that which is begun in self-confidence ends in shame.

CHRIST MAKES US FEEL OUR DEPENDENCE

The manner of Christ's bringing forth judgment to victory is by letting us see a necessity of dependence on him. Hence proceed those spiritual desertions in which he often leaves us to ourselves, in regard to both grace and comfort, that we may know the spring-head of these to be outside ourselves. Hence it is that in the mount, that is, in extremities, God is most seen (Genesis 22:14). Hence it is that we are saved by the grace of faith which carries us out of ourselves to rely upon another; and faith works best alone, when it has least outward support. Hence it is that we often fail in lesser conflicts and stand firm in greater, because in the lesser we rest more in ourselves, in the greater we fly to the rock of our salvation, which is higher than we (Psalms 61:2). Hence also it is that we are stronger after defeats, because hidden corruption, undiscerned before, is now discovered, and thence we are brought to make use of mercy pardoning and power supporting.

One main reason for this dispensation is that we should know it is Christ that gives both the will and the deed, and that as a voluntary work according to his own good pleasure. And therefore we should work out our salvation in a jealous fear and trembling (Php_2:12), lest by irreverent and presumptuous conduct we give him cause to suspend his gracious influence and leave us to the darkness of our own hearts.

THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE

Those that are under Christ's government have the spirit of revelation, whereby they see and feel a divine power sweetly and strongly enabling them to preserve faith when they feel the contrary, and hope in a state which is hopeless, and love to God under signs of his displeasure, and heavenly-mindedness in the midst of worldly affairs and allurements which draw a contrary way. They feel a power preserving patience, nay joy, in the midst of causes of mourning, inward peace in the midst of assaults. Whence is it that, when assaulted with temptation and compassed with troubles, we have stood firm, but from a secret strength upholding us? To make so little grace so victorious over so great a mass of corruption, this requires a spirit more than human. This is like preserving fire in the sea, and a part of heaven even, as it were, in hell. Here we know where to obtain this power, and to whom to return the praise of it. And it is our happiness that it is so safely hid in Christ for us, in one so near to God and us. Since the fall, God will not trust us with our own salvation, but it is both purchased and kept by Christ for us, and we for it through faith, wrought by the power of God, which we lay hold of. This power is gloriously set forth by Paul: it is (1) a great power; (2) an exceeding power; (3) a working and a mighty power; (4) such a power as was wrought in raising Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20). That grace which is but a persuasive

offer and in our power to receive or refuse is not the grace which brings us to heaven. But God's people feel a powerful work of the Spirit, not only revealing to us our misery and deliverance through Christ, but emptying us of ourselves, as being redeemed from ourselves, and infusing new life into us, and afterwards strengthening us and quickening us when we droop and hang the wing, never leaving us till the conquest is perfect.

Taken from The Bruised Reed. Updated.

Offending Against

Offending Against

Christ's Mercy

by Richard Sibbes

We are now to take notice of various sorts of men that offend deeply against this merciful disposition of Christ.

FALSE DESPAIR OF CHRIST'S MERCY

There are those who go on in all ill courses of life on this pretence, that it would be useless to go to Christ, because their lives have been so bad; whereas, as soon as we look to heaven, all encouragements are ready to meet us and draw us forward. Among others, this is one allurements, that Christ is ready to welcome us and lead us further. None are damned in the church but those that are determined to be, including those who persist in having hard thoughts of Christ, that they may have some show of reason to fetch contentment from other things, as that unprofitable servant (Matthew 25:30) who would needs take up the opinion that his master was a hard man, thereby to flatter himself in his unfruitful ways, in not improving the talent which he had.

FALSE HOPE OF CHRIST'S MERCY

There are those who take up a hope of their own, that Christ will suffer them to walk in the ways to hell, and yet bring them to heaven; whereas all comfort should draw us nearer to Christ. Otherwise it is a lying comfort, either in itself or in our application of it.

RESISTING CHRIST'S MERCY

There are those who take it on themselves to cast water on those sparks which Christ labors to kindle in them, because they will not be troubled with the light of them. Such must know that the Lamb can be angry, and that they who will not come under his scepter of mercy shall be crushed in pieces by his scepter of power (Psalms 2:9). Though he will graciously tend and maintain the least spark of true grace, yet where he finds not the spark of grace but opposition to his Spirit striving with them, his wrath, once kindled, shall burn to hell. There is no more just provocation than when kindness is churlishly refused.

When God would have cured Babylon, and she would not be cured, then she was given up to destruction (Jeremiah 51:9). When Jerusalem would not be gathered under the wing of Christ, then their habitation is left desolate (Matthew 23:37-38). When wisdom stretches out her hand and men refuse, then wisdom will laugh at men's destruction (Proverbs 1:26). Salvation itself will not save those that spill the medicine and cast away the plaster. It is a pitiful case, when this merciful Savior shall delight in destruction; when he that made men shall have no mercy on them (Is. 27:11).

Oh, say the rebels of the time, God has not made us to damn us. Yes, if you will not meet Christ in the ways of his mercy, it is fitting that you should 'eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices' (Proverbs 1:31). This will be the hell of hell, when men shall think that they have loved their sins more than their souls; when they shall think what love and mercy has been almost enforced upon them, and yet they would perish. The more accessory we are in pulling a judgment upon ourselves, the more the conscience will be confounded in itself. Then they shall acknowledge Christ to be without any blame, themselves without any excuse.

If men appeal to their own consciences, they will tell them that the Holy Spirit has often knocked at their hearts, as willing to have kindled some holy desires in them. How else can they be said to resist the Holy Ghost, but that the Spirit was readier to draw them to a further degree of goodness than was consistent with their own wills? Therefore those in the church that are damned are self-condemned before. So that here we need not rise to higher causes, when men carry sufficient cause in their own bosoms.

PRESUMING ON CHRIST'S MERCY

And the best of us all may offend against this merciful disposition if we are not watchful against that liberty which our carnal disposition will be ready to take from it. Thus we reason, if Christ will not quench the smoking flax, what need we fear that any neglect on our part can bring us into a comfortless condition? If Christ will not do it, what can?

You know the apostle's prohibition, notwithstanding, 'Quench not the Spirit' (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Such cautions of not quenching are sanctified by the Spirit as a means of not quenching. Christ performs his office in not quenching by stirring up suitable endeavors in us; and there are none more solicitous in the use of the means than those that are most certain of their good success. The reason is this: the means that God has set apart for the effecting of any thing are included in the purpose that he has to bring that thing to pass. And this is a principle taken for granted, even in civil matters; for who, if he knew before that it would be a fruitful year, would therefore hang up his plough and neglect tillage?

Hence the apostle stirs us up from the certain expectation of a blessing (1 Corinthians 15:57-58), and this encouragement from the good issue of victory is intended to stir us up, and not to put us off. If we are negligent in the exercise of grace received and the use of the means prescribed, suffering our spirits to be oppressed with many and various cares of this life, and take not heed of the discouragements of the times, for this kind of neglect God in his wise care suffers us often to fall into a worse condition in our feelings than those that were never so much enlightened. Yet in mercy he will not suffer us to be so far enemies to ourselves as wholly to neglect these sparks once kindled. Were it possible that we should be given up to abandon all endeavor wholly, then we could look for no other issue but quenching; but Christ will tend this spark and cherish this small seed, so that he will always preserve in the soul some degree of care.

If we would make a comfortable use of this, we must consider all those means whereby Christ preserves grace begun; such as, first, holy communion, by which one Christian warms another. 'Two are better than one' (Ecclesiastes 4:9). 'Did not our heart burn within us?', said the disciples (Luke 24:32). Secondly, much more communion with God in holy duties, such as meditation and prayer, which not only kindles but adds a luster to the soul. Thirdly, we feel by experience the

breath of the Spirit to go along with the breath of his ministers. For this reason the apostle knits these two together: 'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings' (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20). Nathan, by a few words, blew up the decaying sparks in David. Rather than that God will suffer his fire in us to die, he will send some Nathan or other, and something always is left in us to join with the Word, as of the same nature with it; as a coal that has fire in it will quickly gather more fire to it. Smoking flax will easily take fire. Fourthly, grace is strengthened by the exercise of it:

'Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee' (1 Chronicles 22:16), said David to his son Solomon. Stir up the grace that is in you, for in this way holy motions turn to resolutions, resolutions to practice, and practice to a prepared readiness to every good work.

However, let us remember that grace is increased, in the exercise of it, not by virtue of the exercise itself, but as Christ by his Spirit flows into the soul and brings us nearer to himself, the fountain, so instilling such comfort that the heart is further enlarged. The heart of a Christian is Christ's garden, and his graces are as so many sweet spices and flowers which, when his Spirit blows upon them, send forth a sweet savor. Therefore keep the soul open to entertain the Holy Ghost, for he will bring in continually fresh forces to subdue corruption, and this most of all on the Lord's day. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, even in Patmos, the place of his banishment (Revelation 1:10). Then the gales of the Spirit blow more strongly and sweetly.

As we look, therefore, for the comfort of this doctrine, let us not favor our natural sloth but exercise ourselves rather to godliness (1 Timothy 4:7), and labor to keep this fire always burning upon the altar of our hearts. Let us dress our lamps daily, and put in fresh oil, and wind up our souls higher and higher still. Resting in a good condition is contrary to grace, which cannot but promote itself to a further measure. Let none turn this grace 'into lasciviousness' (Jude 1:4). Infirmities are a ground of humility, not a plea for negligence, nor an encouragement to presumption. We should be so far from being evil because Christ is good that those coals of love should melt us. Therefore those may well suspect themselves in whom the consideration of this mildness of Christ does not work that way. Surely where grace is, corruption is 'as vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes' (Proverbs 10:26). And therefore they will labor, with respect to their own comfort, as likewise for the credit of religion and the glory of God, that their light may break forth. If a spark of faith and love is so precious, what an honor will it be to be rich in faith! Who would not rather walk in the light, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, than live in a dark, perplexed state? And not rather be carried with full sail to heaven than be tossed always with fears and doubts? The present trouble in conflict against a sin is not so much as that disquiet which any corruption favored will bring upon us afterward. True peace is in conquering, not in yielding. The comfort intended in this text is for those that would fain do better, but find their corruptions clog them; that are in such a mist, that often they cannot tell what to think of themselves; that fain would believe, and yet often fear that they do not believe; and that think that it cannot be that God should be so good to such sinful wretches as they are, and yet they do not permit these fears and doubts in themselves.

SEEKING ANOTHER SOURCE OF MERCY

And among others, how do they wrong themselves and him that will have other mediators to God for them than he! Are any more pitiful than he who became man to that end, that he might be pitiful to his own flesh? Let all, at all times, repair to this meek Savior, and put up all our petitions in his prevailing name. What need do we have to knock at any other door? Can any be more tender over

us than Christ? What encouragement we have to commend the state of the church in general, or of any broken-hearted Christian, to him by our prayers, of whom we may speak to Christ, as they did of Lazarus, 'Lord, the church which thou lovest, and gavest thyself for, is in distress'; 'Lord, this poor Christian, for whom thou wast bruised (Isaiah 53:5) is bruised and brought very low.' It cannot but touch his heart when the misery of those so dear to him is spread before him.

MISTREATING THE HEIRS OF MERCY

Again, considering this gracious nature in Christ, let us think with ourselves thus: when he is so kind to us, shall we be cruel against him in his name, in his truth, in his children? How shall those that delight to be so terrible to 'the meek of the earth' (Zephaniah 2:3) hope to look so gracious a Savior in the face? They that are so boisterous towards his spouse shall know one day that they had to deal with himself in his church. So it cannot but cut the heart of those that have felt this love of Christ to hear him wounded who is the life of their lives and the soul of their souls. This makes those that have felt mercy weep over Christ whom they have pierced with their sins. There cannot but be a mutual and quick sympathy between the head and the members. When we are tempted to any sin, if we will not pity ourselves, yet we should spare Christ, in not putting him to new torments. The apostle could not find out a more heart-breaking argument to enforce a sacrifice of ourselves to God than to appeal to us 'by the mercies of God' in Christ (Romans 12:1).

STRIFE AMONG THE HEIRS OF MERCY

This mercy of Christ should also move us to commiserate the state of the poor church, torn by enemies without, and rending itself by divisions at home. It cannot but affect any soul that ever felt comfort from Christ to consider what an affectionate entreaty the apostle makes to mutual agreement in judgment and affection. 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded' (Php_2:1), as if he should say, 'Unless you will disclaim all consolation in Christ, labour to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' What a joyful spectacle is this to Satan and his faction, to see those that are separated from the world fall in pieces among themselves! Our discord is our enemy's melody.

The more to blame are those that for private aims affect differences from others, and will not suffer the wounds of the church to close and meet together. This must not be understood as if men should dissemble their judgment in any truth where there is just cause of expressing themselves; for the least truth is Christ's and not ours, and therefore we are not to take liberty to affirm or deny at our pleasure. There is something due on a penny as well as on a pound, therefore we must be faithful in the least truth, when the season calls for it. Then our words are 'like apples of gold in pictures of silver' (Proverbs 25:11). One word spoken in season will do more good than a thousand out of season. But in some cases peace, through having our faith to ourselves before God (Romans 14:22), is of more consequence than the open discovery of some things we take to be true, considering that the weakness of man's nature is such that there can hardly be a discovery of any difference in opinion without some estrangement of affection. So far as men are not of one mind, they will hardly be of one heart, except where grace and the peace of God bear great rule in the heart (Colossians 3:15). Therefore open show of difference is only good when it is necessary, although some, from a desire to be somebody, turn into by-ways and yield to a spirit of contradiction in themselves. Yet, if Paul may be judge, they 'are yet carnal' (1 Corinthians 3:3). If it

be wisdom, it is wisdom from beneath: for the wisdom from above, as it is pure, so it is peaceable (James 3:17). Our blessed Savior, when he was to leave the world, what did he press upon his disciples more than peace and love? And in his last prayer, with what earnestness did he beg of his Father that 'they all may be one', as he and the Father were one (John 17:21). But what he prayed for on earth, we shall only enjoy perfectly in heaven. Let this make the meditation of that time the more sweet unto us.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BRUISED

And further, to expose offenders of this kind, what spirit shall we think -them to be of that take advantage of the bruisedness and infirmities of men's spirits to relieve them with false peace for their own worldly ends? A wounded spirit will part with anything. Most of the gainful points of popery, such as confession, satisfaction, merit and purgatory, spring from hence, but they are physicians of no value, or tormentors and not physicians at all. It is a greater blessing to be delivered from the sting of these scorpions (Revelation 9:5) than we are thankful for. Spiritual tyranny is the greatest tyranny, and then especially when it is where most mercy should be shown; yet even there some, like cruel surgeons, delight in making long cures, to serve themselves through the misery of others. It brings men under a terrible curse that they 'remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man', that they might 'even slay the broken in heart' (Psalms 109:16).

In the same way, to such as raise temporal advantage to themselves out of the spiritual misery of others we must add such as raise estates by betraying the church, and are unfaithful in the trust committed unto them, when the children cry for the bread of life, and there is none to give them, bringing thus upon the people of God that heavy judgment of a spiritual famine, starving Christ in his members. Shall we so requite so good a Savior who counts the love and mercy shown in feeding his lambs (John 21:15) as shown to himself?

DESPISING THE SIMPLE MEANS OF MERCY

Lastly, they carry themselves very unkindly towards Christ who stumble at his low stooping to us in his government and ordinances, that are ashamed of the simplicity of the gospel, that count preaching foolishness. They, out of the pride of their heart, think that they may do well enough without the help of the Word and sacraments, and think Christ did not take enough dignity upon him; and therefore they will mend the matter with their own devices so that they may give better satisfaction to flesh and blood, as in popery. What greater unthankfulness can there be than to despise any help that Christ in mercy has provided for us? In the days of his flesh the proud Pharisees took offence at his familiar conversing with sinful men, though he only did so as a physician to heal their souls. What defenses was Paul driven to make for himself, for his plainness in unfolding the gospel? The more Christ, in himself and in his servants, shall descend to exalt us, the more we should, with all humility and readiness, entertain that love and magnify the goodness of God, that has put the great work of our salvation, and laid the government, upon so gentle a Savior as will carry himself so mildly in all things wherein he is to deal between God and us, and us and God. The lower Christ comes down to us, the higher let us lift him up in our hearts. So will all those do that have ever found the experience of Christ's work in their hearts.

Taken from The Bruised Reed. Updated.

Help for the Weak

Help for the Weak

by Richard Sibbes

By meditation on these rules and signs, much comfort may be brought to the souls of the weakest. That it may be in greater abundance, let me add something to help them over some few ordinary objections and secret thoughts against themselves which, getting within the heart, oftentimes keep them low.

TEMPTATIONS WHICH HINDER COMFORT

1. Some think they have no faith at all because they have no full assurance, whereas the fairest fire that can be will have some smoke. The best actions will smell of the smoke. The mortar wherein garlic has been stamped will always smell of it; so all our actions will savor something of the old man.

2. In weakness of body some think grace dies, because their performances are feeble, their spirits, which are the instruments of their souls' actions, being weakened. But they do not consider that God regards the hidden sighs of those that lack abilities to express them outwardly. He that pronounces those blessed that consider the poor will have a merciful consideration of such himself.

3. Some again are haunted with hideous representations to their imaginations, and with vile and unworthy thoughts of God, of Christ, of the Word, which, as busy flies, disquiet and molest their peace. These are cast in like wildfire by Satan, as may be discerned by the strangeness, the strength and violence, and the horribleness of them even to corrupt nature. A pious soul is no more guilty of them than Benjamin was when Joseph's cup was put into his sack. Among other helps recommended by godly writers, such as detestation of them and diversion from them to other things, let this be one, to complain to Christ against them, and to fly under the wings of his protection, and to desire him to take our part against his and our enemy. Shall every sin and blasphemy of man be forgiven, and not these blasphemous thoughts, which have the devil for their father, when Christ himself was molested in this way so that he might succor all poor souls in this condition?

But there is a difference between Christ and us in this case. Because Satan had nothing of his own in Christ his suggestions left no impression at all in his holy nature, but, as sparks falling into the sea, were presently quenched. Satan's temptations of Christ were only suggestions on Satan's part, and apprehensions of the vileness of them on Christ's part. To apprehend ill suggested by another is not ill. It was Christ's grievance, but Satan's sin. But thus he yielded himself to be tempted, that he might both pity us in our conflicts, and train us up to manage our spiritual weapons as he did. Christ could have overcome him by power, but he did it by argument. But when Satan comes to us, he finds something of his own in us, which holds correspondence and

has intelligence with him. There is the same enmity in our nature to God and goodness, in some degree, that is in Satan himself. Therefore his temptations fasten, for the most part, some taint upon us. And if there were no devil to suggest, yet sinful thoughts would arise from within us, though none were cast in from without. We have a mint of them within. These thoughts, if the soul dwell on them so long as to suck or draw from and by them any sinful delight, then they leave a more heavy guilt upon the soul, hinder our sweet communion with God, interrupt our peace, and put a contrary relish into the soul, disposing it to greater sins. All scandalous actions are only thoughts at the first. Ill thoughts are as little thieves, which, creeping in at the window, open the door to greater. Thoughts are seeds of actions. These, especially when they are helped forward by Satan, make the life of many good Christians almost a martyrdom. In this case it is an unsound comfort that some minister, that ill thoughts arise from nature, and what is natural is excusable. We must know that nature, as it came out of God's hands in the beginning, had no such risings out of it. The soul, as inspired of God, had no such unsavoury breathings. But since it betrayed itself by sin it is, in some sort, natural to it to forge sinful imaginations, and to be a furnace of such sparks. And this is an aggravation of the sinfulness of natural corruption, that it is so deeply rooted and so generally spread in our nature.

It promotes humiliation to know the whole breadth and depth of sin. But the fact that our nature now, so far as it is unrenewed, is so unhappily fruitful in ill thoughts, ministers this comfort, that it is not our case alone, as if our condition in this were different from others, as some have been tempted to think, even almost to despair. None, say they, have such a loathsome nature as I have. This springs from ignorance of the spreading of original sin, for what can come from an unclean thing but that which is unclean? 'As in water face answereth to face, so the [polluted] heart of man to man' (Proverbs 27:19), where grace has not made some difference. As in annoyances from Satan, so here, the best way is to lay open our complaints to Christ, and cry with Paul, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Romans 7:24). On giving vent to his distress, he presently found comfort, for he breaks into thanksgiving, 'I thank God.' And it is good to profit from this, to hate this offensive body of death more, and to draw nearer to God, as that holy man did after his 'foolish' and 'beastly' thoughts (Psalms 73:22; Psalms 73:28), and so to keep our hearts closer to God, seasoning them with heavenly meditations in the morning, storing up good matter, so that our heart may be a good treasury, while we beg of Christ his Holy Spirit to stop that cursed issue and to be a living spring of better thoughts in us. Nothing more abases the spirits of holy men that desire to delight in God after they have escaped the common defilements of the world than these unclean issues of spirit, as being most contrary to God, who is a pure Spirit. But the very irksomeness of them yields matter of comfort against them. They force the soul to all spiritual exercises, to watchfulness and a more near walking with God, and to raise itself to thoughts of a higher nature, such as those which the truth of God, the works of God, the communion of saints, the mystery of godliness, the terror of the Lord, and the excellency of the state of a Christian and a conversation suitable to it, do abundantly minister. They discover to us a necessity of daily purging and pardoning grace, and of seeking to be found in Christ, and so bring the best often upon their knees.

Our chief comfort is that our blessed Savior, as he bade Satan depart from him, after he had given way awhile to his insolence (Mart. 4:10), so he will command him to be gone from us, when it shall be good for us. He must be gone at a word. And Christ can and will likewise, in his own time,

rebuke the rebellious and extravagant stirrings of our hearts and bring all the thoughts of the inner man into subjection to himself.

4. Some think, when they become more troubled with the smoke of corruption than they were before, therefore they are worse than they were. It is true that corruptions appear now more than before, but they are less.

For, first, the more sin is seen, the more it is hated, and therefore it is less. Dust particles are in a room before the sun shines, but they only appear then.

Secondly, the nearer contraries are one to another, the sharper is the conflict between them. Now, of all enemies the spirit and the flesh are nearest one to another, being both in the soul of a regenerate man, in the faculties of the soul, and in every action that springs from those faculties, and therefore it is no marvel that the soul, the seat of this battle, thus divided within itself, is as smoking flax.

Thirdly, the more grace, the more spiritual life, and the more spiritual life, the more antipathy to the contrary. Therefore none are so aware of corruption as those whose souls are most alive.

Fourthly, when men give themselves up to self-indulgence, their corruptions do not trouble them, as not being bound and tied up; but when once grace suppresses their extravagant and licentious excesses, then the flesh boils, as disdainingly to be confined. Yet they are better now than they were before. That matter which yields smoke was in the torch before it was lighted, but it is not offensive till the torch begins to burn. Let such know that if the smoke be once offensive to them, it is a sign that there is light. It is better to enjoy the benefit of light, though with smoke, than to be altogether in the dark.

Nor is smoke so offensive to us as light is pleasant to us, since it yields an evidence of the truth of grace in the heart. Therefore, though it is cumbersome in the conflict, yet it is comfortable as evidence. It is better that corruption should offend us now than, by giving way to it to gain a little peace, to lose comfort afterwards. Let such therefore as are at variance and odds with their corruptions look on this text as their portion of comfort.

WEAKNESS SHOULD NOT KEEP US FROM DUTY

It should encourage us to duty that Christ will not quench the smoking flax, but blow on it till it flames. Some are loath to do good because they feel their hearts rebelling, and duties turn out badly. We should not avoid good actions because of the infirmities attending them. Christ looks more at the good in them which he means to cherish than the ill in them which he means to abolish. Though eating increases a disease, a sick man will still eat, so that nature may gain strength against the disease. So, though sin cleaves to what we do, yet let us do it, since we have to deal with so good a Lord, and the more strife we meet with, the more acceptance we shall have. Christ loves to taste of the good fruits that come from us, even though they will always savor of our old nature.

A Christian complains he cannot pray. 'Oh, I am troubled with so many distracting thoughts, and never more than now!' But has he put into your heart a desire to pray? Then he will hear the desires of his own Spirit in you. 'We know not what we should pray for as we ought' (nor how to do anything else as we ought), but the Spirit helps our infirmities with 'groanings which cannot be

uttered' (Romans 8:26), which are not hid from God. 'My groaning is not hid from thee' (Psalms 38:9). God can pick sense out of a confused prayer. These desires cry louder in his ears than your sins. Sometimes a Christian has such confused thoughts that he can say nothing but, as a child, cries, 'O Father', not able to express what he needs, like Moses at the Red Sea. These stirrings of spirit touch the heart of God and melt him into compassion towards us, when they come from the Spirit of adoption, and from a striving to be better.

'Oh, but is it possible', thinks the misgiving heart, 'that so holy a God should accept such a prayer?' Yes, he will accept that which is his own, and pardon that which is ours. Jonah prayed in the fish's belly (Jonah 2:1), being burdened with the guilt of sin, yet God heard him. Let not, therefore, infirmities discourage us. James takes away this objection (James 5:17). Some might object, 'If I were as holy as Elijah, then my prayers might be regarded.' 'But,' says he, 'Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.' He had his passions as well as we, or do we think that God heard him because he was without fault? Surely not. But look at the promises: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee' (Psalms 50:15). 'Ask, and it shall be given you' (Matthew 7:7) and others like these. God accepts our prayers, though weak, because we are his own children, and they come from his own Spirit; because they are according to his own will; and because they are offered in Christ's mediation, and he takes them, and mingles them with his own incense (Revelation 8:3).

There is never a holy sigh, never a tear we shed, which is lost. And as every grace increases by exercise of itself, so does the grace of prayer. By prayer we learn to pray. So, likewise, we should take heed of a spirit of discouragement in all other holy duties, since we have so gracious a Savior. Pray as we are able, hear as we are able, strive as we are able, do as we are able, according to the measure of grace received. God in Christ will cast a gracious eye upon that which is his own.

Would Paul do nothing because he could not do the good that he would? No, he 'pressed toward the mark'. Let us not be cruel to ourselves when Christ is thus gracious. There is a certain meekness of spirit whereby we yield thanks to God for any ability at all, and rest quiet with the measure of grace received, seeing it is God's good pleasure it should be so, who gives the will and the deed, yet not so as to rest from further endeavors. But when, with faithful endeavor, we come short of what we would be, and short of what others are, then know for our comfort, Christ will not quench the smoking flax, and that sincerity and truth, as we said before, with endeavor of growth, is our perfection.

What God says of Jeroboam's son is comforting, 'He only shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel' (1 Kings 14:13), though only 'some good thing'. 'Lord, I believe' (Mark 9:24), with a weak faith, yet with faith; love thee with a faint love, yet with love; endeavor in a feeble manner, yet endeavor. A little fire is fire, though it smokes. Since thou hast taken me into thy covenant to be thine from being an enemy, wilt thou cast me off for these infirmities, which, as they displease thee, so are they the grief of my own heart?

Spiritual Jubilee, the

The Spiritual Jubilee

by Richard Sibbes

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death.—Romans 8:2.

There are four things especially that trouble the peace of a Christian, and indeed of any man, in this world.

The first is, sin, with the guilt of it, binding them over to the wrath of God, and the expectation of misery, which is a heavy bondage.

The second is, besides the guilt of sin, the remainders of corruption, with the conflict that accompanies them while we live in this world; and that conflict must needs be tedious.

The third is, the miseries of this life that accompany always both the guilt and remainders of sin in this world. We are condemned to a great deal of trouble here, and this doth much exercise and perplex God's children. And then the finishing up of all, death and damnation.

The thought of these things doth much disquiet and disturb the peace of a Christian's soul.

Now, in this Epistle we have comfort against all these. First, for the guilt of sin, that binds us over to eternal judgment and the wrath of God; we are freed by the obedience of Christ, the second Adam, as is excellently shewed in the fifth chapter.

And for the remainders of corruption that we struggle with in this world, we are assisted against that by the Spirit of Christ. For as by the obedience of Christ we are freed from the guilt, so by the Spirit of Christ we are helped and assisted against the remainders of our corruptions.

For the third, the miseries of this life, we have victory in Christ: 'In him we are more than conquerors,' as you have it in this chapter, Romans 8:37. They can do us no harm. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.' We have many singular comforts in this chapter against all the troubles that can befall us, and this is one that triumphs over all: 'All things shall work for the best to them that love God.' What should I speak of hurt from anything that befalls us, when all shall work for the best, by the over-ruling of him that commands all? ver. 28.

And for death itself: 'Neither life nor death shall be able to separate us from the love of God.' And for damnation which accompanies death: 'It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?' There are contrasting comforts in God's book, nay, in this epistle and in this chapter, to set against all that may any way trouble our peace. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' saith the apostle; and then he goes on after to shew how, by the help of the Spirit, 'all things work for the best,' &c. In this very verse likewise, you have this comfort set down, of our freedom by Christ from any thing that may hurt us. 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from

the law of sin and of death.'

The words are not absolute, as we see in the particle 'for;' for the law of the Spirit of life,' &c. They depend upon the first verse thus; as a reason why, however there be sin in God's children, yet there is no damnation to them. 'There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus.' He proves it thus. Those that are free from the law of sin and of death, which brings in condemnation, those undoubtedly are free from damnation. But those that are in Christ Jesus, they are freed from the law of sin and of death; therefore there is no condemnation to such. But how shall we know that we are in Christ Jesus? Those that have the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit of Christ, they are in Christ. 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath freed me from the law of sin and of death.' So I say, the words are especially a reason of the former, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;' because by the 'Spirit of Christ they are freed from the law of sin, and of death;' and consequently, they are freed from damnation; for what brings in damnation but sin?

In the words, then, there is an opposition. There is law against law. 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ,' and 'the law of sin and of death.' Now, where there are contrary laws, if there be contrary lords, as there must be, new lords will have new laws; especially if they be lords by conquest, they will alter the very fundamental laws that were before; as you know the old conquerors have done in this kingdom. Here is law against law, and lord against lord; Christ against sin and death. Here is a Lord by conquest over all other lords and laws. Therefore, here must needs be an alteration of laws upon it; the very fundamental laws must be altered. But to come more particularly to the words,

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath freed me from the law of sin and of death.'

The words are much vexed by expositors. I will rather speak my own judgment of them, and reconcile them, than dash one man's judgment against another; for that tends not to edification. 'The law of the Spirit of life,' &c. The meaning of the words is plain, if we compare it with other Scriptures.

'The law.' It is nothing but a commanding power; for so the word written the law, in the apostle's meaning, is but a power forcing and commanding. So the 'law of the Spirit of life' is the commanding and forcing power of the 'Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;' and so the 'law of sin,' it is either the tyrannical command and forcing power of sin, or else the condemning for sin afterwards, as we shall see hereafter. For we shall unfold the words better in the particulars.

First, then, here we have set down what estate we are in by nature: 'We are under the law of sin and of death.'

And then, here is our freedom and deliverance from that: 'We are made free from the law of sin and of death.'

And then the author of it, Christ Jesus: 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath freed me from the law of sin and of death.' In the words, and those that go a little before, there are these three main fundamental points of religion:

The misery and bondage of man.

The deliverance of man.

And his duty.

Here you have his misery. He is under 'sin and death.'

Here is his deliverance. He is 'free from this by Christ.'

And for his duty; you have it in the last verse of the former chapter, speaking of his deliverance. 'Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Then it follows, 'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Thankfulness is due, not verbal thankfulness only. Indeed, the whole life of a Christian, after his deliverance, is a real thanksgiving. But that is not in my text.

To speak, therefore, of our estate by nature, and of our deliverance; our estate is, that we are under the law of sin and death.

'We are under the law of sin.'

Obs. We are under sin. What sin? We are under a threefold sin.

1. We are under the first sin of our first father; for as Levi paid tithes in Abraham to Melchisedec, so we all sinned in the loins of Adam our first parent; and the guilt of that first sin lies upon us.

2. Secondly, There is another sin that is derived and springs from that first sin; which is the marring of the image of God, the privation of our nature. We call it original sin, whereby we are stripped of that good we had in our first creation, and have the contrary image, the image of Satan stamped upon us. So we are under the first sin, the guilt of it; and we are under the sin of nature, which we call original sin, because it is derived to us even from our birth and first original we had in Adam.

3. And then we are under actual sins, which are so many bonds to tie us fast under sin. We are dead by nature; but we are dead and rotten by actual sins. We superadd to the guilt of our sin by our daily activities. We are blind by nature; but we are blinded indeed much more by our custom of life. Every sin doth, as it were, tie us faster to damnation, and keeps us more tightly under the bondage of sin. Every new sin takes away some part of the light of the understanding, and takes away some freedom of the will. It darkens the judgment more and more, and enthralls the will and affections; and binds a man more and more to the just sentence of God, that, as it is Proverbs 5:22, 'the sinner is tied with the bonds of his own sins.' He is under the chains of an habituated wicked course of life, as well as of the sin of nature, which is the spring of all.

This is the miserable state of man; and these chains of his sins hold him over him to further chains. Even as the devil is reserved in chains; that is, in terrors of his conscience, which as chains bind him till he be in hell, the place he is destined to; so we being in the chains and bondage, vexed with our sins, we are at the same time in the chains of terrors of conscience, the beginnings of hell, and reserved to chains of damnation and death world without end. It is another manner of matter, our estate by nature, than it is usually taken for. If men had but a little supernatural light, to see what condition they are in, till they get out into Christ Jesus, they would not continue a minute in that cursed estate.

And we have deserved to be cast into this estate by reason that we left our subordination and dependence upon God, which, being creatures, we should have had. Therefore we turning from God to the creature, God punisheth our rebellion to him with rebellion in ourselves; because we withdrew our subjection from him, that therefore there should be in us a withdrawing of the subjection of sin and of the whole soul to God. So this captivity to and giving up to sin in us, it is penal and sinful; but as it comes from God, it is altogether judicial. Therefore we have it oft in the New Testament, in Romans 1:21 and 2 Thessalonians 2:10. The Gentiles, because they would not receive the truth that they might have had by the light of nature, 'God gave them up to their sins.' And then the Christians after the apostles' times, they set slight by the good word of God, the gospel. Therefore 'God gave them up to believe lies.' It was sin in them; but as God gave them up, it was justice. So this captivity and giving men up to their own lusts, it is justice; as it comes from God, it is a horrible judgment. It is worse than to be given up to the devil himself; for by being given up to our lusts we increase our damnation. To be given up to be tormented of the devil, it is not such a mischief as this spiritual captivity under sin. We are guilty ourselves of our own thralldom. And this will increase both the shame and the punishment. The shame, that a man shall say in hell afterward, 'I have brought myself hither, I had means enough, prohibitions enough; I had sometimes chastisements of God, sometimes motions of his Spirit, sometimes one help from God, sometimes another; yet notwithstanding I thrust through all oppositions that God set between me and the execution of my lusts, and to hell-ward I would, and hither I have brought myself.' So that indeed the greatest part of hell-torments, the shame of them especially, it will be that men have brought themselves by their own wits and carnal lusts thither. And indeed all the wit a carnal man hath, that is not sanctified by God's Spirit, it is to work himself to misery, to be a drudge to his lusts; that sets all the parts he hath on work, not how he may serve God and be happy in another world, but how he may prowl and provide for his own carnal lusts. This is the estate of all men by nature. They are under sin, under the power of sin. The blind judgment leads the blind affections, and both 'fall into the ditch,' into hell, Luke 6:89.

1. The fearfulness and odiousness of this condition, to be in prison and thralldom and bondage to all kind of sin, natural and actual, it will appear further by this, that being in subjection to our base lusts, by consequence we are under the bondage of Satan; for he hath power over death by sin, because he draws us to sin, and then accuseth us and torments us for sin. By sin we come to be under his bondage. So that we are under the fearful captivity of the devil while we are under the captivity of sin; for all the power that he hath over us it is by sin. He is but God's executioner for sin. First, God gives him power to draw us to sin, to punish one sin with another; and then he suffers him to accuse and to torment us afterward: What a fearful bondage is this, that being under sin we are under Satan! We are servants to our enemy, as God threatened his people that they should serve their enemies. But this is a greater judgment, to be slaves to this enemy. This is the condition of every sinner. To be a slave to a man's enemy, it is a judgment of judgments; yet notwithstanding this is the case of every man by nature; he is a servant to his enemy, to Satan and his own lusts. He is a right Ham, a 'servant of servants;' for Satan useth him as the Philistines did Samson: he puts out his eyes; he puts out his judgment, his wits; he besots him; and so he goes blind in Satan's blind work and business: he is in a maze all his life long, till at length he sink into hell. So this is the aggravation of a man's estate by nature, he is a slave to his enemy. You know blessed Zacharias saith, Luke 1:74-75, 'That, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in righteousness and holiness, all the days of our life.' There is no

wicked man, but he is manipulated by the devil. Oh that we would consider of it! We think we are led only by our own lusts and sins, as men; but until a man be in Christ, 'he is ruled by the command of the prince of the air,' Ephesians 2:2, and in 2 Timothy 2:26, 'he is ruled by Satan, according to his will.' Even as a bird in a snare, it may move up and down, but it is still in the snare, and he that hath it there cares not: he knows he hath it safe, and he goes about to catch other birds; so when we are in our lusts and follow them, the devil hath us in his snare: he is secure of us, and goes about getting more and more still. The devil acts, and moves, and leads all carnal men.

But how chanceth it that they do not know and perceive it?

It is because he goeth with the stream of their own corruptions. Indeed, we must make some limitation of this. In some cases the devil doth not move carnal men. They are better than the devil would have them be for the good of the commonwealth and state; but yet take them as they stand in relation to religion, they may be devilish, secret, bitter, dark enemies to that. Though they may have strong heads for the good of the state, yet it is not from any intrinsic good in themselves; but God useth them and makes them do that. For the devil would have all wicked; he is an enemy to the very swine; therefore much more to the good of a state. Therefore there are many civil moral virtues, as we see in Ahithophel and Judas, which no question is more than the devil would have. He would not have civil men so good; he would not have them do that they do for the common good oftentimes. Yet the devil will be sure to be at one end of the good they do, to taint them, that their aim shall not be good. It shall not be to the glory of God; it shall not be in reference to salvation.

And so, as the good is temporal, they have a reward suitable to their desire; they care for no more. For they believe not heaven but in a general notion. It may be there is such things, it may be not. Therefore the good they do is some little petty obedience. And what do they desire? To be well esteemed and respected; to be venerable, and to have honourable opinions in the hearts of men, that men may stoop in their conceits to them as men of respect. This they deserve indeed, and this they have; God gives them that they would have. But as Christ tells the Pharisees, who did excellent good things, but it was to be 'seen of men,' he tells them 'they had their reward,' Matthew 6:2. They had all they looked for, for they were atheists; they looked not for heaven. So a man may say of all that are out of the state of grace: though they do more than the devil would have them, and for divers degrees of what they do they are not subject to the devil, yet he taints their actions one way or other in the end; he joins himself in the action first or last; he hath a hand in all their actions. So that, notwithstanding there be many good things, yet this hinders not a whit but that they may be under the power of the devil; for it is but in reference to civil government and state, which is but for a time. 'The fashion of this world passeth away,' 1 Corinthians 7:31. Here will be no magistrates to govern, nor no people to be governed ere long.

I speak it, because many men are ready to propound such and such, to imitate them in their courses; and to say, I will be no more religious than he; when, perhaps, all may be but formality and common graces for this world. God will honour some so much, to be instruments for common good here; but what is that to eternal salvation? He may be a slave to his lusts, and an enemy to the power of grace, for all that. Therefore, unless we see men wrought upon thoroughly, to be of the mind of Christ, to have the Spirit of Christ, to judge of things as Christ judgeth, to judge the

service of God and doing his will to be the best things, and to 'go about doing good, Acts 10:38, and that with reference and obedience to God, all is nothing else. A man may be under the bondage of his corruptions, and so by them to Satan.

Again, When we are under our lusts and sins, it is about earthly things; we are in slavery to that which is worse than ourselves. Sin is the vilest thing in the world, and the things whereabout sin is occupied are the profits and pleasures and trifles of this world—mean petty things. It is a base slavery to consider whom we serve.

3. And to consider what it is that is in bondage, the immortal soul of man, that had the image of God stamped upon it; and in the soul of man, the most excellent part, the will, that is most free, yet being under sin, it is most bound. Our will was given us to cleave to God and the best things; to make choice of the best things, and to cleave to them undivided in life and death, and for ever; and so by cleaving to things better than ourselves, to advance ourselves to a higher condition. For when the soul of man that is under better things, that is under God and Christ, and doth cleave to God and Christ in his affections, and to the things of a better life, these be things bettering a man's condition, even raising the soul from its own present estate to a glorious condition; for we are as we love. Our wills and our affections do transform us. Therefore wicked men are called the world, because they love it; and holy men are called heavenly, because they are carried in their affections and wills to heavenly things. Our affections and wills do denominate us, they give us the name; nay, that is too little, they do give us the reality, the state. When God so alters and changes our dispositions, that out of a sanctified judgment we make a right choice of things, and then cleave to them in our wills and affections constantly, this raiseth our nature to be higher than itself: 'He that cleaveth to the Lord is one spirit,' as the apostle saith, Acts 10:38. Indeed, our affections transform us anew. As it is with the fire, it transforms cold and gross bodies to be all fiery; so God and heavenly things work upon our hearts, they transform us to be like themselves.

Now, for this inward soul of man, which is so excellent a thing, fitted by God to cleave to better things, for communion with himself and everlasting happiness, for this to be a drudge to base pleasures and profits, to the windy empty things of this world, to vain titles and such like empty things, and to place its happiness in these things, it is a pitiful degeneration that so excellent a thing as the immortal soul of man, that shall never die, should join with those things that shall make him miserable, that it shall be better for a man that he had never been; as it is said of Judas, 'It had been better for that man that he had never been born,' Matthew 26:24.

4: In the next place, consider that that follows this thralldom and baseness to our lusts. There is a double fruit of it. (1.) The one is uncertain. I mean, for our yielding to our base affections, what do we profit? 'The pleasures of sin for a season,' Hebrews 11:25; a little pleasure or profit, perhaps not that neither; but if we have it, it is a fading commodity, that goes away quickly. When they are gotten, what are they? Vanity. They promise more before we get them than they perform when we have them. But then (2.) There is another wages, that God injustice hath appointed for it, that is, damnation: 'The wages of sin is death,' Rom. 6:28. It cries for wages. When we are under sin we can look for nothing but death, and therefore he joins them together here: 'the law of sin and of death,' an expectation of eternal misery. This a man hath that is wedded to himself, that hath not learned the first lesson in the gospel, to deny himself. He is a wretched slave to the devil in his best part and power; his lusts imprison his will and affections; his wit, that should devise how he

should be happy for eternity, it is only a drudge to his base lusts. There are a company of men that are the shame and blemish of the gospel, that get their wits a-work only how to devise to satisfy their base lusts; and then the issue and conclusion of all this is eternal misery; and in the meantime, the expectation of misery in terrors of conscience. This is the estate of every man till he be translated by the Spirit of God to a better condition in Christ, that he spends out his time in a base and miserable thralldom, worse than the thralldom of the Israelites in Egypt or in Babylon.

5. And it is so much the more fearful, because men are insensible of it, like inmates in an insane asylum, that make nothing of their chains, that laugh in their chains. A frantic man, when he is bound in chains, he laughs, when they that are about him weep at his misery. So you have men frolicking in sin. They will swear at liberty, and besot themselves at liberty, and corrupt their consciences, even for base trifles. They think they are in no bondage, and they do all wondrous cheerfully and well; whenas indeed the more cheerfully and readily any man performs the base service of sin, the more he is in bondage. Freedom is opposite to bondage. Notwithstanding, such is the nature of sin, that the more freely we do it the more we are bound; because the more freedom we have, the more we are entangled. We ran into guilt upon guilt, till after guilt comes execution, an eternal separation from the presence of God, and an adjudging to eternal torments for ever.

So that it is a false judgment that the world hath. They think great men happy men. Why? They do as they desire. Ay, they may do so, and ofttimes they take the liberty to do so. They will be under no laws. They are so far from obeying the law of God, that they are loath to be hampered with the laws of the state, or with any laws, but they will be above all. A miserable condition! Why? The more will a man hath in evil, the more miserable; for the more freely and with less opposition he tangleth himself. Let his place be never so great, the deeper he sinks in rebellion, and the deeper he sinks into guilt upon guilt; which will all come to a reckoning at the hour of death and day of judgment. So the men that we admire and envy most—out of credulity and lack of judgment—they are the most miserable creatures in the world, if they be out of Christ and have not grace. For they have nature let loose in them without restraint; and nature being under the captivity of sin, becomes out of measure sinful in such. The less a man is curbed either from laws above him or the law within him to check him, the more wretched man he is. For the deeper he goes in rebellion and sin, the deeper his torment shall be afterward.

Great persons have a great privilege. What privilege is that? They shall be greatly tormented. That is all the privilege that I know if they be wicked. Those that shake off all bonds, any earthly privilege and prerogative is so far from exempting them from misery, that it makes them more miserable; for unless they have grace to use those things that might be an advantage to better things, they sink deeper and deeper into sin, and so into terrors of conscience first or last; and, by consequence, to damnation. Oh it is a fearful condition to be the greatest monarch in the world and not to be in Christ, and under the law of 'the Spirit of life in Christ!' They are the objects of pity more than any other kind of men to truly judicious souls, that know from God's truth, and by the light of the Spirit, what is to be judged of the state of men. You see then what kind of misery it is that natural men are under, being under the law of sin.

6. To declare it a little further, for men will hardly think it is such a bondage to be under sin. Therefore, I beseech you, do but consider how sin tyranniseth where it gets strength. See it in

some instances. The covetous worldly man that is under the law of that lust, he hath the law of other lusts, but that is predominant—see how it tyranniseth. It takes away his rest; the use of God's blessings; the good things he hath given him to enjoy. It makes him a slave to the creature. We see it in carnal pleasure. Amnon, when he lusted after his sister Tamar, it took away his rest, 2 Samuel 13:2, seq. And how doth this degrading affection tyrannise in some men? It makes them forget their bodies so, that they overthrow their health and hasten death temporal. It hurts the natural man. It makes them forget their reputation; it makes them forget their souls; it makes them stink, by living in that carnal noisome sin. The judicious heathen were sensible of it, by the strength of natural judgment; yet sin where it is in any strength uncurbed, it so tyranniseth, that it makes men forget both health and life and reputation and estate in this world, that they come to nothing. What should I speak of forgetting life eternal and damnation? They have no faith to believe that. But such is the tyranny of sin, that it makes them forget things sensible; that by experience, after they see how dearly they have bought their base pleasures, with the loss of reputation, and health, and comfort; with the loss of the estate that God hath trusted them withal in this world.

Take a man that is under the degrading law of ambition, a proud person. See how it tyranniseth over him. It makes him forget blood and kindred, all the bonds of nature. He will kill his brethren to make his way; as you know in our own stories such tyrants. If there were not stories enough in this kind, daily experience shews it. Where the law of ambition and pride reigns, it makes the heart wherein this tyrant sets up his throne, to forget all bonds whatsoever, of nature and justice. You know whose speech it was, 'If the law must be violated, it must be for a kingdom' [Shakespeare]. But men will do it for far less. We see what men will do for a despicable place to command others in this world, when they are conscious of their own evil courses, and commanding corruptions; and all to give way to the base affection of ambition. A touch is enough of these things, for experience witnesseth and goes along with me. All men that are not in Christ, they have some predominant sin; either some degrading sin, or some more refined sin and lust, that keeps them from Christ and salvation; and this tyranniseth over them.

And this is the nature of this tyrant sin. It hath such possession of a man till he be got out of it and be in Christ, that it takes away the perception of itself. It hinders the knowledge of itself; it puts out a man's eyes. For that whereby a man should judge of corruption, it is corrupt itself. 'The wisdom of a man is death, it is enmity to God,' Romans 8:7. The wit that he hath that should discern of his degrading courses, it tangles him more and more to his own lusts; so that wit and wisdom, the highest part of the soul, it is imprisoned by base affections; and that power that should discern corruption, it is set on work to satisfy corruption. What is the wit of a man that is not in Christ occupied about all his lifetime? It is nothing but a drudge and a slave, to devise means to satisfy his degrading lusts. Take a worldly man: he is exceeding witty to contrive worldly plots and business, though he be a dunce and a sot in matters that are spiritual. In his own tract and course, he hath a shrewd wit. Why? Because his lusts to the world, they whet his wit. So we see the best thing in man now is enthralled to sin, his very wisdom itself; therefore it is enmity to God.

Every man hath some Herodias (Matthew 14:3), some sin or other that he is in bondage to, till he be in Christ. He cannot in a like measure be given and enthralled to all sins. It is unnecessary; because one sin serves another. Many sins serve one great one. Corruption doth not run in all streams in one equality: but it runs violently in one way unchecked and uncontrolled and unhindered, in all men that are not in Christ, and subdues the soul to itself, that it can devise and

plot for nothing, but to satisfy that base lust. This is the state of man by nature.

Obj. But some will say, it is not our state and condition. We are baptized, and receive the sacrament, and hear sermons, and read good books; and therefore we are not under sin.

Ans. But saith the apostle, 'His servants ye are to whom ye obey,' Romans 6:16. You may know the state of your service and subjection, by the course of your life. And as Christ saith to the Jews, John 8:33, they bragged that they were free. Alas! proud people! They were neither free for soul nor state; for they were under the Romans. They thought they were free because they were 'Abraham's children.' Were they not in captivity to the Egyptians, and under the Babylonians, and in present captivity under the Romans? Yet they forget themselves out of pride. 'If the Son make you free, ye are free indeed,' John 8:36; but because they were in a sinful course, they were slaves of sin. So it is no matter what privileges men are under, that they receive the sacrament, and are baptized, and live in the church, &c. 'His servants ye are, whom ye obey.' If there be prevailing lusts that set up their throne and tyrannise in our hearts, and set our wits on work, to devise how to satisfy them more than to please God, it is no matter what privileges we have. It is no matter whose uniform we wear, but whom we serve. We may wear God's uniform, that shall be pulled over our heads afterward and we be left unclothed; that it shall appear that we are the devil's servants under the profession of Christ.

There is no man that is not in Christ, that denies his corrupt nature anything. If revenge bid him take revenge, he will if he can; if he do not, it is no thanks to him, but to the laws. If any sin rise in the heart, all the parts of the body, and powers of the soul, are ready weapons to this tyrant to keep a man in slavery. As if anger and wrath keep a man in bondage, you shall have it in his countenance; his hand will be ready to execute it; his feet will be ready to carry him to revenge. If it be a proud heart that a man is kept under, you shall have it in his looks and expressions outward. If it be the base affection of lust, you shall have adultery in the eye; an unchaste and uncircumcised ear and filthy rotten language. Men you see upon all occasions are ready to execute the commands of these tyrannical lusts, in some kind or other. Therefore never talk of thy freedom, when lusts are raised up within thee, either ascending from thine own corruption, or cast in by Satan, and so joining with thy heart. Presently thy tongue will speak wickedly, and thine eyes, and looks, and countenance, shew that there is a wicked heart within; and the whole man is ready to execute it, further than a man is curbed bylaw, or respect to his reputation or the like, which is no thanks to him. Yet a man cannot act the part of a civil man so well, but the corruption of his vile heart will betray itself in his looks or language. One time or other this tyrant will break forth. Therefore let us look to our hearts and courses; for if we be not in Christ, we are under the 'law of sin.'

'And of death.'

We are not only under the law of sin, but also 'of death.' Now, 1, there is a death in this world, the separation of the soul from the body. But that is not so much meant here. For when we are in Christ we are not free from this death. But there is, 2, a worse death, which is a separation of the soul from the favour and love of God, and from the sanctifying and comforting Spirit of God. When the Spirit of God doth not comfort and sanctify the soul, it is a death. For as the soul is the life of the body, the body hath but a communicated life from the union it hath with the soul. The soul hath a life of its own, when it is out of the body, but the body hath its life from the soul. So it is with the

soul in this world.

1. When there is an estrangement of the soul from the Spirit of God and Christ, sanctifying, and comforting and cheering it, then there is a death of the soul. The soul can no more act anything that is savingly and holily good, than the body can be without the soul. And as the body without the soul is a noxious, stinking carcass, offensive in the eyes of its dearest friends, so the soul without the Spirit of Christ quickening and renewing it, and putting a comeliness and beauty upon it, it is odious. All the clothes and flowers you put upon a dead body cannot make it but a stinking carcass; so all the moral virtues, and all the honours in this world put upon a man out of Christ, it makes him not a spiritual living soul; he is but a loathsome corpse, a dead carcass, in the sight of God, and of all that have the Spirit of God. For he is under death. He is stark and stiff, unable to stir or move to any duty whatsoever. He hath no sense nor motion. Though such men live a common natural civil life, and walk up and down, yet they are dead men to God and to a better life. The world is full of dead men, that are dead while they are alive, as St Paul speaks of the 'widow that lives in pleasures,' 1 Timothy 5:6. A fearful estate, if we had spiritual eyes to see it and think of it.

2. But then after the death of the soul in this world, there is another degree of spiritual death; which is, when the soul leaves the body. Then the soul dies. For then it goes to hell. It is severed for ever from the comfortable and gracious presence of God, and likewise it lacks the comforts it had in this world.

3. And the third degree of it is, when body and soul shall be joined together; then there is an eternal separation of both from the presence of God, and an adjudging of them to eternal torments in hell. This is the state of all men that are not in Christ. They are dead in soul while they live; dead after the separation of the soul and body, and after to be adjudged to eternal damnation, world without end. Life is a sweet thing, and we know death is terrible. When we would set out our hatefulness to anything, we often say, 'I hate it as death.' Do we love life, and do we hate death? We should labour then to be out of that condition that we are all in by nature, wherein we are under sin and death, in regard of spiritual life, I mean; for, for civil life, and government, and policy, men may have life and vigour enough, that are hypocrites. But I speak of a better life, an eternal life, that is not subject to death.

Now, mark the joining of both these together. We are under sin and death by nature. Where a man is under sin he is under death; for as the apostle saith, Romans 5:12, 'Sin entered into the world, and by sin death.' They were neither of both God's creatures, neither sin nor death. But sin entered into the world by Satan, and death by sin. 'Oh, ye shall not die,' saith Satan. He was a liar away from the beginning. So now he saith to men, you shall not die; you may do this and do well enough. But he is a liar and a murderer. When he solicits to sin he is a murderer. Let us take heed of solicitations to sin, from our own nature or from Satan. Mark how God hath linked sin and death, 'The wages of sin is death,' Rom. 6:28. When we are tempted to sin, we think, I shall have this honour, or profit, or contentment, or preferment, and advancement in the world. Ay, but that that you get by sin, it is not so great as you look for, when you have it, if you get it at all. But afterwards comes death, the beginnings of eternal death, terrors of conscience, universally follow, if a man be himself, if he be not stupified. The more a man is a man, and enjoys the liberty of his judgment to judge of things, the more he sees the misery that is due after sin, with a fearful expectation of

worse things to come. Sin and death are an adamant chain and link that none can sever. Who shall separate that which God in his justice hath put together? If sin go before, death will follow. If the conception go before, the birth will follow after; if the smoke go before, the fire will follow. There is not a more constant order in nature than this in God's appointment: first sin, and then death and damnation after.

Use. Therefore when we are tempted to sin let us reason with ourselves, 'There is death in the pot,' 2 Kings 4:40. Let us discern death in it. It will follow. And if a man after repent of it, it will be more sharp repentance and grievous than the sin was pleasant; that a man shall have little joy of his sin, if he do repent. If he do not repent, what a fearful estate is a man in, after he hath sinned! Sin and death go together. No human power can sever them; for take the greatest monarch in the world, when he hath sinned, conscience is above him as great as he is, for conscience is next under God. It awes and terrifies him, and keeps his sleep from him; as we see of late in our bloody neighbour country, after that great massacre, he could not sleep without music and the like. All that they have and enjoy in the world, all their greatness, it will not satisfy and stop the mouth of conscience; but when they sin, they feel the wrath of God arresting, and they are as it were shut up in prison, under the terrors of an accusing conscience, till they come to eternal imprisonment in the chains of hell and damnation. This is the estate of the greatest man in the world that is not in Christ. They are not so happy as we think they are. They are imprisoned in their own hearts, though they walk at never so much liberty abroad, and do what they wish; for sin and death goes together, and before eternal death comes, the expectation and terrors of it seize on them for the present. So that whatsoever our first birth be, though it be noble and great, yet by it we are bond-slaves under sin and death, unless our second birth, our new birth, make amends for sin, for the baseness of our first birth. This prerogative, our spiritual nobleness, is such an estate wherein we are not born, but are born again to it, 'to an inheritance immortal,' &c., 1 Peter 1:4. But by nature we are all bondmen, though we be born never so nobly. Therefore let us never brag of our birth, as the Jews did, that they were the children of Abraham. No, saith Christ, you are of your father the devil, John 8:44. Let none stand upon the gentry and nobility of their birth, unless they be taken out of the condition they are in by nature, to be in a better condition in Christ; for we see all men naturally are under the law of sin and death.

These things are slighted, because we enjoy 'the pleasures of sin for a season,' Hebrews 11:25. Men think to be enthralled to sin, it is pleasant thralldom, they are golden fetters; for I shall have the pleasures of sin all my lifetime, &c.; and for death, I will set a Roman spirit against death. Saith a Roman, What! is it such a matter to die? It is nothing to die: They set a good face on the matter. And this is the conceit of many men till they come to it. But, alas! To be in bondage to death, it is another matter, for behind death there is a gulf. A man may break the hedge well enough with a strong resolution to die; it is nothing to die if there were an end. But there is a gulf, there is damnation and destruction behind; there is eternal torment behind; to be adjudged from the presence of God for ever: to be separated from all good and all comfort, and to have society with the devil and his angels in hell, and that for ever and for ever. Thou mayest, perhaps, make slight of the service of sin, because thou hast the present allurements to delight thee, but thou shouldst regard death. Thou mayest neglect death, but then regard eternal death. This word 'eternal' it is a heavy word, 'eternal' separation from all good; and eternal communion with the devil and his angels; and for the wrath of God to seize on thy soul eternally, world without end. Methinks men

should not set light by that. Therefore considering that this is our estate by nature,—we are all slaves to sin and death,—let us labour to get out of this cursed estate by all means, which is by:

'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.'

Now, I come to speak of our freedom: 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath freed me from the law of sin and death.' This is good news indeed, to hear of freedom: good news to the Israelites to hear of freedom out of Egypt, and for the Jews to hear of Cyrus's proclamation for their freedom out of Babylon. Freedom out of bondage is a sweet message. Here we have such a message of spiritual freedom, from other manner of enemies than those were. The year of jubilee, it was a year of consolation to servants that were kept in and were much vexed with their bondage. When the year of jubilee came they were all freed. Therefore there was great expectation of the year of jubilee. Here we have a spiritual jubilee: a manumission and freedom from the bondage we are in by nature. 'The Spirit of life in Christ makes us free from the law of sin and death.' There is life in Christ, opposite to death in us. There is a Spirit of life in Christ and a law of the Spirit of life in Christ, opposite to the law of sin and of death in us. So that this is our happiness while we live here (Oh, it is the blessedness of men to make use of it while they have time and space and grace to repent, and to cleave to Christ), that whatsoever ill we are under by nature, we may have full supply in Christ for all the breaches that came by the first Adam. There came the wrath of God, the corruption of our nature, terrors of conscience, death and damnation. All these followed the sin and breach of the first Adam. All these are made up in the second. He hath freed us from all the ill we received from the first Adam, and that we have added ourselves; for we make ourselves worse than we come from Adam by our voluntary and daily transgressions. But we are freed from all by the 'law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.'

How comes this freedom?

1. There can no freedom be without satisfaction to divine justice. For why are we under sin? God gives us up to sin. Why are we under death? God gives us up to death. Why are we under Satan's government? He is God's executioner, God's serjeant. He gives us up to him here because we offend him. Why are we under damnation and wrath? Because God is offended. All our slavery comes originally from God. However it be sinful in regard of Satan that keeps us, yet the power whereby he keeps us is good, for he doth it from God. His will is always naught, but his power is always lawful. Therefore the power whereby the devil keeps us, if we look up to God under whom the power is, it is a lawful power; for God hath a hand in giving us up to sin: it is a judicial giving up, and then by lusts and sin, to Satan and death and damnation. So if we speak of freedom, we must not begin with the executioner: the wrath of God must be satisfied. God must be one with us, so as his justice must have contentment. Satisfaction must be with the glory of his justice, as well as of his mercy. His attributes must have full recompense. One must not be destroyed to satisfy another. He must so be merciful in freeing us as that content must be given to his justice, that it complain not of any loss. Now, reconciliation always supposeth recompense. It is founded upon it.

2. And satisfaction for sin, it must be in that nature that hath sinned. Now man of himself could not satisfy divine justice, being a finite person; therefore God the second person became man, that in our nature he might satisfy God's wrath for us, and so free us by giving payment to his divine justice. The death of Christ, God-man, is the price of our liberty and freedom.

But why doth the apostle speak here of 'a law of the Spirit of life in Christ' which frees us? But here is no mention of satisfaction by death.

Oh, but death is the foundation of all, as we shall see afterwards. To unfold the point, therefore, because it is a special point, and the words need unfolding.

Here it is said there is life in Christ.

'A Spirit of life,' and a law of the Spirit of life in Christ.

1. There is life in Christ, not only as God, for so indeed he is life. God his life is himself; for life is the being of a thing, and the actions and moving and vigour and operations of a thing answerable to that being. So the life of God is his being: 'As I live, saith the Lord;' that is, 'As I am God, I will not the death of a sinner,' Ezek. 18:82. Now, Christ hath life in him as God, as the Father hath. But that is not especially here meant.

2. There is life in Christ as God-man, as mediator. Now, this life is that life which is originally from the Godhead. Indeed, it is but the Godhead's quickening and giving life to the manhood in Christ; the Spirit quickening and sanctifying the manhood. And we have no comfort by the life of God, as it is in God's life alone severed; for, alas! What communion have we with God without a mediator? But our comfort is this, that God, who is the fountain of life, he became man, and having satisfied God's justice, he conveys life to us. He is our head; he hath life in himself as God, to impart spiritual life to all his members; so there is life in Christ as mediator.

And there is a Spirit of life. That life it is a working life, for spirit is an emphatical word. Spirit added to a thing increased the thing. Again, he saith, 'The law of the Spirit of life.' Law is a commanding thing. To shew that the life in Christ is a commanding life, it countermands all opposing laws whatsoever, of sin and death; and this law is a countermand to all other laws. 'The law of the Spirit of life' 'frees us from all other laws. So here is life, the Spirit of life, and the law of the Spirit of life—all words of strong signification.

But for the clear understanding of this sweet and consoling point, first, consider how the law of the Spirit of life is in Christ, what it doth in him, and then how it is derivatively in us.

First of all, We must know this for a foundation, whatsoever is done to us is done to Christ first; and whatsoever we have, Christ hath it first. Therefore life is first in Christ, and then in us; resurrection first in Christ, and, then in us; sonship first in Christ, and then in us; justification from our sins first in Christ—he is freed from our sins—and then in us; ascension first in Christ, and then in us; glory in heaven first in Christ, and then in us. We have nothing in us, but it is derived from Christ. Therefore, this being laid as a ground, we must consider how the Spirit of life works in Christ, what it doth in Christ, and then what it doth as it is in us; for whatsoever Christ hath, it is not only for himself, but for us.

What doth it in Christ?

1. The Spirit of life in Christ, first of all, it did quicken and sanctify his human nature. That nature that Christ pleased to take upon him it stopped sin, it made a stop of original sin, in sanctifying that blessed substance out of which his body was made. For the foundation of his obedience actual, that it was so holy, it was hence that his nature was purified by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the

virgin. The foundation that his death and sufferings was satisfactory and acceptable, it was that his holy nature was sanctified by the Spirit of God. So the first work of the Spirit of life in the Son of God, it was to sanctify and quicken that blessed human body that he took upon him.

2. And the Spirit of life that quickened and sanctified our nature in Christ did likewise ennoble our nature; for even as a common woman is ennobled when she is taken in marriage with a great man,—she hath his dignity accounted hers—so our nature, by the Spirit being sanctified, is knit into the union of person with Christ, that our nature and the second person make one Christ. So our nature by the Spirit is ennobled by this union. And:

8. Also enriched it with all grace that our nature is capable of; for the nature of Christ had this double prerogative above ours: first of all, that blessed mass of flesh, it was knit to be one person with God; and then, that nature was enriched and ennobled with all graces above ours. And this the Spirit of life did to Christ himself, to his human nature that he took upon him, that he might be a public person. For God, the second person, took not upon him any man's particular person, of Peter, or Paul; or John, for then there should have been distinct persons, one person should have died, and another rise; but he took our nature into his person. So that the same person that did die was God, though he died in our nature, that he might be a public person. So we must consider Christ sanctifying our nature, that he might fit and sanctify all our persons. But did the Spirit of life do nothing else but sanctify and enrich the human nature of Christ with grace?

4. Yes. For the Spirit of life in Christ did sanctify him for his sacrifice, as he saith, John 17:19, in that blessed prayer, 'I sanctify myself for them.' It prepared him for his death, and made him a fit sacrifice. When he entered upon his calling, he had more of the Spirit: the Spirit of life, as it were, was increased. For it is no heresy to think, that the gifts of Christ, for the manifestation of them, were increased. For in every state he was in, he was perfect; and when he set upon his office; and was baptized, he was made more full of the Holy Ghost: as it were, there was a fuller manifestation than before, when he did not set upon his office openly.

5. In his death, what did the Spirit of life then? It supported him in his very death; for there was an union of the Spirit. When there was a separation of his soul and body, there was not a separation of the union. That which gave dignity, and strength, and value, and worth to his death, it was the Spirit. Though there was a suspending of the comfort a while, yet there was no separation of the union. But I speak no more of that, being not especially meant here.

6. But especially in his resurrection (which we are now to think of by reason of the day, and it is not amiss to take all occasions), especially then, the Spirit of life that had sanctified Christ, and quickened him, and enriched his nature, and supported him, and done all, that Spirit of life quickened the dead body of Christ. 'And he was mightily declared to be the Son of God by the Spirit of sanctification, by his resurrection from the dead,' Romans 1:4. The Spirit of life raised him from the dead, and put an end to all that misery that he had undergone before for our sakes. For until his resurrection, there was, as it were, some conflict with some enemies of Christ, either with Satan, or the world, or with death itself. He lay under death three days. Until Christ's body was raised, our enemies were not overcome. God's wrath was not fully satisfied. It was not declared to be satisfied at least. For he being our surety, till he came out of the grave, we could not know that our sins were satisfied for. But now, when the Spirit of life in Christ comes, and quickens that body of his in the grave, and so doth justify us, as it is, Romans 4:25, 'He died for our sins, and rose

again for our justification:' that is, by the Spirit of life in Christ quickening his dead body, he declared that we are fully discharged from our sins, because he was fully discharged from our sins; being our surety, he shewed by his resurrection that he was fully discharged from all that he took upon him. When a man comes out of prison that is a surety, his very coming out of prison shews that he hath a full discharge of all the debt he undertook to pay. So the Spirit of life, raising Christ's body the third day, manifestly declared that the debt he took on him was fully discharged. And so as he died for sin, to satisfy God's justice for them, so he rose again for our justification, to shew that he had a full discharge for all.

Now, since the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath quickened his body, the soul may make a bold demand to God, as it is in 1 Peter 3:16. It may make that demand, Rom. 8:33, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died, nay rather, that is risen again,' and ascended into heaven, and makes intercession for us. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's people? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?' Our sins? Christ hath taken our sins upon him, and satisfied divine justice for them; and by the Spirit of life hath quickened that dead body of his, that was surety for us himself. We may well say, 'Who shall lay anything to our charge?' He that is our surety is dead. Dead? Nay, risen again; nay, ascended, and sits at the right hand of God. Therefore now the conscience of any Christian may make that interrogation and bold demand there. It may stand out any that dares to oppose the peace of his conscience, now that he may say, Who is it? It is God-man that died. It is Christ that died in our nature, and hath raised that nature of ours again, and is at the right hand of God. Who shall lay anything to our charge? The Spirit of life in Christ, quickening him, hath quickened us together with him; so that now we may boldly demand we are freed from our sins, because our Surety is freed from all.

All this was for our good. What Christ did, it was not for himself, but for us. And in his birth, and life, and death, and resurrection, we must consider him as a public person, and so go along with all that he did as a public person. Whatsoever may be terrible to us, we must look upon it first in Christ. If we look upon the corruption and defilement in our nature, look upon the pure nature of Christ. His nature was sanctified in his birth, and he is a public person: therefore this is for me; and though I be defiled in my own nature, and carry the remainders of corruption about me, yet the Spirit of life in Christ sanctified his nature, and there is more sanctity in him than there can be sin in me. When we look upon our sins, let us not so much look upon them in our consciences, as in our surety, Christ. When we look upon death, look not upon it in ourselves, in its own visage, but as it is in Christ, undergone and conquered: for the power of the Spirit of life in Christ overcame death, in himself first, and for us, and will overcome in us in time. When the wrath of God is on our consciences, look not upon it as it is in ourselves, but as undergone by Christ, and as Christ, by the Spirit of life now in him, is raised up, not from death alone, but from all terrors. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' See Christ, by the Spirit of life, quickened from all; not only bare natural death, but from all enemies thou needest to fear. From the law: it is nailed to his cross; he now triumphs over it; and from sin: he was a sacrifice for it; and from the wrath of God: he hath satisfied it, or else he had not come out of his grave. So whatsoever is terrible, look on it in Christ first, and see a full discharge of all that may affright thy conscience, and trouble thy peace any way. See him in his death, dying for every man that will believe. Consider him in his resurrection as a public person, not rising himself alone, but for all us. Therefore in 1 Peter 1:8, there is an excellent place, 'Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again

to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance immortal, undefiled,' &c.; and so go along with him to his ascension, and see ourselves 'sitting with him in heavenly places,' as St Paul speaks, Ephesians 2:6. Oh this is a sweet meditation of Christ! To see ourselves in him, in all the passages of his birth, and life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension to glory in heaven; for all that he did was as a public person, as the second Adam. But now, before the Spirit of life in Christ come to free me, I and Christ must be one; there must be a union between me and Christ; I must be a member of Christ mystical. For as Christ quickened his own body, every joint when it was dead, because it was his body, so he quickens his mystical body, every member of it. But I must be a member first; I must not be myself severed from Christ. Christ by his death obtained all good, and by his resurrection he declared it; but there must be an application to me. Now this Spirit of life which is in Christ, which quickened him and raised him up, and all for my good, must apply this to me.

The grace of application it is faith. Therefore this must be wrought in the next place. How doth the law of the Spirit of life free me? Because first it freed Christ, therefore me. But that is not enough, except there be application. Therefore the law of the Spirit of life works faith in me, to knit me to Christ, to make me believe, that all that he hath done is mine; and the same power that raised Christ from the dead, works the power of faith and application. For we must not think that it is an easy thing for a carnal man to believe, to go out of himself, that it is salvation enough to have salvation, by the obedience of another man. No. Both in the Ephesians and Colossians, in divers places, it is St Paul's phrase, that the same power 'that raised Christ from the dead;' must raise our hearts, and work faith in them. For as the good things that faith lays hold on are wondrous good things, even above admiration almost; that poor flesh and blood, a piece of earth, should be an heir of heaven, a member of Christ; that it should be above angels in dignity. And just as these things are super-excellent things, even above admiration in a manner, so the grace that believes these things, is also astonishing and excellent, and admirable grace, that is faith. Therefore faith must be wrought by the law of the Spirit of Christ by the ministry of the gospel. This is the grace of application, when a man goes out of himself; when he sees himself first in bondage to his corruptions, to Satan, and to death; and then sees the excellent way that God hath wrought in Christ to bring him out of that cursed estate; then he hath faith wrought in him by the Spirit. And indeed the same power and Spirit that quickened Christ from the dead, must quicken our hearts to believe in Christ. It is a miracle to bring the heart of man to believe. We think it an easy matter to believe. Indeed, it is an easy matter to presume, to have a conceit, but for the soul in the time of temptation, and in the hour of death, for the guilty soul to go out of itself, and cast itself upon the mercy of God, who is justly offended, and to believe that the obedience of Christ is mine, as verily as if I had obeyed myself, here must be a strong sanctified judgment and a mighty power to raise the soul, to cast itself so upon God's mercy in Christ. So that besides the obtaining salvation by Christ, there must be a grace to apply it; and this is what faith accomplishes.

Faith is said to do that that Christ doth, because faith lays hold upon Christ. What faith doth, Christ doth; and what Christ doth, faith doth. Therefore it hath the same actions applied and given to it that Christ hath. Faith is said to save us. You know it is Christ that saves us. But faith lays hold on Christ that saves us. Faith purgeth the heart, and overcomes the world. Christ by his Spirit doth all this. Because faith wrought by the Spirit is such a grace as lays hold on the power of Christ, it goes out of itself to Christ, therefore what Christ doth, faith is said to do. So then the law of the Spirit of

life in Christ not only freed Christ himself by his resurrection, but likewise by the same power whereby he raised himself, he raiseth our hearts to believe what he hath done, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation, and makes all that Christ did ours.

The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, working faith in us, and by faith other graces, work together to free us from the law of sin and death. Christ doth it, and faith doth it, and grace, which issues from faith, doth it subordinately. Christ doth it by way of merit; and by his Spirit working faith in us, to lay hold upon whatsoever Christ hath done or suffered, as if we had done it ourselves. So it frees us from the law of sin and death, because it lays hold of the freedom wrought by Christ for us. But besides, and next to faith, there is a Spirit of sanctification, by which we are free from the commanding law of sin and death. But to clear all this, consider there is a freedom in this life, and in the life to come from sin and from death.

I. A freedom in this life, in calling, in justification, in sanctification; and in the life to come a freedom of glory.

1. There is a freedom in effectual calling, by the ministry of the gospel. The gospel being preached and unfolded, faith is wrought, whereby we know what Christ hath done for us; and we see a better condition in Christ than we are in by nature. Seeing by the Spirit of God the cursed estate we are in, we are convinced of sin in ourselves, and of the good that is in Christ; and hereupon we are called out of the thralldom we are in by nature, by the Spirit of Christ and the word of God, unfolding what our condition is; for man by nature having self-love in him, and that self-love being turned the right way, he begins to think, Ay, doth the word of God say I am a slave to sin and damnation? The word of God can judge better than myself; and then the Spirit of God sets it on with conviction, that undoubtedly this is true. And together with the cursed kingdom and slavery that I am under, there is revealed a better estate in Christ; for the gospel tells us what we are in Christ; freed from hell and death, and heirs of heaven. Oh the happy estate of a Christian to be in Christ! The gospel, with the Spirit revealing this, a man is called out of the cursed estate he is in by nature to the fellowship of Christ by faith, which is wrought in this calling. So that now he comes to be a member of Christ by faith. So that whatsoever Christ hath, or is, or hath done or suffered, it is mine by reason of this union with him by faith, which is the grace of union that knits us to Christ, and the first grace of application. So there is the first degree of liberty and freedom wrought by the Spirit of God, together with the gospel in effectual calling.

2. The second is in justification. That faith and belief in Christ that was wrought in effectual calling, it frees me from the guilt of my sins. For when the gospel, in effectual calling, reveals that Christ is such a one, and that there is such an estate in Christ, and there is faith wrought in me, then that faith lays hold upon the obedience of Christ to be mine. For Christ in the gospel offers his obedience to be mine, as if I had done it in mine own person. Whatsoever Christ did or suffered is mine; for he is made of God to be 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Corinthians 1:30, to be all in all. The gospel sets him forth to be so. Now faith laying hold of Christ, to be made of God all in all, obedience, righteousness, &c., whatsoever is needful, hereupon this faith justifies me; hereupon I come to be free from the guilt of my sins, because my sins were laid upon Christ. Christ's death was the death of a surety. It was as if I had died myself, and more firm. Thus I come to be free in justification; for what my surety hath done I have done.

3. Again, There is a freedom in sanctification; that is, when a man believes that Christ is his, and that his sufferings are his, then the same Spirit that reveals this to be mine, it works a change and alteration in my nature, and frees me from the dominion of sin. The obedience of Christ frees me from the condemnation of sin, and the Spirit of sanctification frees me from the dominion of sin. This is the freedom of sanctification, which faith lays hold on. 'Whosoever hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his,' Romans 8:9. Christ as a head communicates to me the Holy Spirit to sanctify my nature; and 'of his fulness we receive grace for grace,' John 1:16. So the Spirit of sanctification in Christ frees me from the dominion of sin and death.

It is said here, that by Christ we have spiritual liberty and freedom, not from sin and death, but from the law of sin and of death. It is one thing to be freed from sin and death, and another thing to be freed from the law of them; for we are not indeed freed from sin and death, but from the law of sin and death, that is, from the condemning power of sin; that though sin be in us yet it doth not condemn us; and though we die, yet the sting is pulled out. Death is but a passage to a better life. So I say in justification, we are freed from the condemning power of sin; and in sanctification, from the commanding power of sin. When we are knit once to Christ, we have the obedience of Christ, ours in justification; and the holiness of Christ is derived to us, as from the head to the members in sanctification; and so we are freed from the law of sin.

To understand this a little better, the same Spirit that sanctified the natural body, the human nature of Christ, whereby he 'became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' Ephesians 5:30: the same Spirit doth sanctify the mystical body of Christ, that it may be 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.' For before we come to heaven, Christ must not only 'be bone of our bone,' &c., that is, in his incarnation, but we must be 'bone of his bone,' &c.; that is, we must have natures like Christ, not only flesh and blood—for so a reprobate hath flesh and blood, as Christ hath—but we must have his Spirit altering and changing our nature: that instead of a proud, disobedient, rebellious nature, now it must be a holy and humble and meek nature, together with human frailty, for that we carry about with us. Then the Spirit of life derived from Christ makes us 'bone of his bone.' For indeed, in his human nature being 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' he made us 'bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.' He became man that we might partake of the divine nature, being partakers of the divine Spirit. So that now the Spirit of life in Christ, when we are knit to him, is a Spirit of sanctification, altering our natures and working in our hearts a disposition like Christ's: that we judge as Christ judgeth, and choose as Christ chooseth, and aim at God's glory as Christ did; for there is 'the same mind in us that was in Christ,' Philip. 2:5—in our proportion, growing still more and more to conformity with Christ, till we be in heaven, till 'Christ be all in all,' 1 Corinthians 15:28, when he will change our nature to be holy as his own.

II. Besides this liberty from sin and death in this life, there is a glorious liberty and freedom that we have by the Spirit of Christ when we are dead; for then the Spirit of life that raised Christ's dead body will raise our bodies; and that Spirit of Christ that raiseth his body and raiseth our souls in this world from sin to believe in him, will raise our dead bodies. The same virtue and power that works in Christ works in his members. This is called 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' Then we shall be freed indeed, not only from the law of sin, but from sin itself; and not only from the law of death, but death itself; and we 'shall live for ever with the Lord,' 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Christ then 'shall be all in all by his Spirit.' Christ will never leave us till he have brought us to that glorious freedom. We are freed already from sin and death. He hath 'set us in heavenly places together

with himself' now, Ephesians 1:3. In faith we are there already: but then we shall be indeed. Thus you see how we come to have the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, to free us from the law of sin and death, and all the passages of it.

Use. You see here that there is law against law—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ against the law of sin and death. I beseech you, consider that God hath appointed law to countermand law; the Spirit of Christ to overcome sin in us, not only in justification but in sanctification. Oh let us therefore to our comfort think there is a law above this law. I have now cold, dead, base affections; but if I have the Spirit of Christ, he can quicken and enliven me. He will not only pardon my sin, but by the law of his Spirit direct, guide, and command me a contrary way to my lusts. And this is an art of spiritual prudence in heavenly things, whensoever we are beset with dangers, to set greater than that against it. The devil is an angel; but we have a guard of angels about us. The devil is a serpent; but we have a brazen serpent that cures all the stings of that serpent. We have principalities and powers against, but we have greater principalities and powers for us: the law of life against the law of sin and death. We have a law of our lusts tyrannizing over us and enthralling us. It is true. But then there is a law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, to overcome and subdue that law of our lusts, if so be that we use the prerogatives we have, if we use faith and go to God and Christ, in whom are all the treasures of grace. He is the treasury of the church: 'Of his fulness we receive grace for grace,' John 1:16. Are we troubled with any corruptions? Go to the Spirit of liberty in Christ, and desire him to set us at liberty from the bondage and thralldom of our corruptions. And remember what Christ hath done for us, and where he is now, in heaven. Let us raise our thoughts that we may see ourselves in heaven already; that we maybe ashamed to defile our bodies and souls with the base drudgery of sin and Satan, that are sanctified in part in this world, and shall be glorified in heaven. Certainly faith would raise our souls so. We betray ourselves, when, being once in the state of grace, we are enthralled basely to any sin. 'For sin shall not have dominion over you, because you tare under grace,' saith the apostle, Romans 6:14. Being under grace, if we do but use our reasoning and use faith and exercise the grace we have given us, we cannot be in thrall to corruptions. We shall have remainders to trouble us, but not to rule, and reign, and domineer. For sin never bears sway, but when we betray ourselves, and either believe not what Christ hath done for us, or else exercise not our faith. A Christian is never overtaken basely, but when he neglects his privileges and prerogatives, and doth not stir up the grace of God in him.

Learn this then, when we are troubled with anything, set law against law: set the law of the Spirit of life in Christ against all oppositions whatsoever; and let the temptation lie where it will.

1. Let it lie in justification, as when we are tempted by Satan to despair for sins, for great sins. Oh, but then consider, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath 'freed me from the law of sin and of death.' Christ was made sin, to free me from sin. Consider that Christ was God-man. He satisfied divine justice. 'The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin,' 1 John 1:7, 'though they be as red as crimson,' Isaiah 1:18. Thus set Christ against our sins in justification, when the guilt of them troubles our souls.

2. And so likewise, when we are set on by base lusts, set against them the power of Christ in sanctification. What am I now? A member of Christ; one that professeth myself to be an heir of heaven. There is a Spirit of life in Christ my head. There is a law of the Spirit of life in Christ; that

is, there is a commanding power in his Spirit; and that Spirit of his is not only in the head, but in the members. If I go to him for grace, I may have grace, answerable to the grace that is in him, grace that will strengthen me with his power. 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' Ephesians 6:10, and in 'Christ I can do all things,' Philip. 4:18, by his Spirit, though in myself I can do nothing.

8. And so in deadness and desolation of spirit, when the soul is cast down with discomfort, let us think with ourselves, the Spirit of life in Christ is a quickening Spirit. If I can believe in Christ, he hath freed me from the guilt of sin; and he hath by his Spirit given me some little enlargement from the dominion of my corruptions: why should I be cast down? I am an heir of heaven. Ere long Satan shall 'be trodden under my feet,' Luke 10:19. Ere long I shall be free from the spiritual combat and conflict with sin, that I am now engaged with. Therefore I will comfort myself; I will not be cast down overmuch.

4. In the hour of death, let us make use of this freedom of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. When the time comes that there must be a separation of soul and body, Oh let us think with our ourselves: Now I must die, yet Christ hath died; and I must die in conformity to my head; and here is my comfort—'The law of the Spirit of life hath freed me from the law of death.' It hath freed me from spiritual and eternal death. So that now through Christ death is become friendly to me. Death now is not the death of me, but death will be the death of my misery, the death of my sins; it will be the death of my corruptions. Death now will be the death of all that before troubled me. But death will be my birthday in regard of happiness. 'Better is the day of death than the day of birth,' Ecclesiastes 7:1. When a man comes into this life he comes into misery; but when he dies, he goes out of misery and comes to happiness. So that, indeed, we never live till we die; we never live eternally and happily till then. For then we are freed from all misery and sin. 'Blessed are they that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours,' Revelation 14:18. They rest from their labours of toil and misery; they rest from the labours of sin, from all labours whatsoever. 'Blessed are they that die in the Lord,' and of all times then blessed, more blessed than before. They rest from their labours, and then begins their happiness that shall never end. So you see what comfort a Christian's soul sprinkled with the blood of Christ may have, if it go to God in Christ, and beg of Christ to be set at liberty from all enemies, to serve God in holiness and righteousness.

I speak too poorly when I say, the law of the Spirit of life hath freed us from sin and death. This is not all. The Spirit of life not only frees us from ill, but advanceth us to the contrary good in every thing wherein this freedom is. For we are not only called out of misery, but to a kingdom. We are not only freed from sin, but entitled to heaven in justification; and in sanctification we are not only freed from corruption, but enabled by the Holy Spirit of liberty to run the ways of God's commandments, and make them voluntary; to serve God cheerfully, 'zealous of good works,' Titus 2:14. We are not only freed from the command and condemnation of sin, and the rigour of the law, but we have contrary dispositions, ready and willing, and voluntary dispositions, wrought by the Spirit of Christ, to every thing that is good. And so we are not only free from death and misery (for so things without life are, they suffer no misery), but we are partakers of everlasting life and glory, the liberty of glory. God's benefits are complete; that is, not only privative, freeing us from ill, but positive, implying all good; because God will show himself a God: he will do good things as a God, fully. For the law of the Spirit of life not only frees us from the law of sin and of death, but 'writes

the law of God in our hearts.' He not only frees us from the law of death, but advanceth us to everlasting life, to the glorious life we have in heaven, 'to live for ever with the Lord,' 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Oh happy condition of a Christian, if we could know our happiness!

Let us often meditate deeply of Christ, and of ourselves in him; let us see all our ill in him, and all our good in him: see death overcome, and sin overcome by his death, he being 'made a curse for us,' Galatians 3:13: see the law overcome, he being 'made under the law for us,' Galatians 4:4-5. When the wrath of God vexeth and terrifieth us, see it upon him. 'He sweat water and blood in the garden,' Luke 22:44. It made him cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mark 15:34. See all that may trouble us in him, as our surety. And all the good we hope for, see it in Christ first. Whatsoever he hath in his natural body, it is for his mystical body; for he gave his natural body for his mystical. God in the world, to humble us, exerciseth us with troubles and calamities, as he did Christ. We must be conformable to our head. But consider, the poison and sting of all ills we need to fear is swallowed up and taken away by Christ. And, as I said, let us see all our good in him. We are sons in him, raised in him, blessed in him, 'set in heavenly places with him,' Ephesians 1:3, and shall be fellow-heirs and kings with him; for we are his members, his spouse. The wife shall enjoy the same condition as the husband; whatsoever he hath she shall have. What a comfortable estate is this We can fear no ill, nor lack any good. Whatsoever he hath, it is for us. He was born for us. He died for us. He is gone to heaven for us; for us and our good. He did and suffered all these things. We cannot exercise our thoughts too much in these meditations.

The Lord's supper is a sacrament of union and communion. Hence it hath its name; and by receiving the sacrament, our communion and union with Christ is strengthened. What a comfort then is it to think, if I have fellowship with Christ it is sealed by the sacrament! When I take the bread and wine, at the same time I have communion with the body and blood of Christ shed for my sins; and as Christ himself was freed from my sins imputed to him, and by his resurrection declared that he was freed, so surely shall I be freed from my sins. So that this communion, taking the bread and wine, it seals to us our communion and fellowship with Christ, and thereupon our freedom from sin and from the law, and sets us in a blessed and happy estate. We should labour therefore by all means to strengthen our union and communion with Christ; and amongst the rest, reverently and carefully attend upon this blessed ordinance of God, for the body of Christ broken doth quicken us, because it is the body of the Son of God. 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,' John 6:55. And he calls his body broken the bread of life.' Why? Because it was the body of the Son of God, 'who is life,' John 6:35. All life comes from God. Now, Christ taking our nature upon him, his death is a quickening death, and by reason of the union with the divine nature, now it is the body of God broken and the blood of God shed for us. There is our comfort; and he was declared to be so by his resurrection, that declared that he was God, and that he was freed from our sins. Powerful must that Saviour needs be that was so strong in his very death, when his very body was broken and his blood let out. Then he did work the foundation of all comfort, for then he satisfied the wrath of God. Christ was strongest when he was weakest. The resurrection was but a declaration of the worth of that he had done. Now, in the sacrament we have communion with Christ dying, especially as his body is broken and his blood shed, for that is the foundation of all comfort by his resurrection. And because the Spirit of life was in Christ, and did quicken his body while he was alive, and was a Spirit of life even when he died, and gave

worth and excellency to his death, therefore, when we take the communion, we ought not to meditate merely of the death of Christ, as his blood was shed and his body broken, but of the death of such a person as had the Spirit of life in him, as was God and man. And so set the excellency of his person against all temptations whatsoever. Set the excellency of Christ so abased, his body broken and his blood shed, against all temptations. If it be the greatest, the wrath of God upon the conscience, yet when conscience thinks this, God, the party offended, gave his own Son to be incarnate, and the Spirit of life in him did quicken man's nature, and in that nature did die for satisfaction, now God will be satisfied by the death of such a surety as his own Son. So that the excellency of the person having the seal of God upon him, 'For him hath God the Father sealed,' John 6:27, doth wondrously satisfy conscience in all temptations whatsoever: What need a man fear death, and damnation, and the miseries of this life, and Satan? What are all? If God be appeased and reconciled in Christ, then a man hath comfort, and may think of all other enemies as conquered enemies. Now, we cannot think of the death of Christ, who was a 'quickening Spirit,' but we must think of the death of an excellent person, that gave worth to his death, to be a satisfactory death for us. Therefore let us receive the communion with comfort, that as verily as Christ is mine, so his quickening Spirit is communicated to me, and whatsoever he hath is mine. If I have the field, I have the pearl in it; his obedience, his victory over death, his sonship, is mine; his sitting in heaven is for me; he sits there to rule me while I am on earth, and to take me up to himself when I am dead. All is for me. When we have communion with Christ we have communion with all. Therefore 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' when I am one with him, it quickens me, and 'frees me from the law of sin and death.'

A Description of Christ

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by Richard Sibbes

"Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets," &c.—Matthew 12:18.

The words are the accomplishment of a prophecy, taken out of Isaiah 52:1-2, as we may see by the former verse, 'that it might be fulfilled.' Now the occasion of bringing them in here in this verse, it is a charge that Christ gives, verse 16, that they should not reveal and make him known because of the miracles he did. He withdraws himself; he was desirous to be concealed, he would not allow himself to be seen over much, for he knew the rebellious disposition of the Jews, who were eager to change their government, and to make him king. Therefore, he laboured to conceal himself in various ways. Now, upon this injunction, that they should tell nobody, he brings in the prophet Isaiah prophesying of him, 'Behold my servant, &c.; he shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.' Other kings labour that their pomp and magnificence may be seen; but he does not desire ostentation, he shall not be contentious nor clamorous. For these three things are meant when he says, 'he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets;' he shall not yield himself to any ostentation, for he came in an abased state to work our salvation; he shall not be contentious, nor yet clamorous in matter of wrong; there shall be no boasting any kind of way, as we shall see when we come to the words. You see, then, the inference here.

The purpose of the prophet Isaiah is to comfort the people, and to direct them how to come to worship the true God, after he had preached against their idolatry, as we see in the former chapter, 'Behold my servant,' &c. Great princes have their ambassadors, and the great God of heaven has his Son, his servant in whom he delights, through whom, and by whom, all dealings between God and man are.

As is usual in the prophecies, especially of Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, when he foretells anything to comfort the people in the promise of temporal things, he rises to establish their faith in better things. He does this by adding to them a prophecy, a promise of Christ the Messiah, to assert thus much: I will send you the Messiah, and that is a greater gift than this that I have promised you; therefore you may be sure of the lesser one. As the apostle reasons excellently, 'If he spared not his own son, but delivered him to death for us all, how shall he not with him give us all things?' Romans 8:32. So here, I have promised you deliverance out of Babylon, and this and that; do you doubt of the performance? Alas! what is that in comparison to a greater favour I intend for you in Christ, that shall deliver you out of another type of Babylon? 'Behold my servant whom I have chosen;' and in Isaiah 7:14, 'Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,' &c. I will send you the Messiah; God shall become man; therefore, I will not stand for any outward favour or

deliverance whatsoever. So he goes on to the grand promise, that they might reason from the greater to the less.

There is another purpose, why in other promises there is mention of the promise of the Messiah: to uphold their faith. Alas! we are unworthy of these promises, we are so laden with sin and iniquity. It is no matter, I will send you the Messiah. 'Behold my servant in whom my soul delighteth,' and for his sake I will delight in you. I am well pleased with you, because I am well pleased in him; therefore, be not discouraged. All the promises are yea and amen in Jesus Christ,' 2 Corinthians 1:20; for all the promises that be, though they be for the things of this life, they are made for Christ, they are yea in him, and they are performed for his sake, they are amen in him. So much for the occasion of the quotation in the evangelist St Matthew, and likewise in the prophet Isaiah.

To come more directly to the words, 'Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased,' &c.

In the words you have a description of Christ, and his nearness to God: Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased.' And then his calling and attainments: 'I will put my Spirit upon him.' And the execution of that calling: 'He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.' Then the quiet and peaceable manner of the execution of his calling: 'He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets,' &c.

Behold!—This word is as it were a lighted beacon. In all the evangelists you have this word often repeated, and the prophets likewise when they speak of Christ; there is no almost prophecy but there is this word, 'Behold.'

Why? The use of it in the prophet, especially out of which these words are taken, was to present Christ to the hearts of the people of God at that time; therefore he says, 'Behold,' for Christ was present to the believers then. Christ did profit them before he was, he did good before he was exhibited, because he was 'the Lamb of God slain from the beginning of the world,' Revelation 13:8; he was yesterday as well as to-day, and tomorrow as well as to-day, 'yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever,' Hebrews 13:8. He was present to their faith, present to them in types and sacrifices, and present in God's acceptance of him for them. Therefore, the prophets mount up with the wing of prophecy, and seeing the certainty of the things to come, they speak as if they were present, as if they had looked on Christ before them, 'Behold my servant,' and 'Behold a virgin,' &c.

But that is not all. Another purpose of this word 'behold,' was to call the people's minds from their miseries, and from other abasing objects that dejected them, which might force them to despair. Why do you dwell upon your unworthiness and sin? Raise up your mind, 'Behold my servant whom I have chosen,' &c. This is an object worth beholding and admiring, especially by a distressed soul that may see in Christ whatsoever may comfort it.

A third purpose of it is to raise the mind from any vulgar, common, base contentments. You look on these things, and are carried away with common trivial objects, as the poor disciples when they came to the temple; they stood wondering at the stones. What wondrous stones! What a great building is here! (Mark 13:1) So shallow-minded men, when they see any earthly excellency, they stand gazing. Alas, says Christ, do you wonder at these things? In the same way the prophet here raises up the minds of men to look on an object fit to be looked on, 'Behold my servant,' &c. He

intends that the Holy Ghost would have them from this saving object, Christ, to receive satisfaction to their souls in every way. Are you dejected? Here is comfort. Are you sinful? Here is righteousness. Are you led away with present contentments? Here you have honours, and pleasures, and all in Christ Jesus. You have a right to common pleasures that others have, and besides them you have claim to others that are everlasting pleasures that shall never fail, so that there is nothing that is dejecting and abasing in man, but there is comfort for it in Christ Jesus; he is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; therefore, 'Behold my servant.'

My servant.—Christ is called a servant, first, in respect of his creation, because being a man, as a creature he was a servant. But that is not all.

He was a servant in respect of his condition. Servant implies a base and low condition, Php_2:7. Christ took upon him the form of a servant; he emptied himself; he was the lowest of all servants in condition: for none was ever so abased as our glorious Saviour.

And then, it is a name of office, as well as of base condition. There are ordinary servants and extraordinary, as great kings have their servants of state. Despite his abasement, Christ was a servant of state, he was an ambassador sent from the great God; a prophet, a priest, and a king, as we shall see afterwards; an extraordinary servant, to do a work of service that all the angels in heaven, and all the men on the earth joined together, could not perform. This great masterpiece of service was to bring God and man together again, that were at variance, as it is, 1 Peter 3:18, 'to bring us to God.' We were severed and scattered from God. His office was to gather us together again, to bring us all to one head again, to bring us to himself, and so to God, to reconcile us, as the Scripture phrase is, Colossians 1:20. Now, it being the greatest work and service that ever was, it required the greatest servant; for no creature in the world could perform it. All the angels of heaven would have sunk under this service. They could never have given satisfaction to divine justice; for the angels themselves, when they sinned, could not recover themselves, but sunk under their own sin eternally. Thus we see how Christ is God's servant, who set him apart, and chose him to this service.

And then he was a servant to us; for the Son of man came to minister, not to be ministered unto, Matthew 20:28. He washed his disciples' feet. He was a servant to us, because he did our work and suffered our punishment; we made him serve by our sins, as the prophet says, Isa. 53:24. He is a servant that bears another man's burden. There was a double burden— of obedience active, and obedience passive. He bore them both. He came under the law for us, both doing what we should have done, and indeed far more acceptably, and suffering that we should have suffered, and far more acceptably. He being our surety, being a more excellent person, he did bear our burden, and did our work, therefore he was God's servant, and our servant; and God's servant, because he was our servant, because he came to do a work on our behalf.

Herein appears the admirable love and care of God to us wretched creatures, here is matter of wonderment.

Whence comes it that Christ is a servant? It is from the wondrous love of God, and the wondrous love of Christ. To be so abased, it was wondrous love in God to give him to us to be so abased, and the wondrous misery we were in, that we could not otherwise be freed from; for such was the pride of man, that he, being man, would exalt himself to be like God. God became man, he

became a servant to expiate our pride in Adam, so that it is wondrous in the spring of it. There was no such love as Christ's to become a servant, there was no such misery as we were in, out of which we were delivered by this abasement of Christ becoming a servant; so it is wondrous in that regard, springing from the infinite love and mercy of God, which is greater in the work of redemption and reconciliation than in the creation of the world, for the distance between nothing and something was less than the distance between sin and happiness. For nothing adds no opposition; but to be in a sinful state there is opposition. Therefore it was greater love and mercy for God, when we were sinful, and so obnoxious to eternal destruction, to make us of sinners, not only men, but to make us happy, to make us heirs of heaven out of a sinful and cursed estate, than to make us of nothing something, to make us men in Adam, for there God prevailed over nothing, but here his mercy triumphed over that which is opposite to God, over sinfulness and cursedness. To show that the creature cannot be so low but there is somewhat in God above the misery of the creature, his mercy shall triumph over the basest estate where he will show mercy. Therefore there is mercy above all mercy and love above all love, in that Christ was a servant.

Is the Lord Christ a servant? This should teach us not to stand upon any terms. If Christ had stood upon terms, if he had refused to take upon him the shape of a servant, alas! Where had we and our salvation been? And yet wretched creatures, we think ourselves too good to do God and our brethren any service. Christ stood not upon his greatness, but, being equal with God, he became a servant. Oh! we should dismount from the tower of our conceited excellency. The heart of man is a proud creature, a proud piece of flesh. Men stand upon their distance. What! Shall I stoop to him? I am thus and thus. We should descend from the heaven of our conceit, and take upon us the form of servants, and abase ourselves to do good to others, even to any, and account it an honour to do any good to others in the places we are in. Christ did not think himself too good to leave heaven, to conceal and veil his majesty under the veil of our flesh, to work our redemption, to bring us out of the cursed estate we were in. Shall we think ourselves too good for any service? Who for shame can be proud when he thinks of this, that God was abased? Shall God be abased, and man proud? Shall God become a servant, and shall we that are servants think much to serve our fellow-servants? Let us learn this lesson, to abase ourselves; we cannot have a better pattern to look unto than our blessed Saviour. A Christian is the greatest freeman in the world; he is free from the wrath of God, free from hell and damnation, from the curse of the law; but then, though he be free in these respects, yet, in regard of love, he is the greatest servant. Love abases him to do all the good he can; and the more the Spirit of Christ is in us, the more it will abase us to anything wherein we can be serviceable.

Then, again, here is comfort for us, that Christ, in whatsoever he did in our redemption, is God's servant. He is appointed by God to the work; so, both God and Christ meet together in the work. Christ is a voluntary in it, for he emptied himself, he took upon him the form of a servant, [Php_2:6](#), he came from heaven voluntarily. And then withal the Father joins with him, the Father appointed him and sent him, the Father laid him as the corner-stone, the Father sealed him, as it is, [John 6:27](#), the Father set him out, as it is, [Romans 3:25](#). 'He has set him out as the propitiatory.' Therefore, when we think of reconciliation and redemption, and salvation wrought by Christ, let us comfort ourselves in the solidity of the work, that it is a service perfectly done. It was done by Christ, God-man. It is a service accepted of God, therefore God cannot refuse the service of our salvation wrought by Christ. Christ was his servant in the working of it. We may present it to God, it

is the obedience of thy servant, it is the satisfaction of thy servant. Here is that will give full content and satisfaction to conscience, in this, that whatsoever Christ did, he was God's servant in it. But we shall better understand the intent of the Holy Ghost when we have gone over the rest of the words, 'Behold my servant whom I have chosen.'

Christ was chosen before all worlds to be the head of the elect. He was predestinated and ordained by God. As we are ordained to salvation, so Christ is ordained to be the head of all that shall be saved. He was chosen eternally, and chosen in time. He was singled out to the work by God; and all others that are chosen are chosen in him. There had been no choosing of men but in him; for God saw us so defiled, lying in our filth, that he could not look upon us but in his Son. He chose him, and us in him.

Here is meant, not only choosing by eternal election to happiness, but a choosing to office. There is a choosing to grace and glory, and a choosing to office. Here, it is as well meant, a choosing to office, as to grace and glory. God, as he chose Christ to grace and glory, so he chose him to the office of Mediatorship. Christ did not choose himself; he was, no usurper. No man calls himself to the office, as it is in Hebrews 5:4; but Christ was called and appointed of God. He was willing, indeed, to the work, he took it voluntary upon him; but as Mediator, God chose him, God the Father. If we respect eternal salvation, or grace, or office, Christ was chosen in respect of his manhood; for, as it is well observed by divines, Christ is the head of all that are predestinated; and the human nature of Christ could not merit its choice, it could not merit its incarnation, it could not merit union with the Godhead, it was merely from grace. How could Christ's manhood deserve anything of God before it was? Things must have a subsistence before they can work: our blessed Saviour is the pattern of all election, and his manhood could not merit to be knit to the second person; as how could it, being a creature? Therefore the knitting of the human nature of Christ to his divine, it is called the grace of union. The choosing of the human nature of Christ to be so gracious and glorious, it was of grace.

This adds to our comfort, that whatsoever Christ did for us, he did it as chosen; he is a chosen stone, as St Peter says, 1 Peter 2:6, 'a precious corner-stone;' though refused of the builders, yet precious in God's sight.

Was Christ a chosen servant of God, and shall not we take God's choice? Is not God's choice the best and the wisest? Has God chosen Christ to work our salvation, and shall we choose any other? Shall we run to saints' mediation, to the virgin Mary, and others, for intercession, which is a part of Christ's office? Who chose Mary, and Peter, and Paul to this work? There is no mention in Scripture of them for this purpose, but behold my servant, whom I have chosen.

God in paradise did choose a wife for Adam, so God has chosen a husband for his church; he has chosen Christ for us: therefore it is intolerable sacrilegious rebellion and impudency to refuse a Saviour and Mediator of God's choosing, and to set up others of our own, as if we were wiser to choose for ourselves than God is. We may content ourselves well enough with God's choice, because he is the party offended.

And this directs us also, in our devotions to God, how to carry ourselves in our prayers and services, to offer Christ to God. Behold, Lord, thy chosen servant, that thou hast chosen to be my Mediator, my Saviour, my all in all to me, he is a mediator and a Saviour of thine own choosing,

thou canst not refuse thy own choice; if thou look upon me, there is nothing but matter of unworthiness, but look upon him whom thou hast chosen, my head and my Saviour!

Again, if Christ be a chosen servant, O let us take heed how we neglect Christ. When God has chosen him for us, shall not we think him worthy to be embraced and regarded; shall we not kiss the Son with the kiss of love, and faith, and subjection? He is a Saviour of God's own choosing, refuse him not. What is the reason that men refuse this chosen stone? They will not be laid low enough to build upon this corner stone, this hidden stone. The excellency of Christ is hidden, it appears not to men, men will not be squared to be built upon him. Stones for a building must be framed, and made even, and flat. Men stick with this and that lust, they will not be pared and cut and fitted for Christ. If they may have their lusts and wicked lives, they will admit of Christ. But we must make choice of him as a stone to build upon him; and to be built on him, we must be made like him. We like not this laying low and abasing, therefore we refuse this corner stone, though God has made him the corner of building to all those that have the life of grace here, or shall have glory hereafter.

The papists admit him to be a stone, but not the only stone to build on, but they build upon him and saints, upon him and works, upon him and traditions. But he is the only corner stone. God has chosen him only, and we must choose him only, that we may be framed and laid upon him to make up one building. So much for that, 'Behold my servant whom I have chosen.'

My Beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased.— How do we know that these words in the prophet Isaiah are fitly applicable to Christ? By the greatest authority that ever was from the beginning of the world, by the immediate voice of God the Father from heaven, who applies these words in Isaiah to Christ, Matthew 3:17, in his inauguration when he was baptized, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' this is that my Son, that beloved, agaptoV, the beloved Son, so beloved that my soul delights in him, he is capable of my whole love, I may pour out my whole love upon him. 'In whom I am well pleased,' it is the same with that here, 'in whom my soul delighteth,' the one expresses the other.

How, and in what respect is Christ thus beloved of God?

First as he is God, the Son of God, the engraven image of his Father, so he is primum amabile, the first lovely thing that ever was. When the Father loves him, he loves himself in him, so he loves him as God, as the second person, as his own image and character.

And as man he loves him, for as man he was the most excellent creature in the world, he was conceived, fashioned, and framed in his mother's womb by the Holy Ghost. It is said, Hebrews 10:5, God gave him a body. God the Father by the Holy Ghost fashioned and framed and fitted him with a body, therefore God must needs love his own workmanship.

Again, there was nothing in him displeasing to God, there was no sin found in his life any way, therefore as man he was well pleasing to God. He took the manhood and ingrafted it into the second person, and enriched it there; therefore he must needs love the manhood of Christ, being taken into so near a union with the Godhead.

As God and man mediator especially, he loves and delights in him. In regard of his office, he must needs delight in his own ordinance and decree. Now he decreed and sealed him to that office,

therefore he loves and delights in him as a mediator of his own appointing and ordaining, to be our king, and priest, and prophet.

Again, he loved and delighted in him, in regard of the execution of his office both in doing and suffering. In doing, the evangelist says, 'He did all things well,' Mark 7:37. When he healed the sick, and raised the dead, and cured all diseases, whatsoever he did was well done. And for his suffering, God delighted in him for that, as it is in John 10:17, 'My Father loves me, because I lay down my life;' and so in Isaiah 53:12, 'He shall divide him a portion with the great, because he poured out his soul unto death;' and in Php_2:9, 'Because he abased himself to the death of the cross, God gave him a name above all names:' therefore God loves and delights in him for his suffering and abasement.

Now, that Christ's sacrifice was so acceptable to God, there is a direct place for it in Ephesians 5:2, 'Walk in love, as Christ has loved us, and has given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smell.' And indeed how many sweet savours were there in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross! Was there not the sweet savour of obedience? He was 'obedient to the death of the cross,' Php_2:8. There was the sweet savour of patience, and of love to mankind. Therefore God delighted in him, as God, as man, as mediator God-man, in his doings, in his sufferings, every way.

Does God delight thus in Christ, in his person, or considered mystically? I answer; both. God loves and delights in Christ mystical, that is, in Christ and his members, in whole Christ. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' not only with whom alone by himself, but 'in whom,' in him as God, in him in body and soul, in him as head of the church, in him mystically, in all that are under him any kind of way. God delights in him, and all his.

Is it possible that he should delight in the head, and refuse the members? that he should love the husband, and dislike the spouse? O no; with the same love that God loves Christ, he loves all his. He delights in Christ and all his, with the same delight. There is some difference in the degree, 'that Christ in all things may have the pre-eminence,' Colossians 1:18, but it is the same love; therefore our Saviour sets it down excellently in his own prayer, he desires 'that the same love wherewith his Father loved him may be in them that are his,' John 17:20, that they may feel the love wherewith his Father loves him, for he loved him and his members, him and his spouse, with all one love.

This is our comfort and our confidence, that God accepts us, because he accepts his beloved; and when he shall cease to love Christ, he shall cease to love the members of Christ. They and Christ make one mystical Christ. This is our comfort in dejection for sin. We are so and so indeed, but Christ is the chosen servant of God, 'in whom he delighteth,' and delights in us in him. It is no matter what we are in ourselves, but what we are in Christ when we are once in him and continue in him. God loves us with that inseparable love wherewith he loves his own Son. Therefore St Paul triumphs, Romans 8:35, 'What shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?' This love, it is founded in Christ, 'therefore neither things present, nor things to come (as he goes on there gloriously), shall be able to separate us.' You see what a wondrous confidence and comfort we have hence, if we labour to be in Christ, that then God loves and delights in us, because he loves and delights in Christ Jesus.

And here is a wondrous comfort, that God must needs love our salvation and redemption when he loves Christ, because 'he poured out his soul to death to save us.' Does not God delight that we should be saved, and our sins should be forgiven, when he loves Christ because he abased himself for that purpose? What a prop and foundation of comfort is this, when the devil shall present God to us in a terrible hideous manner, as an avenging God, 'and consuming fire,' &c., Hebrews 12:29; indeed out of Christ he is so. Let us present to ourselves thoughts of God as the Scripture sets forth God to us; and as God sets forth himself, not only in that sweet relation Ps a Father to Christ, but our father, 'I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,' John 20:17, having both one God, and love and care. There is none of us all but the devil will have a saying to us, either in the time of our life, in some terrible temptation, especially when any outward abasement comes, or at the hour of death; and all the cordials we have gathered out of the word will then be little enough to support the drooping soul, especially in the hour of temptation. O beloved, what a wondrous anchor and satisfaction to a distressed conscience does this yield, that Christ in all that he has wrought for us is God's chosen servant, 'whom he loves and delights in,' and delights in him for this very work, that he abased himself and gave himself for us, that he wrought God's work, because he wrought reconciliation for us! If we can believe in Christ, we see here what ground of comfort we have, that God loves and delights in us, as he does in his own Son.

And what a comfort is it now, in our daily approach to God, to minister boldness to us in all our suits, that we go to God in the name of one that he loves, 'in whom his soul delights,' that we have a friend in court, a friend in heaven for us, that is at the right hand of God, and interposes himself there for us in all our suits, that makes us acceptable, that perfumes our prayers and makes them acceptable. His intercession is still by virtue of his service, dying for us. He intercedes by virtue of his redemption. If God love him for the work of redemption, he loves him for his intercession, therefore God must needs regard the prayers made by him, by virtue of his dying for us, when he loves him for dying for us. Be sure therefore, in all our suits to God, to take along our older brother, to take our beloved brother, take Benjamin with us, offer all to God in him, our persons to be accepted in him, our prayers our hearing, our works, and all that we do, and we shall be sure to speed; for he is one in whom the soul of God delights. There must be this passage and repassage, as God looks upon us lovely in him, and delights in us as we are members of him. All God's love and the fruits of it come to us as we are in Christ, and are one with him. Then in our passage to God again we must return all, and do all, to God in Christ. Be sure not to go to a naked God; for so he is 'a consuming fire,' but go to him in the mediation of him whom he loves, 'and in whom his soul delighteth.'

And shall God love him and delight in him, and shall not our soul delight in Christ? This therefore should stir up our affections to Christ, to be faithful in our conjugal affection as the spouse of Christ, to say, 'My beloved is mine and I am my beloved's,' Son_2:16. Christ calls his church, 'My love and my dove,' Son_6:9. Does Christ delight in us, and God delight in Christ, and shall not we delight in Christ that delights in us, and in whom God delights? In 1 Corinthians 16:22, the apostle is bold to pronounce a bitter curse, 'Anathema Maranatha,' upon him that loves not the Lord Christ Jesus, a most bitter curse. When Christ shall become a servant to do our work for us, to suffer for us, to bear the burden of our sins upon the tree, to become our husband, to bestow his riches upon us, to raise us to the same condition with himself, and withal to be such, a one as God has

chosen out to love and delight in as the best object of his love, and most capable of it, and for us not to solace and delight ourselves in him that God delights in, when God delights in him for our sake. God loves and delights in him for the work of salvation and redemption by his blood, and shall not we love and embrace him for his love which is for our good? What good has God by it but only the glory of his mercy, in saving our souls through Christ? Therefore if God love him for the good he does to us, much more should we love him for the fruit of it that we receive ourselves.

It should shame us therefore when we find dulness and coldness upon us, that we can hear of anything better than of Christ; and arguments concerning Christ are cold to us. Alas! Where is our love, and joy, and delight; and when we can make no better but a carnal use of the incarnation and other benefits by Christ? We should therefore desire God to shed the love of Christ into our hearts more and more, that we may feel in our souls the love that he bears to us, and may love God and Christ again, for that that he has done for us.

Hence we have also a ground of estimation of Christians to be excellent persons. Does God value poor sinful souls so much as to give Christ for them to become a Saviour? Does he delight in Christ for giving himself for them? And shall not we love one another whom God and Christ so loves?

But if God love and delight in those that are in Christ, with the same love and delight that he has in him, how shall I know that I am in Christ, and that God thus delights in me?

Briefly, a man may know that he is in Christ, if he find the Spirit of Christ in him; for the same Spirit when Christ took our nature, that sanctified that blessed mass whereof he was made, when there was a union between him and the second person, the same Spirit sanctifies our souls and bodies. There is one Spirit in the head and in the members. Therefore if we find the Spirit of Christ in us, we are in Christ and he in us. Now this Spirit is renewing, 'Whosoever is in Christ is a new creature,' 2 Corinthians 5:17; all is new, 'old things are done away,' the old manner of language, the old disposition, old affections, old company, all old things are past, all is new; and if a man be a new creature, he has right and title to 'the new heaven and new earth,' 2 Peter 3:13. Let us examine the work of grace in us. If there be no change in us we have no present interest in Christ. We have to do with him because he is still wooing us to be in him, but as yet we have no title to him.

The very beholding of Christ is a transforming sight. The Spirit that makes us new creatures, and stirs us up to behold this servant, it is a transforming beholding. If we look upon him with the eye of faith, it will make us like Christ; for the gospel is a mirror, and such a mirror, that when we look into it, and see ourselves interested in it, we are changed from glory to glory, 2 Corinthians 3:18. A man cannot look upon the love of God and of Christ in the gospel, but it will change him to be like God and Christ. For how can we see Christ, and God in Christ, but we shall see how God hates sin, and this will transform us to hate it as God does, who hated it so that it could not be expiated but with the blood of Christ, God-man. So, seeing the holiness of God in it, it will transform us to be holy. When we see the love of God in the gospel, and the love of Christ giving himself for us, this will transform us to love God. When we see the humility and obedience of Christ, when we look on Christ as God's chosen servant in all this, and as our surety and head, it transforms us to the like humility and obedience. Those that find not their dispositions in some comfortable measure wrought to this blessed transformation, they have not yet those eyes that the Holy Ghost requires

here. 'Behold my servant whom I have chosen. my beloved in whom my soul delighteth.'

I will put my Spirit upon him. —Now we come to the qualification of Christ for his calling, in these words, I will put my Spirit upon him—that is, I will clothe him with my Spirit, I will put it, as it were, upon him as a garment.

Now there were divers degrees of Christ's receiving the Spirit at several times. For he was conceived by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost did sanctify that blessed mass whereof his body was framed in the womb of the virgin, he was quickened in the womb in his conception by the Holy Ghost, and he was graced by the Holy Ghost, and led by the Spirit in all things before his baptism. But afterward, when he came to set upon his office, to be the prophet and priest and king of his church, that great office of saving mankind, which he did not solemnly set upon till he was thirty years old, then God poured upon him a special portion of the Spirit, answerable to that great calling, then the Spirit lighted upon him, Matthew 3:16. Christ was ordained to his office by the greatest authority that ever any was ordained from the beginning of the world. For at his baptism, when he was ordained and set apart to his office, there was the Father from heaven uttered an audible voice, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' Matthew 3:17; and there was Christ, the party baptized and installed into that great office; then there was the Holy Ghost, in the form and shape of a dove. It being a matter of the greatest consequence that ever was in the world, greater than the creation, it was fit it should be done with the greatest authority; and so it was, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost being present at the admission of Christ into his office. This is especially here intended, though the other be included, I will put my Spirit upon him that is, I will anoint him, as it is in Isaiah 61:1, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' says Christ, 'because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to open the prison for them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'—that is, the year of jubilee, for that was a type of Christ, to preach the gospel deliverance to all that are in captivity, servitude, and thralldom under Satan and sin. This was accomplished when Christ, at his baptism, entered upon his office. God put his Spirit upon him, to set him apart, to ordain him, and to equip him with abundance of grace for the work; for there are these three things especially meant by putting the Spirit upon him, separation or setting apart, and ordaining, and enriching with the gifts of the Spirit.

When any one is called to a great place, there is a setting apart from others, and an ordaining to that particular, and an equipping. If it be a calling of God, he equips where he ordains always.

It may be objected, Christ was God himself; he had the Spirit, and gives the Spirit; therefore, how could the Spirit be put upon him?

I answer, Christ is both God and man. Christ, as God, gives the Spirit to his human nature; so he communicates his Spirit. The Spirit is his Spirit as well as the Father's. The Spirit proceeds from them both. Christ, as man, receives the Spirit. God the Father and the Son put the Spirit upon the manhood of Christ; so Christ both gives and receives the Spirit in diverse respects. As God, he gives and sends the Spirit. The spiration and breathing of the Spirit is from him as well as from the Father, but as man he received the Spirit.

And this is the reason of it: next under the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Christ the Mediator, was to be the spring and original of all comfort and good. Therefore, Christ's nature must not only be

sanctified and ordained by the Spirit; but he must receive the Spirit to enrich it, for whatsoever is wrought in the creature is by the Spirit. Whatsoever Christ did as man, he did by the Spirit. Christ's human nature, therefore, must be sanctified, and have the Spirit put upon it. God the Father, the first person in Trinity, and God the Son, the second, they work not immediately, but by the Holy Ghost, the third person. Therefore, whatsoever is wrought upon the creature, it comes from the Holy Ghost immediately. So Christ received the Holy Ghost as sent from the Father and the Son. Now as the Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, so he works from the Father and the Son. He sanctifies and purifieth, and does all from the Father and the Son, and knits us to the Father and the Son; to the Son first, and then to the Father. Therefore it is said, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,' 2 Corinthians 13:14; because all the communion we have with God is by the Holy Ghost. All the communion that Christ as man had with God was by the Holy Ghost; and all the communion that God has with us, and we with God, is by the Holy Ghost: for the Spirit is the bond of union between Christ and us, and between God and us. God communicates himself to us by his Spirit, and we communicate with God by his Spirit. God does all in us by his Spirit, and we do all back again to God by the Spirit. Because Christ, as a head, as the second Adam, was to be the root of all that are saved, as the first Adam was the root of all that are damned, he was therefore to receive the Spirit, and to have it put upon him in a more excellent and rich manner: for we must know that all things are first in Christ, and then in us.

God chose him first, and then he chose us. God singled him out to be the Saviour, the second Adam, and he calls us in Christ.

God justified Christ from our sins, being our surety, taking our sins upon him. We are justified, because he by his resurrection quit himself from the guilt of our sins, as having paid the debt.

Christ is the first fruits of them that rise again, 1 Corinthians 15:20. We rise again because he is risen. Christ first ascended; we ascend in Christ. Christ is first loved; we are loved in the Beloved. Christ is first blessed; we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ, Ephesians 1:8. So, whatsoever is in us, we have it at the second hand. We have the Spirit in us, but he is first in Christ; God has put the Spirit in Christ, as the spring, as the second Adam, as a public person, that should receive the Spirit for us all. He is first in all things; Christ must have the pre-eminence. He has the pre-eminence in all, both before time, in time, and after time, in election, in whatsoever is done here in this world, and in glorification. All is first in Christ, and then in us. He is the elder brother.

We must understand this, to give Christ his due honour and respect, and to know whence we have all we have. Therefore the Spirit is said here, first, to be 'put upon Christ.' We have not the Holy Ghost immediately from God, but we have him as sanctifying Christ first, and then us; and whatsoever the Holy Ghost does in us, he does the same in Christ first, and he does it in us because in Christ. Therefore, in John 16:14-15, Christ says, He shall take of mine. Whatsoever the Holy Ghost works in us, he takes of Christ first. How is that?

Thus: the Holy Ghost comforts us with reasons from Christ. He died, and has reconciled us to God; therefore, now God is at peace with thee. Here the Holy Ghost takes a ground of comfort from the death of Christ. When the Holy Ghost would raise a man up to holiness of life, he tells him, Christ thy Saviour and head is quickened, and is now in heaven, therefore we ought to rise to

holiness of life. If the Holy Ghost be to work either comfort or grace, or anything, he not only does the same thing that he did first in Christ, but he does it in us by reasons from Christ, by grounds fetched from Christ. The Holy Ghost tells our souls that God loves Christ first, and he loves us in Christ, and that we are those that God gave Christ for, that we are those that Christ makes intercession for in heaven. The Holy Ghost witnesses to us the love of the Father and the Son, and so he fetches from Christ whatsoever he works.

And hence the work of the Holy Ghost is distinguished from illusions and delusions, that are nothing but frantic conceits of comfort that are groundless. The Holy Ghost fetches all from Christ in his working and comfort, and he makes Christ the pattern of all; for whatsoever is in Christ, the Holy Ghost, which is the Spirit of Christ, works in us as it is in Christ. Therefore, in John 1:13, it is said, 'of his fulness we receive grace for grace'—that is, grace answerable to his grace. There are three things that we receive answerable to Christ by the Spirit.

We receive grace—that is, the favour of God answerable to the favour God shows his Son. He loves his Son, he is graciously disposed to him, and he loves us.

So grace habitual. We have grace in us answerable to the grace in Christ. We have love answerable to his love, patience answerable to his patience, obedience and humility answerable to that in Christ. The Spirit works a conformity to Christ in all things.

Likewise, in the third place, the Spirit assures us of the same privileges that issue from grace. Christ is a Son; the Spirit tells us we are sons. Christ is an heir; the Spirit tells us we are heirs with Christ. Christ is the king of heaven and earth; the Spirit tells us that we are kings, that his riches are ours. Thus we have 'grace for grace,' both favour and grace in us, and privileges issuing from grace, we have all as they are in Christ. Even as in the first Adam we receive of his emptiness, curse for curse, ill for ill; for his blindness and rebellion we are answerable; we are born as he was after his fall: so in the second Adam, by his Spirit, we receive grace for grace.

Hence issues this, that our state now in Christ is far more excellent than our state in Adam was.

How does it spring hence?

Thus, Christ is God-man. His nature was sanctified by the Spirit; he was a more excellent person, he gives and sends the Spirit. Adam was only a mere man, and therefore his goodness could not be so derived to his posterity; for, however the Holy Ghost was in Adam, yet the Holy Ghost did not so fill him, he was not so in him as in Christ. The Holy Ghost is in Christ in a more excellent manner; for Christ being equal with God, he gave the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost comes from Christ as God. Now the second Adam being a more excellent person, we being in Christ the second Adam, we are in a more excellent, and in a more safe estate; we have a better keeper of our happiness than Adam. He being a mere man, he could not keep his own happiness, but lost himself and all his posterity. Though he were created after the image of God, yet being but a mere man, he showed himself to be a man—that is, a changeable creature; but Christ being God and man, having his nature sanctified by the Spirit, now our happiness is in a better keeping, for our grace has a better spring. The grace and sanctification we have, it is not in our own keeping, it distils into us answerable to our necessities; but the spring is inexhaustable, it never fails, the spring is in Christ. So the favour that God bears us, it is not first in us, but it is first in Christ; God loves him, and then he loves us; he gives him the Spirit, and us in him. Now, Christ is the keeper

both of the love of God towards us and the grace of God; and whatsoever is good he keeps all for us, he receives all for himself and for us; he receives not only the Spirit for himself, but he receives it as Mediator, as head: for 'we all of his fulness receive grace for grace.' He receives it as a fountain to diffuse it, I say. This shows us our happy and blessed condition in Jesus Christ, that now the grace and love of God and our happiness, and the grace whereby we are sanctified and fitted for it, it is not in our own keeping originally, but in our head Christ Jesus.

These be comfortable considerations, and, indeed, the life and soul of a Christian's life and comfort. If we conceive them aright, they will quicken us to obedience, and we shall know what the gospel is. To come to make some use of it.

I might observe this, that none should take that office upon them to which they are not called of God, nor qualified by his Spirit, especially ministers, because Christ did not set upon his office, till the Spirit was put upon him. The Spirit must enable us and fit us for everything. But I leave that, and come to that which concerns us all.

First, then, has God put the Spirit upon Christ, as the evangelist says in John 3:34, 'He whom God has sent—that is Christ—he speaks the word of God: for God gives him not the Spirit by measure.' God does not stand measuring grace out to Christ, but he pours it out upon him, full measure, running over, because he receives it not for himself alone, but for us. We receive the Spirit by measure, Ephesians 4:7, 'according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' Christ gives us all a measure of sanctifying knowledge and of every grace, till we 'grow to be a perfect man in Christ,' Ephesians 4:13. Therefore it is called the 'first fruits of the Spirit,' Romans 8:23, as much as shall fit us for heaven, and grace sufficient, though it be not that measure we shall have hereafter, or that we would have here. Christ had a full measure, the fulness of a fountain, diffusive, not only abundance for himself, but redundance, and overflowing for the good of others; he being the head of the church, not only a head of eminence, but of influence to bestow and convey all grace in him to all his members, proportionable to the service of every member. Therefore he received not the Spirit according to measure—that is, sparingly—but it was showered upon him; he was filled and clothed with the Holy Ghost.

Is it so? Let us labour, then, to see where to have supply in all our wants. We have a full treasury to go to. All treasure is hid in Christ for us. What a comfort is this in anything we lack! If we lack the favour of God, go to his beloved Christ, desire God to love us in his beloved, and to accept us in his gracious Son, in him whom he has made his servant, and anointed with his Spirit for that purpose.

If we lack particular graces, go to the well-head Christ, consider of Christ now filled for us, as it was in Aaron. The oil that was poured on Aaron's head ran down to his beard, and to the skirts of his clothing, Psalms 133:2, the meanest parts of his garment were bedewed with that oil: so the graces of God's Spirit poured upon our head Christ, our Aaron, our High Priest, run down upon us, upon all ranks of Christians, even upon the skirts, the weakest and lowest Christians. Every one has grace for grace; we all partake of the oil and anointing of our spiritual Aaron, our High Priest. If we lack anything, therefore, let us go to him. I can do all, says St Paul, in Christ that strengthens me, Philip. 4:13. Go to him for patience, for comfort, for everything, because God has put his Spirit upon him, to supply all our deficiencies; he has the oil of gladness above his fellows, Psalms 45:7; but for his fellows he has the oil of grace more than any, but it is not only for him, but for us all.

Therefore, let us have comfortable meditations of the fulness of Christ, and make use of it, all this is for me. In Colossians 2:9, St Paul sets it out, 'in him the fulness of the Godhead dwells personally;' for that is meant by somatikwV, and it follows after, 'in him we are complete.' Wherefore is all the fulness that is in him? to show that in him we are complete. So, in 1 John 5:20-21, to show how the spirits of the apostles agree, 'we know that the Son of God is come in the flesh, and has given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is true God and eternal life.' Christ is true God and eternal life for us all; for our comfort, 'we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, &c. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.' How does this depend upon the other? Thus;

Will you go to idols, stocks and stones, devices of men's brain, for supply of grace and comfort? Christ, whom God has sent, he is come into the world; he is God and eternal life. 'God has given eternal life, and this life is in his Son,' 1 John 5:11; therefore why should you go to idols?

What is the ground of popish idolatries and abominations? They conceive not aright of the fulness of Christ, wherefore he was ordained, and sent of God; for if they did, they would not go to idols and saints, and leave Christ. Therefore let us make this use of it, go out of Christ for nothing. If we want favour, go not to saints, if we want instruction, go; not to traditions of men. He is a prophet wise enough, and a priest full enough to make us accepted of God. If we lack any grace, he is a king able enough, rich enough, and strong enough to subdue all our rebellions in us, and he will in time by his Spirit overcome all, 'Stronger is he that is in us than he that is in the world,' 1 John 4:4. The spirit in the world, the devil and devilish-minded men, they are not so strong as the Spirit of Christ; for by little and little the Spirit of Christ will subdue all. Christ is a king, go not out of him therefore for anything. 'Babes, keep yourselves from idols,' 1 John 5:21. You may well enough, you know whom to go to.

Therefore let us shame ourselves. Is there such a store-house of comfort and grace every way in Christ? Why are we so weak and comfortless? Why are we so dejected as if we had not such a rich husband? All our husband's riches are ours for our good, we receive of it in our measure, why do we not go to the fountain and make use of it? Why, in the midst of abundance, are we poor and beggarly? Here we may see the misery of the world. Christ is a prophet to teach us the way to heaven, but how few be there that will be directed by him 'Christ is a king to subdue all our spiritual and worst enemies, to subdue those enemies that kings tremble at, to subdue death, to subdue the fear of judgment and the wrath of God, and yet how few will come under his government! 'Christ is the light of the world,' John 9:5, yet how few follow him! Christ is the way, yet how few tread in his steps! Christ is our wisdom and our riches, yet how few go to him to fetch any riches, but content themselves with the transitory things of this life! Men live as if Christ were nothing, or did nothing concern them, as if he were a person abstracted from them, as if he were not a head or husband, as if he had received the Spirit only for himself and not for them, whereas all that is in Christ is for us. I beseech you therefore let us learn to know Christ better, and to make use of him.

Again, if Christ has 'the Spirit put upon him for us all,' then in our daily slips and errors make this use, to offer Christ to God with this argument. Take an argument from God himself to bind him. God will be bound with his own arguments. We cannot bind him with ours, but let us go to him and say, Lord, though I be thus and thus sinful, yet for Christ Jesus' sake thy servant, whom thou

lovest and hast put thy Spirit upon him to be a priest, and to make intercession for me, for his sake pardon, for his sake accept. Make use of God's consecration of Christ by the Spirit to God himself, and bind him with his own mediator, and with his own priest of his own ordaining. Thou canst not, Lord, refuse a Saviour and mediator of thine own, sanctified by thine own Spirit, whom thou hast set apart, and ordained and qualified every way for this purpose. Let us go to God in the name of this mediator Jesus Christ every day, and this is to make a good use of this, that God has 'put his Spirit upon him.'

But to make a use of trial, how shall we know that this comfort belongs to us, that Christ has the Spirit put upon him for us or no, whether he be ordained a king, priest, and prophet for us? That which I said before will give light to this. We must partake of the same Spirit that Christ has, or else we are none of his members. As we partake of his name, so we must also of his anointing. Thereupon we are called Christians, because we partake of the anointing and Spirit of Christ, and if we have the Spirit of Christ, it will work the same in us as it did in Christ, it will convince us of our own ill, of our rebellions, and cursed estate, and it will convince us likewise of the good we have in him. And then, he is a Spirit of union, to knit us to Christ, and make us one with him, and thereupon to quicken us, to lead us, and guide us, and to dwell in us continually, to stir up prayers and supplications in us, to make us cry familiarly to God as to a Father, to comfort and support us in all our wants and miseries, as he did Christ, 'to help our infirmities,' as the apostle at large, in Romans 8:20, sets down the excellent office of the Holy Ghost, what he does in those that are Christ's. Let us therefore examine ourselves, what the Spirit does in us, if Christ be set apart to redeem us as a priest. Surely all his offices go together. He does by the same Spirit rule us, Revelation 1:5, 'He has washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests.' Whosoever he washes in his blood he makes him a king and a priest, he makes him by the power of his Spirit able to rule over his base corruptions. We may know then, whether we have benefit by Christ by his Spirit, not only by the Spirit witnessing that we are the sons of God, but by some arguments whereby the Spirit may witness without delusion. For though the Spirit of Christ tells us that we are Christ's, yet the proof must be from guiding and leading, and comforting and conforming us to Jesus Christ, in making us kings and prophets, enlightening our understandings to know his will, and conforming us to be like him. The Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of power and strength. It will enable us to perform duties above nature, to overcome ourselves and injuries, it will make us to lack and to abound, it will make us able to live and to die, as it enabled Christ to do things that another man could not do. So a Christian can do that, and suffer that that another man cannot do and suffer, because he has the Spirit of Christ.

At the least, whosoever has the Spirit of Christ, he shall find that Spirit in him striving against that which is contrary, and by little and little getting ground. Where there is no conflict, there is no Spirit of Christ at all. I will not be large in the point, only I speak this by way of trial, to know whether we have the Spirit of Christ in us or no. If not, we have nothing to do with Christ; for Christ saves us not as he is out of us only. Christ was to do something of himself that we have no share in, only the good of it is ours. He was to redeem us by his blood, to be a sacrifice. The title to heaven and salvation was wrought by Christ out of us. But there is somewhat that he does not only for us, but he works in us by his Spirit, that is, the fitting of us for that he has given us title to, and the applying Of that that he has done for us. Whosoever therefore has any benefit by Christ, he has the Spirit to apply that to himself and to fit and qualify him to be a member of such a head, and an heir of such

a kingdom. Whosoever Christ works anything for, he does also work in them. There is a Spirit of application, and that Spirit of application, if it be true, it is a Spirit of sanctification and renovation fitting us every way for our, condition.

Let us not abuse ourselves, as the world commonly does, concerning Christ. They think God is merciful, and Christ is a Saviour. It is true, but what has he wrought in thee by his Spirit? Hast thou the Spirit of Christ? Or 'else thou art none of his,' Romans 8:9. Wherever Christ is, he goes with his Spirit to teach us to apply what Christ has done for us, and to fit us to be like him. Therefore, let those that live in any sins against conscience, think it a diabolical illusion to think God and Christ is merciful. Aye, but where is the work of the Spirit? All the hope thou hast is only that thou art not in hell as yet, [only] for the time to come; but for the present I dare not say thou hast anything to do with Christ, when there is nothing of the Spirit in thee. The Spirit of Christ conforms the spouse to be like the husband, and the members to be like the head. Therefore, beg of Christ that he would anoint himself king in our hearts, and prophet and priest in our hearts, to do that that he did, to know his will as a prophet, to rule in us as a king, and to stir up prayers in us as a priest, to do in some proportion that that he does, though it be in never so little a measure, for we receive it in measure, but Christ beyond measure. We must labour for so much as may manifest to us the truth of our estate in Christ, that we are not dead but living branches.

But how or by what means does Christ give his Spirit to us? This Spirit that is so necessary for us, it is given by the ministry of the gospel, which is the ministry of the Spirit. 'Received ye the Holy Ghost by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith preached?' Galatians 3:2. When the love of God in Christ, and the benefits by Christ, are laid open in the preaching of the gospel to us, God gives his holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Now God in Christ would save us by a triumphant and abundant love and mercy, and the Spirit of God never goes but where there is a magnifying of the love and mercy of God in Christ; therefore the ministry of the gospel, which only discovers the amity and love of God to mankind, being now reconciled in Christ, it is accompanied with the Spirit, to assure us of our part and portion in those benefits, for the Spirit is the fruit of God's love as well as Christ. Christ is the first gift, and the Spirit is the second, therefore that part of the word that reveals God's exceeding love to mankind, leaving angels when they were fallen, in their cursed estate, and yet giving his Son to become man, and 'a curse for us:' the revealing of this love and mercy of God, and of his Son Christ to us, is joined with the Spirit. For by the Spirit we see our cursed estate without the love and mercy of God in Christ, and likewise we are convinced of the love of God in Christ, and thereupon we love God in return, and trust to his mercy, and out of love to him perform all cheerful obedience. Whatsoever we do else, if it be not stirred by the Spirit, apprehending the love of God in Christ, it is but morality. A man shall never go to heaven except by such a disposition and frame and temper of soul as is wrought by the Holy Ghost, persuading the soul first of the love and favour of God in Christ. What are all our performances if they be not out of love to God? And how shall we love God except we be persuaded that he loves us first? Therefore the gospel breeds love in us to God, and has the Spirit together with it, working a blessed frame of sanctification, whereby we are disposed to every good duty. Therefore if we would have the Spirit of God, let us attend upon the sweet promises of salvation, upon the doctrine of Christ; for together with the knowledge of these things, the Holy Ghost slides and insinuates and infuses himself into our souls.

Therefore the ministers of the gospel should be much in laying open the riches of God in Christ. In unfolding Christ, all other things will follow, as St Paul in Titus 2:11-12) 'The grace of God has shined, has appeared gloriously, teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live holily and soberly in this present world.' Where the grace and love of God is persuaded and shed into the soul, all will follow.

What is the reason that former times were called dark times (and so they were), the times of popery a dark age? Christ was veiled, the gospel was veiled, there was no preaching of salvation by Christ alone, people were sent to stocks and stones, and to saints, and instead of the word, they were sent to legends and such things. Christ was obscured, thereupon they were dark ages. Those ages wherein the Spirit of God is most, is where Christ is most preached, and people are best always where there is most Spirit; and they are most joyful and comfortable and holy, where Christ is truly laid open to the hearts of people. The preaching of mere morality, if men be not careful to open Christ, to know how salvation is wrought by Christ, and how all good comes by Christ, it will never make a man perfectly good and fit him for heaven. It may make a man reform many abuses, like a philosopher, which has its reward and respect amongst men, but nothing to give comfort at the hour of death and the day of judgment. Only that whereby the Spirit is conveyed, is the knowledge and preaching of Christ in his state and offices.

And he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.—After Christ was fully prepared, as he was prepared with the Spirit of God, and with a commission from heaven, from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, having this high commission, and gifts for it by the Spirit, he falls upon his office presently. We are never fit for anything till we have the Spirit, and when we have the Spirit it is active and vigorous and working. 'He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.'

He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.—These words set down the mild and sweet and amiable manner of Christ's carriage upon earth. Here, in his first coming to work the great work of our redemption, he did not carry the matter in an outward glorious manner, in pomp; but he would have his miracles concealed oftentimes and himself hidden. His Godhead was hid under the veil of his manhood. He could not have wrought our salvation otherwise. If the devil and the world had known Christ to be as he was, they would never have made those attempts against him. Therefore, considering he had such a dispensation to work our salvation as a king, priest, and prophet, he would not cry and contend and strive, he would not come with any great noise.

Now, here is an opposition to the giving of the law, and likewise to the coming and carriage of civil princes. You know when the law was given all the mount was on fire, and the earth thereabout quaked and trembled, and the people fled. They could not endure to hear the voice of God speaking in the mount; there was such a terrible smoke and fire, they were all afraid. Thus came Moses. Now, did Christ come as Moses? Was the gospel delivered by Christ as the law was, in terrors and fears? Oh, no. Christ came not in such a terrible manner, in thunder and lightning; but the gospel, it came sweetly. A dove, a mild creature, lit upon the head of Christ when he was baptized, to show his mild manner of carriage; and he came with blessing in his mouth in his first sermon of all: Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness,' Matthew 5:8; Matthew 5:4; Matthew 5:6. The law came with curses: 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them '

Galatians 3:10. Christ came in another manner; the gospel was delivered in a mild, sweet manner. Christ, as an ambassador, came sweetly to entreat and beseech. There is a crying, indeed, but it is a crying out of love and entreaty, not a shouting in a terrible manner as was at the giving of the law, no, nor as at the coming of other civil princes into a city, with shouting and noise of trumpets, with pomp, and state, and great attendants. Christ came not into the world to execute his kingdom and office in such pomp and noise as it is said of Agrippa, Acts 25:23, 'He came with great pomp.' So worldly princes carry things thus, and it is needful in some sort. People must have shows and pomp; the outward man must have outward things to astonish it withal. It is a policy in state so to do. But Christ came in another manner. He came not to make men quake and tremble that came to speak and deal with him. He came not with clamour and fierceness; for who would have come to Christ then? But he came in a mild, and sweet, and amiable manner. We see a little before the text (ver. 16), upon occasion of the inference of these words, he commands and charges them that they should not reveal him and make him known. When he had done a good work he would not have it known.

Now, there are three things especially insinuated in this description,

He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the street.' That Christ should not be outwardly glorious to publish his own excellency, nor contentious; he should not cry nor quarrel, nor he should not be clamorous, if he had any wrong, to be all on fire presently, but he should be as a meek lamb, he should make no noise, he should not come in vainglory or clamour, &c.

But here we must know that Christ was a wise discerner of the fitness of times; for sometimes he would have things published, sometimes he would not; sometimes he would be known, sometimes he would not. Christ, in his second coming, shall come all in majesty and glory with his angels, and all the earth shall appear before him; but now his wisdom told him, now he came to save the world as a prophet, priest, and king, to work man's salvation, that he must hide and conceal himself; and so he ordered all his courses by discretion. Every sacrifice must be salted with salt, everything should be seasoned with the salt of discretion. This is the steward of all our actions, to know what is fit. Christ knew it was fittest to conceal himself now at this time.

Now, by Christ's example we should learn this, not to be vainglorious, not to make a great noise. You have some, if they do anything that is good, presently all the world must know it. This was not Christ's disposition. It is a disposition that is hardly wrought out of man's heart without an exceeding great measure of the Spirit of God; for we see good men have been given this way. David would number the people, that it might be known what a great monarch he was, what a great number of people he had, 2 Samuel 24:1-25. He was a good man, yet vainglorious. He smarted for it. So good Hezekiah. Ambassadors were sent to him from the king of Babylon, and that they should know that Hezekiah was no beggarly prince, out must come the vessels of the temple and all his treasures, to show what a rich king the king of Judah was, 2 Kings 20:13, et seq. His vainglory cost him all his riches, as the prophet told him. So the disciples. Before they received a great measure of the Spirit, how vainglorious were they! They contended for the higher place; therefore they advise Christ to go up to Jerusalem, that he might be known. As Jehu said to Jonadab, 'Come up and see my zeal for the Lord of hosts,' 2 Kings 10:16, he accounts it nothing unless it be seen. So flesh and blood. If there be anything done that is good, all the world must

know it presently. Christ charged them that no noise should be made, but that they should conceal him.

What should we learn hence?

To be of Christ's disposition, that is, to have no more care of the knowledge of things than the light of the things themselves will discover, to do works of light, and if the things themselves will break forth to men's eyes and they must see our light shine, then let them, and imitate our good works; but for us to blazon them abroad ourselves, it is not the spirit of Christ.

Let us labour to have humility of spirit, that that may grow up with us in all our performances, that all things that we speak and do may savour of a spirit of humility, that we may seek the glory of God in all things more than our own.

And let us commit the fame and credit of what we are or do to God. He will take care of that. Let us take care to be and to do as we should, and then for noise and report, let it be good or ill as God will send it. We know oftentimes it falls out that that which is precious in man's eye is abominable in God's. If we seek to be in the mouths of men, to dwell in the talk and speech of men, God will abhor us, and at the hour of death it will not comfort us what men speak or know of us, but sound comfort must be from our own conscience and the judgment of God. Therefore, let us labour to be good in secret. Christians should be as minerals, rich in the depth of the earth. That which is least seen is his riches. We should have our treasure deep. For the disclosure of it we should be ready when we are called to it, and for all other accidental things, let them fall out as God in his wisdom sees good. So let us look through good report and bad report to heaven; let us do the duties that are pleasing to God and our own conscience, and God will be careful enough to get us applause. Was it not sufficient for Abel, that though there was no great notice taken what faith he had, and how good a man he was, yet that God knew it and revealed it? God sees our sincerity and the truth of our hearts, and the graces of our inward man, he sees all these, and he values us by these, as he did Abel. As for outward things there may be a great deal of deceit in them, and the more a man grows in grace, the less he cares for them. As much reputation as is fit for a man will follow him in being and doing what he should. God will look to that. Therefore we should not set up sails to our own meditations, that unless we be carried with the wind of applause, to be becalmed and not go a whit forward; but we should be carried with the Spirit of God and with a holy desire to serve God, and our brethren, and to do all the good we can, and never care for the speeches of the world, as St Paul says of himself: 'I care not what ye judge of me, I care not what the world judgeth, I care not for man's judgment,' 1 Corinthians 4:3. This is man's day. We should, from the example of Christ, labour to subdue this infirmity which we are sick of naturally. Christ concealed himself till he saw a fitter time. We shall have glory enough, and be known enough to devils, to angels, and men ere long. Therefore, as Christ lived a hidden life, that is, he was not known what he was, that so he might work our salvation, so let us be content to be hidden men. A true Christian is hidden to the world till the time of manifestation comes. When the time came, Christ then gloriously revealed what he was; so it shall be revealed what we are. In the mean time, let us be careful to do our duty that may please the Spirit of God, and satisfy our own conscience, and leave all the rest to God. Let us meditate, in the fear of God, upon these directions for the guidance of our lives in this particular.

Through Conflict to Victory

Through Conflict to Victory

by Richard Sibbes

The text also implies that the prevailing of Christ's government will not be without fighting. There can be no victory where there is no combat. In Isaiah it is said, 'He shall bring forth judgment unto truth' (Isaiah 42:3). In Matthew it is said that he shall 'send forth judgment unto victory' (Matthew 12:20). The word 'send forth' has a stronger sense in the original: to send forth with force; showing that, where his government is in truth, it will be opposed, until he gets the upper hand. Nothing is so opposed as Christ and his government are, both within us and outside us; and within us most in our conversion. Though corruption does not prevail so far as to make void the powerful work of grace, yet there is not only a possibility of opposing, but a proneness to oppose, and not only a proneness, but an actual withstanding of the working of Christ's Spirit, and that in every action. Yet there is no prevailing resistance so far as to make void the work of grace, but corruption in the issue yields to grace.

It takes much trouble to bring Christ into the heart, and to set up a tribunal for him to judge there. There is an army of lusts in mutiny against him. The utmost strength of most men's endeavors and abilities is directed to keeping Christ from ruling in the soul. The flesh still labors to maintain its own government, and therefore it cries down the credit of whatever crosses it, such as God's blessed ordinances, and highly prizes anything, though never so dead and empty, if it allows the liberty of the flesh.

WHY CHRIST'S GOVERNMENT IS OPPOSED

And no marvel if the spiritual government of Christ is so opposed:

First, because it is government, and that limits the course of the, will and casts a bridle on its wanderings. Everything natural resists what opposes it; so the corrupt will labor to bear down all laws, and counts it a noble thing not to be awed, and an argument of a low spirit to fear any, even God himself, until unavoidable danger seizes on men. Then those that feared least when out of danger fear most in danger, as we see in the case of Belshazzar (Daniel 5:6).

Secondly, it is spiritual government, and therefore the flesh will endure it even less. Christ's government brings the very thoughts and desires, which are the most immediate and free issue of the soul, into obedience. Though a man were of such controlled behavior that his whole life were free from outward offences, yet in Christ's eyes to be carnally or worldly-minded is death (Romans 8:6). He looks on a worldly mind with a greater detestation than any one particular offence.

One may say, 'But Christ's Spirit is in those who are in some degree earthly-minded.' True, but not as an allower and maintainer, but as an opposer, subduer, and in the end as a conqueror. Carnal men would like to bring Christ and the flesh together, and could be content, with some reservation, to submit to Christ. But Christ will be no underling to any base affection, and therefore, where

there is allowance of ourselves in any sinful lust, it is a sign the keys were never given up to Christ to rule us.

Thirdly, this judgment is opposed, because it is judgment, and men do not like to be judged and censured. Now Christ, in his truth, arraigns them, gives sentence against them, and binds them over to the latter judgment of the great day, and therefore they take upon them to judge that truth which must judge them. But truth will be too strong for them. Man has a day now, which Paul calls 'man's day' (1 Corinthians 4:3 [margin]), in which he gets on his bench and usurps a judgment over Christ and his ways; but God has a day in which he will set everything straight, and his judgment shall stand. And the saints shall have their time, when they shall sit in judgment on those that judge them now (1 Corinthians 6:2). In the meantime, Christ will rule in the midst of his enemies (Psalms 110:2), even in the midst of our hearts.

WE MUST EXPECT OPPOSITION

It is therefore no sign of a good condition to find all quiet, with no opposition; for can we think that corruption, which is the older element in us, and Satan, the strong man who has many holds over us, will yield possession quietly? No, there is not so much as a thought of goodness discovered by him, but he joins with corruption to kill it in the birth. And as Pharaoh's cruelty was especially against the male children, so Satan's malice is especially against the most religious and manly resolutions.

This, then, we are always to expect, that wherever Christ comes there will be opposition. When Christ was born, all Jerusalem was troubled; so when Christ is born in any man, the soul is in an uproar, and all because the heart is unwilling to yield up itself to Christ to rule it.

Wherever Christ comes he brings division, not only between man and himself, but between man and man, and between church and church; of which disturbance Christ is no more the cause than medicine is of trouble in a diseased body. Harmful agents are the real cause, for the purpose of medicine is to bring health. But Christ thinks it fit that the thoughts of men's hearts should be revealed, and he is set for the fall as well as the rising of many in Israel (Luke 2:34).

Thus, the desperate madness of men is laid open, that they would rather be under the guidance of their own lusts, and in consequence of Satan himself, to their endless destruction, than put their feet into Christ's fetters and their necks under his yoke; though, indeed, Christ's service is the only true liberty. His yoke is an easy yoke, his burden but as the burden of wings to a bird which make her fly the higher. Satan's government is rather a bondage than a government, to which Christ gives up those that shake off his own, for then he gives Satan and his agents power over them. Since they will not 'receive the love of the truth' (2 Thessalonians 2:10), take him, Jesuit, take him, Satan, blind him and bind him and lead him to perdition. Those that take the most liberty to sin are the greatest slaves., because the most voluntary slaves. The will is either the best or the worst part in anything. The further men go on in a willful course, the deeper they sink in rebellion; and the more they oppose Christ, doing what they will, the more they shall one day suffer what they would not. In the meantime, they are prisoners in their own souls, bound over in their consciences to the judgment after death of him whose judgment they would not accept in their lives. And is it not just that they should find him a severe judge to condemn them when they would not have him as a mild judge to rule them?

OUR VICTORY IN CHRIST IS CERTAIN

In conclusion and as a general application to ourselves of all that has been said, we see the conflicting, but yet sure and hopeful, state of God's people. The victory lies not with us, but with Christ, who has taken on him both to conquer for us and to conquer in us. The victory lies neither in our own strength to get it, nor in our enemies' strength to defeat it. If it lay with us, we might justly fear. But Christ will maintain his own government in us and take our part against our corruptions. They are his enemies as well as ours. Let us therefore be 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might' (Ephesians 6:10). Let us not look so much at who our enemies are as at who our judge and captain is, nor at what they threaten, but at what he promises. We have more for us than against us. What coward would not fight when he is sure of victory? None is here overcome but he that will not fight. Therefore, when any base fainting seizes on us, let us lay the blame where it ought to be laid.

Discouragement rising from unbelief and the ill report brought upon the good land by the spies moved God to swear in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. Let us take heed that a spirit of faintheartedness, rising from the seeming difficulty and disgrace involved in God's good ways, does not provoke God to keep us out of heaven. We see here what we may look for from heaven. Oh beloved, it is a comfortable thing to conceive of Christ aright, to know what love, mercy and strength we have laid up for us in the breast of Christ. A good opinion of the physician, we say, is half the cure. Let us make use of this mercy and power of his every day in our daily combats: 'Lord Jesus, thou hast promised not to quench the smoking flax, nor to break the bruised reed. Cherish thy grace in me; leave me not to myself; the glory shall be thine.' Let us not allow Satan to transform Christ to us, to make him other than he is to those that are his. Christ will not leave us till he has made us like himself, all glorious within and without, and presented us blameless before his Father (Jude 1:24).

What a comfort this is in our conflicts with our unruly hearts, that it shall not always be thus! Let us strive a little while, and we shall be happy for ever. Let us think when we are troubled with our sins that Christ has this in charge from his Father, that he shall not 'quench the smoking flax' until he has subdued all. This puts a shield into our hands to beat back 'all the fiery darts of the wicked' (Ephesians 6:16). Satan will object, 'You are a great sinner. We may answer, 'Christ is a strong Savior.' But he will object, 'You have no faith, no love.' 'Yes, a spark of faith and love.' 'But Christ will not regard that.' 'Yes, he will not quench the smoking flax.' 'But this is so little and weak that it will vanish and come to naught.' 'Nay, but Christ will cherish it, until he has brought judgment to victory.' And this much we have already for our comfort, that, even when we first believed, we overcame God himself, as it were, by believing the pardon of all our sins, notwithstanding the guilt of our own consciences and his absolute justice. Now, having been prevailers with God, what shall stand against us if we can learn to make use of our faith?

Oh, what a confusion is this to Satan, that he should labor to blow out a poor spark and yet should not be able to quench it; that a grain of mustard seed should be stronger than the gates of hell; that it should be able to remove mountains of oppositions and temptations cast up by Satan and our rebellious hearts between God and us. Abimelech could not endure that it should be said, 'A woman slew him' (Judges 9:54); and it must needs be a torment to Satan that a weak child, a woman, a decrepit old man should, by a spirit of faith, put him to flight.

TREASURE THE LEAST DEGREE OF GRACE

Since there is such comfort where there is a little truth of grace, that it will be so victorious, let us often try what God has wrought in us, search our good as well as our ill, and be thankful to God for the least measure of grace, more than for any outward thing. It will be of more use and comfort than all this world which passes away and comes to nothing. Yea, let us be thankful for that promised and assured victory which we may rely on without presumption, as Paul does: 'But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:57). See a flame in a spark, a tree in a seed. See great things in little beginnings. Look not so much to the beginning as to the perfection, and so we shall be, in some degree, joyful in ourselves, and thankful to Christ.

Neither must we reason from a denial of a great measure of grace to a denial of any at all in us, for faith and grace do not consist in an indivisible amount, so that he who has not such and such a measure has none at all. But, as there is a great difference between a spark and a flame, so there is a great difference between the least measure of grace and the greatest; and he who has the least measure is within the compass of God's eternal favor. Though he is not a shining light, yet he is a smoking wick, which Christ's tender care will not allow him to quench.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO COME TO CHRIST

And let all that has been spoken allure those that are not yet in a state of grace to come under Christ's sweet and victorious government, for, though we shall have much opposition, yet, if we strive, he will help us. If we fail, he will cherish us. If we are guided by him, we shall overcome. If we overcome, we are sure to be crowned. As for the present state of the church, we see now how forlorn it is, yet let us comfort ourselves that Christ's cause shall prevail. Christ will rule, till his enemies become his footstool (Psalms 110:1), not only to trample upon, but to help him up to mount higher in glory. Babylon shall fall, 'for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her' (Revelation 18:8). Christ's judgment, not only in his children, but also against his enemies, shall be victorious, for he is 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (Revelation 19:16). God will not always suffer antichrist and his supporters to revel and swagger in the church as they do.

CHRIST IS THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

If we look to the present state of the church of Christ, it is as Daniel in the midst of lions, as a lily amongst thorns, as a ship not only tossed but almost covered with waves. It is so low that the enemies think they have buried Christ, with respect to his gospel, in the grave, and there they think to keep him from rising. But as Christ rose in his person, so he will roll away all stones and rise again in his church. How little support has the church and cause of Christ at this day! How strong a conspiracy is against it. The spirit of antichrist is now lifted up and marches furiously. Things seem to hang on a small and invisible thread. But our comfort is that Christ lives and reigns, and stands on Mount Zion in defense of those who stand for him (Revelation 14:1); and when states and kingdoms shall dash one against another Christ will have care of his own children and cause, seeing there is nothing else in the world that he much esteems. At this very time the delivery of his church and the ruin of his enemies are in progress. We see nothing in motion till Christ has done his work, and then we shall see that the Lord reigns.

Christ and his church, when they are at the lowest, are nearest rising. His enemies, at the highest, are nearest their downfall. The Jews are not yet come in under Christ's banner; but God who has persuaded Japheth to come into the tents of Shem (Genesis 9:27) will persuade Shem to come into the tents of Japheth. The 'fullness of the Gentiles' has not yet come in (Romans 11:25), but Christ, who has the uttermost parts of the earth given to him for his possession (Psalms 2:8) will gather all the sheep his Father has given him into one fold, that there may be one sheepfold and one shepherd (John 10:16). The faithful Jews rejoiced to think of the calling of the Gentiles and why should we not rejoice to think of the calling of the Jews?

The gospel's course has hitherto been as that of the sun, from east to west, and so in God's time it may proceed yet further west. No creature can hinder the course of the sun, nor stop the influence of heaven, nor hinder the blowing of the wind, much less hinder the prevailing power of divine truth, until Christ has brought all under one head, and then he will present all to his Father: 'These are those thou hast given to me; these are those that have taken me for their Lord and King, that have suffered with me. My will is that they may be where I am and reign with me. And then he will deliver up the kingdom, even to his Father, and put down all other rule, and authority, and power (1 Corinthians 15:24).

FAITH WILL PREVAIL

Let us then bring our hearts to holy resolutions, and set ourselves upon that which is good, and against that which is ill, in ourselves or others, according to our callings, with this encouragement, that Christ's grace and power will go along with us. What would have become of that great work of reformation of religion in the latter-spring of the gospel if men had not been armed with invincible courage to overcome all hindrances, with this faith, that the cause was Christ's, and that he would not fail to help his own cause? Luther ingenuously confessed that he often acted inconsiderately and moved by, various passions. But when he acknowledged this: God did not condemn him for his errors, but, the cause being God's, and his aims being holy, to promote the truth, and being a mighty man in prayer, and strong in faith, God by him kindled that fire which all the world shall never be able to quench. According to our faith, so is our encouragement to all duties, therefore let us strengthen faith, so that it may strengthen all other graces. The very belief that faith shall be victorious is a means to make it so indeed. Believe it, therefore, that, though it is often as smoking flax, yet it shall prevail. If it prevails with God himself in trials, shall it not prevail over all other opposition? Let us wait a while, 'stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD' (Exodus 14:13).

The Lord reveal himself more and more to us in the face of his Son Jesus Christ and magnify the power of his grace in cherishing those beginnings of grace in the midst of our corruptions, and sanctify the consideration of our own infirmities to humble us, and of his tender mercy to encourage us. And may he persuade us that, since he has taken us into the covenant of grace, he will not cast us off for those corruptions which, as they grieve his Spirit, so they make us vile in our own eyes. And because Satan labors to obscure the glory of his mercy and hinder our comfort by discouragements, the Lord add this to the rest of his mercies, that, since he is so gracious to those that yield to his government, we may make the right use of this grace, and not lose any portion of comfort that is laid up for us in Christ. And, may he grant that the prevailing power of his Spirit in us should be an evidence of the truth of grace begun, and a pledge of final victory, at that time when he will be all in all, in all his, for all eternity. Amen.

Taken from The Bruised Reed. Updated.

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