

WRITINGS OF RALPH ERSKINE

by Ralph Erskine

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Ralph Erskine, compiled for study and devotional reading.

39 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00.00. Titles/Contents
2. S. A Legal Strain of Doctrine
3. S. A Song of Praise to God for his Merciful Judgments, Saving Benefits, and Vict...
4. S. Against A Legal Spirit
5. S. An Exhortation to All Apart from Christ
6. S. Arminian Doctrine Exposed
7. S. Benefits Accruing to Believers from the Offices, Names, Natures, and Sufferin...
8. S. Christ Suitable for All Christians' Needs
9. S. Christ the Believer's Adorning Garment
10. S. Christ the Believer's Sweet Nourishment.
11. S. Christ's Treasures Opened by Himself
12. S. Comfort to Believers from the text, Thy Maker is thy Husband, inverted thus
13. S. Comfort to Believers, in Christ's Relations, in His Dying Love, His Glory in ...
14. S. Earth Despicable—Heaven Desirable
15. S. Faith & Sense
16. S. God's Great Name, the Ground and Reason of Saving Great Sinners
17. S. Gospel Humiliation
18. S. Hear Christ's Testimony about Himself
19. S. Heaven's Grand Repository
20. S. How a Sinner Becomes a Believer
21. S. Improve God's Name in Every Case, for It is Suitable to Every Need
22. S. Man's Fall in Adam, & the Remedy in Christ
23. S. Objections Against Receiving Christ Answered
24. S. Purgatory Needful for Christians
25. S. Smoking Spiritualized
26. S. The Believer's Faith and Hope Encouraged, Even in the Darkest Nights of Deser...
27. S. The Believer's Principles Concerning The Law & the Gospel
28. S. The Best Match; Or, the Incomparable Marriage Between the Creator and the Cre...
29. S. The Difference Between Legal and Gospel Mortification
30. S. The Free Gospel-Call
31. S. The Joyful Sound of the Gospel
32. S. The Right Rule of Our Love to Christ
33. S. The Spiritual Feelings of Believers and Hypocrites Compared
34. S. The Word of Salvation Sent to Sinners
35. S. True Lovers of God Highly Privileged
36. S. Unbelievers' Joy in the Word?
37. S. What It Means to be "Dead to the Law"
38. S. What Sinners Should Plead with God
39. S. What is that Good that All Things shall Work For?

00.00. Titles/Contents

Erskine, Ralph - Library

S. A Legal Strain of Doctrine

S. A Song of Praise to God for his Merciful Judgments, Saving Benefits, and Victorious Salvation.

S. Against A Legal Spirit

S. An Exhortation to All Apart from Christ

S. Arminian Doctrine Exposed

S. Benefits Accruing to Believers from the Offices, Names, Natures, and Sufferings of Christ

S. Christ Suitable for All Christians' Needs

S. Christ the Believer's Adorning Garment

S. Christ the Believer's Sweet Nourishment.

S. Christ's Treasures Opened by Himself

S. Comfort to Believers from the text, Thy Maker is thy Husband, inverted thus,— Thy Husband is thy Maker; and the Conclusion of this Subject.

S. Comfort to Believers, in Christ's Relations, in His Dying Love, His Glory in Heaven,

S. Earth Despicable—Heaven Desirable

S. Faith & Sense.

S. God's Great Name, the Ground, and Reason of Saving Great Sinners

S. Gospel Humiliation

S. Hear Christ's Testimony about Himself

S. Heaven's Grand Repository

S. How a Sinner Becomes a Believer

S. Improve God's Name a short extract from "God's Great Name.".

S. Man's Fall in Adam & the Remedy in Christ

S. Objections Against Receiving Christ Answered

S. Purgatory Needful for Christians

S. Smoking Spiritualized

- S. The Believer's Faith and Hope Encouraged, Even in the Darkest Nights of Desertion and Distress
- S. The Believer's Principles Concerning The Law & The Gospel
- S. The Best Match
- S. The Difference Between Legal and Gospel Mortification
- S. The Free Gospel-Call
- S. The Joyful Sound of the Gospel
- S. The Right Rule of Our Love to Christ
- S. The Spiritual Feelings of Believers and Hypocrites Compared
- S. The Word of Salvation Sent To Sinners
- S. True Lovers of God Highly Privileged
- S. Unbelievers' Joy in the Word?
- S. What is that Good that All Things Shall Work For
- S. What It Means to be Dead to the Law
- S. What Sinners Should Plead with God

S. A Legal Strain of Doctrine

A Legal Strain of Doctrine

by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The following selection is taken from Erskine's Gospel Sonnets as found in "The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine" (Glasgow: W. Smith and J. Bryce Booksellers, 1778) vol. 10, pp. 85-95. The original title appears as follows: "Arguments and Encouragements to Gospel-ministers to avoid a legal strain of doctrine, and endeavor the sinner's match with Christ by gospel means." The electronic edition of this text has been newly type set and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. In numerous cases antiquated characters have been replaced and the spelling has been modernized. In some instances sections have been edited for clarity. This particular version therefore is not in the public domain. It may be copied and distributed only for personal or educational use.

FEATURING :

Section I. A Legal Spirit the Root of Damnable Errors.

Section II. A Legal Strain of Doctrine Discovered and Discarded.

Section III. The Hurtfulness of Not Preaching Christ, and Distinguishing Duly Between Law and Gospel.

Section IV. Damnable Pride and Self-righteousness, So Natural to All Men, Has Little Need to be Encouraged by Legal Preaching.

Section V. The Gospel of Divine Grace the Only Means of Converting Sinners; and Should be Preached Therefore Most Clearly, Fully, and Freely.

SECTION I. A Legal Spirit the Root of Damnable Errors.

Ye heralds great, that blow, in name of God, The silver trump of gospel-grace abroad; And sound, by warrant from the great I AM, The nuptial treaty with the worthy Lamb: Might ye but stoop th' unpolish'd muse to brook, And from a shrub an wholesome berry pluck;

Ye'd take encouragement from what is said, By gospel-means to make the marriage-bed, And to your glorious Lord a virgin chaste to wed. The more proud nature bears a legal sway, The more should preachers bend the gospel-way:

Oft in the church arise destructive schisms From anti-evangelic aphorisms; A legal spirit may be justly nam'd The fertile womb of ev'ry error damn'd.

Hence Pop'ry, so nat'ral since the fall, Makes legal works like saviours merit all;

Yea, more than merit on their shoulder loads, To supererogate like demi-gods.

Hence proud Soncinians set their reason high, 'Bove ev'ry precious gospel-mystery, Its divine author stab, and without fear The purple cover of his chariot tear. With these run Arian monsters in a line, All gospel truth at once to undermine; To darken and delete, like hellish foes, The brightest colour of the Sharon Rose. At best its human red they but decry, That blot the divine white, the native dye.

Hence dare Arminians too, with brazen face, Give man's free-will the throne of God's free grace; Whose self-exalting tenets clearly shew Great ignorance of law and gospel too.

Hence Neonomians spring, as sundry call The new law-makers, to redress our fall. The law of works into repentance, faith, Is chang'd, as their Baxterian Bible saith.* Shaping the gospel to an easy law, They build their tott'ring house with hay and straw;

Yet hide, like Rachel's idols in the stuff, Their legal hands within a gospel-muff.

Yea, hence spring Antinomian vile refuse, Whose gross abettors gospel-grace abuse;

Unskill'd how grace's silken latchet binds Her captives to the law with willing minds.

* The Baxterian Scheme Opposite to the Gospel Doctrine

The Baxterians tell us that God hath made a new law with mankind, and, that obedience to this new law and its commands is our righteousness; and that, this obedience gives us a title to heaven, and a title to Christ's blood, and to pardon; and that the act of faith is our righteousness, not as it accepts of Christ's righteousness, but as it is an obedience to this new law. The very act and work of faith is, according to them, the righteousness itself and this faith includes all kinds of works, namely, repentance, love, obedience, and ten or twelve duties of that sort; and all these together are our righteousness for justification. Really as one says upon this very head, if the Apostle Paul were alive he would excommunicate such ministers. (From "The Beauties of Erskine").

SECTION II. A Legal Strain of Doctrine Discovered and Discarded. No wonder Paul the legal spirit curse, Of fatal errors such a feeding nurse.

He, in JEHOVAH's great tremendous name, Condemns perverters of the gospel-scheme.

He damn'd the sophist rude, the babbling priest Would venture to corrupt it in the least;

Yea, curst the heav'nly angel down to hell, That daring would another gospel tell. Which crime is charg'd on these that dare dispense The self-same gospel in another sense.

Christ is not preach'd in truth, but in disguise, If his bright glory half absconded lies. When gospel-soldiers, that divide the word, Scarce brandish any but the legal sword.

While Christ the author of the law they press, More than the end of it for righteousness;

Christ as a seeker of our service trace, More than a giver of enabling grace. The king commanding holiness they show, More than the Prince exalted to bestow;

Yea, more on Christ the sin-revenger dwell, Than Christ Redeemer both from sin and hell. With legal spade the gospel-field he delves, Who thus drives sinners in unto themselves;

Halving the truth that should be all reveal'd, The sweetest part of Christ is oft conceal'd.

We bid men turn from sin, but seldom say, Behold the Lamb that takes all sin away!

Christ, by the gospel rightly understood, Not only treats a peace but makes it good.

Those suitors therefore of the bride, who hope By force to drag her with the legal rope, Nor use the drawing cord of conqu'ring grace, Pursue with flaming zeal a fruitless chase; In vain lame doings urge, with solemn awe, To bribe the fury of the fiery law: With equal success to the fool that aims By paper walls to bound devouring flames. The law's but mock'd by their most graceful deed, That wed not first the law-fulfilling Head;

It values neither how they wrought nor wept, That slight the ark wherein alone 'tis kept.

Yet legalists, DO, DO, with ardour press, And with prepost'rous zeal and warm address, Would seem the greatest friends to holiness: But vainly (could such opposites accord) Respect the law, and yet reject the Lord.

They shew not Jesus as the way to bliss, But Judas-like betray him with a kiss Of boasted works, or mere profession puft, Law-boasters proving but law-breakers oft.

SECTION III. The Hurtfulness of Not Preaching Christ, and Distinguishing Duly Between Law and Gospel Hell cares not how crude holiness be preach'd, If sinner's match with Christ be never reach'd;

Knowing their holiness is but a sham, Who ne'er are marry'd to the holy Lamb.

Let words have never such a pious shew, And blaze aloft in rude professor's view, With sacred aromatics richly spic'd, If they but drown in silence glorious Christ;

Or, if he may some vacant room supply, Make him a subject only by the by;

They mar true holiness with tickling chat, To breed a bastard Pharisaic brat.

They wofully the gospel message-broke, Make fearful havock of their Master's flock;

Yet please themselves and the blind multitude, By whom the gospel's little understood.

Rude souls, perhaps, imagine little odds Between the legal and the gospel roads: But vainly men attempt to blend the two;

They differ more than Christ and Moses do.

Moses, evangelizing in a shade, By types the news of light approaching spread; But from the law of works, by him proclaim'd, No ray of gospel-grace or mercy gleam'd. By nature's light the law to all is known, But lightsome news of gospel-grace to none. The doing cov'nant now, in part or whole, Is strong to damn, but weak to save a soul.

It hurts, and cannot help, but as it tends Through mercy to subserve some gospel-ends.

Law-thunder roughly to the gospel tames, The gospel mildly to the law reclaims. The fiery law, as 'tis a covenant, Schools men to see the gospel-aid they want;

Then gospel-aid does sweetly them incline Back to the law, as 'tis a rule divine.

Heaven's healing work is oft commenc'd with wounds, Terror begins what loving-kindness crowns.

Preachers may therefore press the fiery law, To strike the Christless men with dreadful awe.

Law-threats which for his sins to hell depress.

Yea, damn him for his rotten righteousness; That while he views the law exceeding broad, He fain may wed the righteousness of God.

But, ah! to press the law-works as terms of life, was ne'er the way to court the Lamb a wife. To urge conditions in the legal frame, Is to renew the vain old cov'nant game. The law is good, when lawfully 'tis used, But most destructive, when it is abused.

They set not duties in the proper sphere, Who duly law and gospel don't sever; But under many chains let sinners lie, As tributaries, or to DO or DIE. Nor make the law a squaring rule of life, But in the gospel-throat a bloody knife.

SECTION IV.

Damnable Pride and Self-righteousness, So Natural to All Men, Has Little Need to be Encouraged by Legal Preaching. The legal path proud nature loves so well, (Though yet 'tis but the cleanest road to hell) That, lo! e'en these that take the foulest ways, Whose lewdness no controlling bridle stays;

If but their drowsy conscience raise its voice, 'Twill speak the law of works their native choice, And echo to the rousing sound, "Ah! true:

"I cannot hope to live, unless I DO." No conscious breast of mortal kind can trace They myst'ry deep of being favor'd by grace. Of this nor is the nat'ral conscience skill'd; Nor will admit it, when it is reveal'd; But pushes at the gospel like a ram, As proxy for the law, against the Lamb. The proud self-righteous Pharisaic strain Is, "Blest be God I'm not like other men;

"I read and pray, give alms, I mourn and fast;

"And therefore hope to get to heav'n at last:

"For though from ev'ry sin I be not free, "Great multitudes of men are worse than me.

"I'm none of those that swear, cheat, drink, and whore!"

Thus on the law he builds his Babel tow'r.

Yea, ev'n the vilest cursed debauchee Will make the law of works his very plea;

"Why, says the rake, what take you me to be?

"A Turk or infidel (you lie) I can't "Be term'd so base, but by a sycophant;

"Only I hate to act the whining saint.

"I am a Christian true; and therefore bode, "It shall be well with me, I hope in God.

"An't I an honest man? Yea, I defy "The tongue that dare assert black to mine eye."

Perhaps, when the reprovor turns his back, He'll vend the viler wares to an op'ned pack, And with his fellows, in a strain more big, "Bid damn the base, uncharitable whig.

"These scoundrel hypocrites (he'll proudly say) "Think non shall ever merit heav'n but they.

"And yet we may compete with them; for see, "The best have blemishes as well as we.

"We have as good a heart (we trust) as these, "Though not their vain superfluous shew and blaze.

"Bigotted zealots, whose full crimes are hid, "Would damn us all to hell; but, God forbid.

"Whatever such a whining sect profess, "'Tis but a nice, morose, affected dress.

"And though we don't profess so much as they.

"We hope to compass heav'n a shorter way;

We seek God's mercy, and are all along "Most free of malice, and do no man wrong.

"But whims fantastic shall not our heads annoy, "That would our social liberties destroy.

"Sure, right religion never was design'd "To mar the native mirth of human kind.

"How weak are those that would be thought non-such!

"How mad, that would be righteous o'ermuch!

"We have sufficient, though we be not cram'd:

"We'll therefore hope the best, let them be damn'd."

Ah! horrid talk! yet so the legal strain Lards ev'n the language of the most profane.

Thus devilish pride o'erlooks a thousand faults, And on a legal ground itself exalts. This DO and LIVE, though doing pow'r be lost, In ev'ry mortal is proud nature's boast.

How does a vain conceit of goodness swell And feed false hope, amidst the shades of hell? Shall we, who should by gospel-methods draw, Send sinners to their nat'ral spouse the law; And harp upon the doing string to such, Who ignorantly dream they do so much?

Why, thus, instead of courting Christ a bride, We harden rebels in their native pride.

Much rather ought we in God's name to place His great artill'ry straight against their face; And throw hot Sinai thunderbolts around, To burn their tow'ring hopes down to the ground. To make the pillars of their pride to shake, And damn their doing to the burning lake. To curse the doers unto endless thrall, That never did continue to do all. To scorch their conscience with the flaming air, And sink their haughty thoughts in deep despair;

Denouncing Ebal's black revenging doom, To bast their expectation in the bloom;

'Till once vain hope of life by works give place Unto a solid hope of life by grace. The vig'rous use of means is safely urg'd. When pressing calls from legal dregs are purg'd; But most unsafely in a fed'ral dress, Confounding terms of life with means of grace.

Oh! dang'rous is th' attempt proud flesh to please, Or send a sinner to the law for ease; Who rather needs to feel its piercing dart, 'Till dreadful pangs invade his trembling heart; And thither only should be sent for flames Of fire to burn his rotten hopes and claims; That thus disarm'd, he gladly may embrace, And grasp with eagerness the news of grace.

SECTION V. The Gospel of Divine Grace the Only Means of Converting Sinners; and Should be Preached Therefore Most Clearly, Fully, and Freely.

They ought, who royal grace's heralds be, To trumpet loud salvation, full and free; Nor safely can, to humour mortal pride, In silence evangelic myst'ries hide.

What heav'n is pleas'd to give, dare we refuse; Or under ground conceal, least men abuse?

Suppress the gospel-flow'r, upon pretence That some vile spiders may suck poison thence?

Christ is a stumbling-block, shall we neglect To preach him, lest the blind should break their neck? That high he's for the fall of many set As well as for the rise, must prove no let. No grain of precious truth must be suppress'd, Though reprobates should to their ruin wrest. Shall heaven's corruscant lamb be dimm'd, that pays Its daily tribute down in golden rays?

Because some, blinded with the blazing gleams, Share not the pleasure of the lightning beams.

Let those be hardned, petrify'd, and harm'd, The rest are mollify'd and kindly warm'd. A various favour, flowers in grace's field, Of life to some, of deat to others yield.

Must then the rose be vail'd, the lily hid, The fragrant favour stifled? God forbid. The revelation of the gospel-flow'r, Is still the organ fram'd of saving pow'r Most justly then are legal minds condemn'd, That of the glorious gospel are asham'd: For this the divine arm, and only this, The pow'r of God unto salvation is. For therein is reveal'd, to screen from wrath, The righteousness of God, from faith to faith! The happy change in guilty sinners case They owe to free displays of sov'reign grace; Whose joyful tidings of amazing love The ministration of the Spirit prove. The glorious vent of the gospel-news express, Of God's free grace, thro' Christ's full righteousness, Is Heaven's gay chariot, where the Spirit bides, And in his conqu'ring pow'r triumphant rides. The gospel-field is still the Spirit's soil, The golden pipe that bears the holy oil; The orb where he outshines the radiant sun, The silver channel where his graces run.

Within the gospel-banks his flowing tide Of lightning, quickning motions sweetly glide.

Received ye the Spirit, scripture saith, By legal works, or by the word of faith?

If by the gospel only then let none Dare to be wiser than the wisest one.

We must, who freely get, as freely give The vital word that makes the dead to live. For ev'n to sinners dead within our reach We in his living name may most successful preach. The Spirit and the scripture both agree Jointly (says Christ) to testify of me. The preacher then will from his text decline, That scorns to harmonize with this design.

Press moral duties to the last degree;

Why not? but mind, lest we successless be, No light, no hope, no strength for duties spring, Where Jesus is not Prophet, Priest, and King. No light to see the way, unless he teach; No joyful hope,

save in his blood we reach; No strength, unless his royal arm he stretch
Then from our leading scope how gross we fall, If, like his name, in ev'ry gospel-call,
We make not him the First, the Last, the All! Our office is to bear the radiant torch,
Of gospel-light, into the darkened porch Of human understandings, and display
The joyful dawn of everlasting day; To draw the golden chariot of free grace,
The darkned shades with shining rays to chase, 'Till Heaven's bright lamp on circling
wheels be hurl'd, With spark'ling grandeur round the dusky world; And thus to bring, in dying
mortals sight, New life and immortality to light.

We're charg'd to preach the gospel, unconfi'd, To ev'ry creature of the human kind; To call, with
tenders of salvation free, All corners of the earth to come and see: And ev'ry sinner must
excuseless make, By urging rich and poor to come and take:

Ho, ev'ry one that thirsts, is grace's call Direct to needy sinners great and small; Not meaning
those alone, whose holy thirst Denominates their souls already blest.

If only those were call'd, then none but saints; Nor would the gospel suit the sinner's wants. But
here the call does signally import Sinners and thirsty souls of every sort; And mainly to their door
the message brings, Who yet are thirsting after empty things; Who spend their means no living
bread to buy, And pains for that which cannot satisfy.

Such thirsty sinners here invited are, Who vainly spend their money, thought, and care, On
passing shades, vile lusts and trash, so base As yeilds the immortal souls no true solace. The call
directs them, as they would be blest, To choose a purer object of their thirst.

All are invited by the joyful sound To drink who need, as does the parched ground, Whose
wide-mouth'd clefts speak to the brazen sky Its passive thirst, without an active cry. The
gospel-preacher then with holy skill Must offer Christ to whosoever will, To sinners of all sorts that
can be nam'd; The blind, the lame, the poor, the halt, the maim'd, Not daring to restrict th'
extensive call, But op'ning wide the net to catch 'em all No soul must be excluded that will come,
Nor right of access be confined to some, Though none will come till conscious of their want, Yet
right to come they have by sov'reign grant;

Such right to Christ, his promise, and his grace, That all are damn'd who hear and don't embrace:
So freely is th' unbounded call dispen'd, We therein find ev'n sinners unconvinc'd; Who know not
they are naked, blind, and poor, Counsell'd to by, or beg at Jesus door, And take the glorious robe,
eye-salve, and golden store. This prize they are oblig'd by faith to win, Else unbelief would never
be their sin.

Yes, gospel-offers but a sham we make, If ev'ry sinner has not right to take. Be gospel-heralds
fortify'd from this To trumpet grace, howe'er the serpent hiss. Did hell's malicious mouth in
dreadful shape 'Gainst innocence itself malignant gape;

Then sacred truth's devoted vouchers may For dire reproach their measures constant lay. With
cruel calumny of old commence'd, This sect will ev'ry where be spoke against.

While to and fro he runs the earth across Whose name is ADELPHON KATEGOROS.* In spite of
hell be then our constant strife To win the glorious Lamb a virgin wife.

* The Accuser of the Brethren (Revelation 12:10) This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com

S. A Song of Praise to God for his Merciful Judgments, Saving Benefits, and Victorious Salvation.

A Song of Praise to God for his Merciful Judgments, Saving Benefits, and Victorious Salvation. by
Ralph Erskine

from Isaiah 25:1-12.

SECTION I.

God's Merciful Judgments

Thou, O Jehovah, art my God,

Thee as mine own I claim;

I'll therefore celebrate abroad

And praise thy glorious name: For thou hast wonders manifold

Perform'd in recent dress;

Shap'd to thy counsels, which of old

Are truth and faithfulness. In heaps and rubbish laid thou hast

Strong cities fenc'd afore;

And strangers' palaces laid waste,

To be rebuilt no more.

Thy stoutest foes shall therefore yield

The glory thine to be;

And nations fierce resign the field,

And fear to cope with thee. For thou in straits a strength to poor

And needy ones hast been;

From blowing storm a refuge sure,

From scorching heat a screen. And that in times of greatest dread,

When furious tempests fall,

And blasts of tyrants fierce exceed

The storm that beats the wall. The ruffling noise of strangers rude,

Thou shalt abate with ease,
As in dry plots a shady cloud
Does scorching heat surcease: On tyrants proud thou'lt be aveng'd,
That are so dreadful now;
Their jovial trebles shall be chang'd
And doleful basses low.

SECTION II. His saving Benefits.

Lo! in this mount the Lord of hosts
A banquet shall prepare,
For all that tread on Zion's coasts,
And people ev'ry-where.
He'll with fat things and wines suffice,
Fat things of marrow full,
Wines well refin'd, from off the lees,
To glad and cheer the dull. And in this mount he'll raze the vail,
The face o'er-cov'ring shade,
Of darkness cast o'er people all,
And o'er all nations spread.
He'll swallow up in victory,
Grim death, the king of fears
From faces all the Lord most high
Will wipe away the tears;
What base contempt, and vile reproach,
Were on his people laid,
From off the earth he'll quite dispatch
For so the Lord hath said.

SECTION III. His victorious Salvation. That day shall songs be utter'd thus,

"Behold this is our God;
We stay'd for him, and now he'll us,

With his salvation load: This is the Lord Redeemer kind,
For whom we, long did wait;
We will be glad, with joyful mind,
In his salvation great." For here shall rest our conqu'ring God,
And Moab be o'erthrown;
The gates of hell shall down be trod,
The trump of triumph blow

S. Against A Legal Spirit

Against A Legal Spirit by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The following selection is taken from Erskine's Gospel Sonnets as found in *The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Glasgow: W. Smith and J. Bryce Booksellers, 1778) vol. 10, pp. 82-85. The original title of this section of the Gospel Sonnets appears as follows: "A Caution to all against a legal spirit; especially to those that have a profession without power, and learning without grace." The electronic edition of this text has been newly type set and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. In numerous cases antiquated characters have been replaced and the spelling has been modernized. In some instances sections have been edited for clarity. This particular version therefore is not in the public domain. It may be copied and distributed only for personal or educational use.

Why, says the haughty heart of legalists, Bound to the law of works by nat'ral twists, "Why, such ado about a law divorce;

"Mens lives are bad and would you have 'em worse?

"Such Antinomian stuff, with labor'd toil, "Would human beauty's native lustre spoil.

"What wickedness beneath the cov'ring lurks, "That lewdly would divorce us from all works?

"Why such a stir about the law and grace?

"We know that merit cannot now take place, "And what need more?" Well, to let slander drop, Be merit for a little here the scope.

Ah! many learn to lisp in gospel-terms, Who yet embrace the law with legal arms. By wholesome education some are taught To own that human merit now is naught; Who faintly but renounce proud merit's name, And cleave refin'dly to the Popish scheme. For graceful works expecting divine bliss;

And, when they fail, trust Christ for what's amiss.

Thus to his righteousness profess to flee;

Yet by it still would their own saviors be.

They seem to works of merit bloody foes;

Yet seek salvation, as it were, by those.

Blind Gentiles found, who did not seek nor know; But Isra'l lost it whole, who sought it so.

Let all that love to wear the gospel-dress, Know that as sin, so dastard righteousness Has slain its thousands, who in tow'ring pride The righteousness of Jesus Christ deride; A robe divinely wrought, divinely won, Yet cast by men for rags that are their own. But some to legal works seem

whole deny'd, Yet would by gospel-works be justify'd, By faith, repentance, love, and other such:

These dreamers being righteous overmuch, Like Uzza give the ark a wrongful touch. By legal deeds, however gospeliz'd, Can e'er tremendous justice be appeas'd? Or sinners justify'd before that God, Whose law is perfect and exceeding broad?

Nay, faith itself, that leading gospel-grace, Holds, as a work, no justifying place.

Just Heav'n to man for righteousness imputes Not faith itself, or in its acts or fruits; But Jesus' meritorious life and death, Faith's proper object, all the honour hath. From this doth faith derive its glorious fame, Its great renown and justifying name;

Receiving all things, but deserving nought; By faith all's begg'd and taken, nothing bought. Its highest name is from the wedding-vote, So instrumental in the marriage-knot.

JEHOVAH lends the bride, in that blest hour, Th' exceeding greatness of his mighty pow'r, Which sweetly does her heart-consent command To reach the wealthy Prince her naked hand. For close to his embrace she'd never stir, If first his loving arms embrac'd not her; But this he does by kindly gradual chase, Of rousing, reaching, teaching, drawing grace.

He shews her, in his sweetest love-address, His glory, as the Sun of righteousness; At which all dying glories earth adorn Shrink like the sick moon at the wholesome morn. This glorious Sun arising with a grace, Dark shades of creature-righteousness to chase, Faith now disclaims itself, and all the train Of virtues formerly accounted gain; And counts them dung, with holy, meek disdain. For now appears the height, the depth immense Of divine bounty and benevolence;

Amazing mercy, ignorant of bounds! Which most enlarged faculties confounds.

How vain, how void now seem the vulgar charms, The monarch's pomp of courts, and pride of arms? The boasted beauties of the human kind, The pow'rs of body, and the gifts of mind?

Lo! in the grandeur of IMMANUEL's train, All's swallow'd up, as rivers in the main.

He's seen, when gospel-light and sight is giv'n, Encompass'd round with all the pomp of heav'n. The soul, now taught of God, sees human schools Make Christless Rabbi's only lit'rate fools; And that, till divine teaching pow'rful draw, No learning will divorce them from the law.

Mere argument may clear the head, and force A verbal, not a cordial clean divorce.

Hence many, taught the wholesome terms of art, Have gospel-heads, but still a legal heart.

'Till sov'reign grace and pow'r the sinner catch, He takes not Jesus for his only match, Nay, works compete! Ah! true, however odd.

Dead works are rival with the living God.

'Till Heaven's preventing mercy clear the fight, Confound the pride with supernat'ral light; No haughty soul of human kind is brought To mortify her self-exalting thought.

Yet holiest creatures in clay-tents that lodge, Be but their lives scann'd by the dreadful Judge;

How shall they e'er his awful search endure, Before whose purest eyes heav'n is not pure?

How must their black indictment be enlarg'd, When by him angels are with folly charg'd?

What human worth shall stand, when he shall scan?

O may his glory stain the pride of man.

How wondrous are the tracts of divine grace?

How searchless are his ways, how vast th' abyss?

Let haughty reason stop, and fear to leap;

Angelic plummet cannot sound the deep. With scorn he turns his eyes from haughty kings, With pleasure looks on low and worthless things;

Deep are his judgments, sov'reign is his will, Let ev'ry mortal worm be dumb, be still.

God and his counsels are a gulf profound, An ocean wherein all our thoughts are drown'd. This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com ÿÿÿ

S. An Exhortation to All Apart from Christ

An Exhortation to All Apart from Christ by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The following selection is taken from the sixth chapter of Erskine's Gospel Sonnets as found in *The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Glasgow: W. Smith and J. Bryce Booksellers, 1778) vol. 10, pp. 96-112. The original title of this piece appears as follows: "An Exhortation to all that are out of Christ; in order to their closing the match with him: containing also motives and directions." The electronic edition of this text has been newly type set and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. In numerous cases antiquated characters have been replaced and the spelling has been modernized. In some instances sections have been edited for clarity. This particular version therefore is not in the public domain. It may be copied and distributed only for personal or educational use.

FEATURING :

Section I. Conviction offered to sinners, especially such as are wedded strictly to the law, or self-righteousness, that they may see the need of Christ's righteousness.

Section II. Direction given with reference to the right use of the Means, that we rest not on these instead of Christ, the glorious Husband, in whom our help lies.

Section I. A Call to believe in Jesus Christ, with some hints at the Act and Object of Faith.

*Section IV. An Advice to Sinners to apply to the sovereign Mercy of God, as it is discovered through Christ, to the highest honour of Justice and other divine attributes, in order to futher their Faith in him unto salvation.

*Section V. The terrible Doom of Unbelievers, and Rejecters of Christ, or Despisers of the Gospel.

* These sections are not currently available.

SECTION I.

Conviction offered to sinners, especially such as are wedded strictly to the law, or self-righteousness, that they may see the need of CHRIST'S righteousness.

If never yet thou didst fair Jesus wed,
Nor yield thy heart to be his marriage-bed;
But hitherto are wedded to the law,
Which never could thy chain'd affections draw
From brutish lusts and sordid lovers charms;

Lo! thou art yet in Satan's folded arms.

Hell's pow'r invisible thy soul retains
His captive slave, lock'd up in many chains.

O sinner then, as thou regard'st thy life,
Seek, seek with ardent care and earnest strife
To be the glorious Lamb's betrothed wife.
For base corrivals never let him lose
Thy heart, his bed of conjugal

repose.

Wed Christ alone, and with sever remorse From other mates pursue a clean divorce; For they thy ruin seek by fraud or force. As lurking serpents in the shady bow'rs Conceal their malice under spreading flow'rs; So thy deceitful lusts with cruel spite Hide ghastly danger under gay delight.

Art thou a legal zealot, soft or rude?

Renounce thy nat'ral and acquired good. As base deceitful lusts may work thy smart, So may deceitful frames upon thy heart.

Seeming good motions may in some be found, Much joy in hearing, like the stony ground;

Much sorrow too in praying, as appears In Esau's careful suit with rueful tears.

Touching the law, they blameless may appear, From spurious views most specious virtues bear. Nor merely be devout in mens esteem, But prove to be sincerely what they seem, Friends to the holy law in heart and life, Suers of heav'n with utmost legal strife;

Yet still with innate pride so rankly spic'd, Converted but to duties, not to Christ; That Publicans and harlots heav'n obtain Before a crew so righteous and so vain.

Sooner will those shake off their vicious dress, Than these blind zealots will their righteousness, Who judge they have (which fortifies their pride) The law of God itself upon their side.

Old nature, new brush'd up with legal pains, Such strict attachment to the law retains, No means, no motives can to Jesus draw Vain souls, so doubly wedded to the law. But wouldst the glorious Prince in marriage have, Know that thy nat'ral husband cannot save.

Thy best essays to pay the legal rent Can never, in the least, the law content.

Didst thou in pray'rs employ the morning-light, In tears and groans the watches of the night, Pass thy whole life in close devotion o'er;

'Tis nothing to the law still craving more.

There's no proportion 'twixt its high commands, And puny works from thy polluted hands;

Perfection is the least that it demands.

Wouldst enter into life, then keep the law; But keep it perfectly without a flaw.

It won't have less, nor will abate at last A drop of vengeance for the sin that's past, Tell, sinful mortal, is thy stock so large As duly can defray this double charge?

"Why these are mere impossibles," sayst thou:

"Yea, truly so they are; and therefore now, That down thy legal confidence may fall, The law's black doom home to thy bosom call.

"Lo! I (the divine law,) demand no less "Than perfect, everlasting righteousness;

"But thou hast fail'd, and lost thy strength to DO:

"Therefore I doom thee to eternal wo;

"In prison close to be shut up for ay, "Ere I be baffled with thy partial pay.

"Thou always didst, and dost my precepts break;

"I therefore curse thee to the burning lake.

"In God, the great Lawgiver's glorious name, "I judge thy soul to everlasting shame." No flesh can by the law be justified.

Yet darest thou thy legal duties plead? As Paul appeal'd to Caesar, wilt thou so Unto the law? then to it thou shalt go, And find it doom the to eternal wo.

What! would ye have us plung'd in deep despair?

Amen; yea, God himself would have you there. His will it is that you despair of life, And safety by the law or legal strife; That cleanly thence divorc'd at any rate His fairest Son may have a faithful mate.

'Till this law-sentence pass within your breast, You'll never wed the law-discharging Priest.

You prize not heav'n, till he through hell you draw; Nor love the gospel, till ye know the law.

Know then, the divine law most perfect cares For none of thy imperfect legal wares;

Dooms thee to vengeance for thy sinful state, As well as sinful actions small or great.

If any sin can be accounted small, To hell it dooms thy soul for one and all. For sins of nature, practice, heart, and way, Damnation-rent it summons thee to pay.

Yea, not for sin alone, which is thy shame, But for thy boasted service too, so lame, The law adjudges thee and hell to meet, Because thy righteousness is incomplete. As tow'ring flames burn up the wither'd flags, So will the fiery law thy filthy rags.

SECTION II.

DIRECTION given with reference to the right use of the Means, that we rest not on these instead of CHRIST, the glorious Husband, in whom our help lies.

ADAM, where art thou? Soul, where art thou now?

Oh! art thou saying, Sir, what shall I do?

I dare not use that proud self-raising strain, Go help yourself, and God will help you then.

Nay, rather know, O Israel, that thou hast Destroy'd thy self, and canst not in the least From sin nor wrath thyself the captive free.

Thy help, says Jesus, only lies in me.

Heav'n's oracles direct to him alone, Full help is laid upon thy mighty One. In him, in him complete salvation dwells;

He's God the helper, and there is none else.

Fig-leaves won't hide thee from the fiery show'r, 'Tis he alone that saves by price and pow'r.

Must we do nothing then, will mockers say, But rest in sloth till Heav'n the help convey?

Pray, stop a little sinner; don't abuse God's awful word, that charges thee to use Means, ordinances, which he's pleas'd to place, As precious channels of his pow'ful grace.

Restless improve all these, until from heav'n The whole salvation needful thus be giv'n.

Wait in his path according to his call, On him whose pow'r alone effecteth all.

Would'st thou him wed? in duties wait, I say; But marry not thy duties by the way.

Thou'lt wofully come short of saving grace, If duties only be thy resting place.

Nay, go a little further through them all, To him whose office is to save from thrall, Thus in a gospel-manner hopeful wait, Striving to enter by the narrow gate; So strait and narrow, that it won't admit The bunch upon thy back to enter it. Not only bulky lusts may cease to press, But ev'n the bunch of boasted righteousness.

Many, as in the sacred page we see, Shall strive to enter, but unable be:

Because, mistaking this new way of life, The push a legal, not a gospel-strife: As if their duties did JEHOVAH bind, Because 'tis written, Seek, and ye shall find Perverted scripture does their error fence, They read the letter, but neglect the sense.

While to the word no gospel-gloss they give; Their seek and find's the same with do and live.

Hence would they a connection native place Between their moral pains, and saving grace: Their nat'ral poor essays the judge won't miss, In justice, to infer eternal bliss.

Thus commentaries on the word they make, Which to their ruin are a grand mistake:

For, through the legal bias in their breast, They scripture to their own destruction wrest.

Why, if we seek, we get, they gather hence; Which is not truth, save in the scripture-sense.

There Jesus deals with friends, and elsewhere faith, These seekers only speed that ask in faith. The prayer of the wicked is abhor'd, As an abomination to the Lord. Their suits are sins, but their neglects no less, Which can't their guilt diminish, but increase. They ought, like beggars, lie in grace's way;

Hence, Peter taught the sorcerer to pray; For though mere nat'ral mens address or pray'rs Can no acceptance gain as work of theirs, Nor have, as their performance, any sway;

Yet as a divine ordinance they may. But spotless truth has bound itself to grant The suit of none but the believing saint. In Jesus persons once accepted, do Acceptance find in him for duties too. For he, whose Son, they do in marriage take, Is bound to hear them for their Husband's sake. But let no Christless soul, at prayer appear, As if JEHOVAH were oblig'd to hear: But sue the means, because a sov'reign God May come with alms in this his wonted road.

He wills theeto frequent kind wisdom's gate, To read, hear, meditate, to pray and wait;

Thy Spirit then be on these duties bent, As gospel means, but not as legal rent, From these don't thy salvation hope nor claim, But from JEHOVAH in the use of them. The beggar's spirit never was so dull, While waiting at the gate call'd Beautiful, To hope for succor from the temple-gate, At which he daily did so careful wait: But from the rich and charitable fort, Who to the temple daily made resort.

Means, ordinances, are the comely gate, At which kind heav'n has bid us constant wait: Not that from these we have our alms, but from The lib'ral God, who ther is wont to come.

If either we these means shall dare neglect; Or yet from these th' enriching bliss expect, We from the glory of the King defalk; Who in the galleries is won't to walk;

We move not regular in duties road, But base, invert them to an idol-god.

SECTION III. A CALL to believe in JESUS CHRIST, with some hints at the Act and Object of Faith. In this new cov'nant judge not faith to hold The room of perfect doing in the old.

Faith is not giv'n to be the fed'ral price Of other blessings, or of paradise: But Heav'n by giving this, strikes out a door At which is carry'd in still more and more. No sinner must upon his faith lay stress, As if it were a perfect righteousness.

God ne'er assign'd unto it such a peace;

'Tis but at best a bankrupt begging grace. Its object makes its fame to fly abroad, So clse it grips the righteousness of God; Which righteousness receiv'd, is, without strife, The true condition of eternal life. But still, say you, pow'r to believe I miss.

You may; but know you what believing is?

Faith lies not in your building up a tow'r Of some great action by your proper pow'r. For Heav'n well knows, that by the killing fall No pow'r, no will remains in man at all For acts divinely good; 'till sov'reign grace By pow'rful drawing virtue turn the chase.

Hence none believe in Jesus, as they ought, 'Till once they do believe they can do nought, Nore are sufficient e'en to form a thought. This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com ÿÿÿ

S. Arminian Doctrine Exposed

Arminian Doctrine Exposed by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) The following selections have been taken from The Beauties of Erskine, with additional supplements from the original source material as found in The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine (vol. 10, 1778). The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. It may be freely copied and distributed.

Arminian doctrine, which aboundeth in our day, makes the efficacy of the gospel depend upon man's free will; but we have not so learned Christ; he hath made surer work, and all the efficacy to depend upon his free grace. The Father's promise to the Son secures it; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

Let Arminians maintain at their peril their universal redemption, but we must maintain at our peril the universal offer. The Arminian doctrine is to be rejected as robbing Christ of the glory of his free grace, in electing from eternity, and effectually calling in time, ascribing so much to man's free will. No wonder Paul the legal spirit curse, Of fatal errors such a feeding nurse.

He, in JEHOVAH's great tremendous name, Condemns perverters of the gospel-scheme.

He damn'd the sophist rude, the babbling priest Would venture to corrupt it in the least;

Yea, curst the heav'nly angel down to hell, That daring would another gospel tell. Which crime is charg'd on these that dare dispense The self-same gospel in another sense.

Christ is not preach'd in truth, but in disguise, If his bright glory half absconded lies. When gospel-soldiers, that divide the word, Scarce brandish any but the legal sword.

While Christ the author of the law they press, More than the end of it for righteousness;

Christ as a seeker of our service trace, More than a giver of enabling grace. The king commanding holiness they show, More than the Prince exalted to bestow;

Yea, more on Christ the sin-revenger dwell, Than Christ Redeemer both from sin and hell. With legal spade the gospel-field he delves, Who thus drives sinners in unto themselves;

Halving the truth that should be all reveal'd, The sweetest part of Christ is oft conceal'd.

We bid men turn from sin, but seldom say, Behold the Lamb that takes all sin away!

Christ, by the gospel rightly understood, Not only treats a peace but makes it good.

Those suitors therefore of the bride, who hope By force to drag her with the legal rope, Nor use the drawing cord of conqu'ring grace, Pursue with flaming zeal a fruitless chase; In vain lame doings urge, with solemn awe, To bribe the fury of the fiery law: With equal success to the fool that aims By paper walls to bound devouring flames. The law's but mock'd by their most graceful deed, That wed not first the law-fulfilling Head;

It values neither how they wrought nor wept, That flight the ark wherein alone 'tis kept.

Yet legalists, DO, DO, with ardour press, And with prepost'rous zeal and warm address, Would seem the greatest friends to holiness: But vainly (could such opposites accord) Respect the law, and yet reject the Lord.

They shew not Jesus as the way to bliss, But Judas-like betray him with a kiss Of boasted works, or mere profession puft, Law-boasters proving but law-breakers oft. From A Legal Strain of Doctrine, found in Erskine's Gospel Sonnets The more proud nature bears a legal sway, The more should preachers bend the gospel-way:

Oft in the church arise destructive schisms From anti-evangelic aphorisms; A legal spirit may be justly nam'd The fertile womb of ev'ry error damn'd.

Hence dare Arminians too, with brazen face, Give man's free-will the throne of God's free grace; Whose self-exalting tenets clearly shew

Great ignorance of law and gospel too.

From: A Legal Spirit the Root of Damnable Errors, found in Erskine's Gospel Sonnets

The following is a specimen of the Arminian's Address to Sinners, and the Answer to it: The Arminian's Address

Arise, ye dead, Arminius cries, Arise, ye dead in sin;

Unstop your ears, unclose your eyes, And a new life begin.

Why will ye die, ye wretched souls?

Ye dead, why will ye die?

Quicken and make your spirits whole, To life eternal fly.

The Answer Deluded seer! but man will lie Still senseless as a stone! And you yourself stand fooling by, Till both are quite undone:

Unless Almighty power be moved By God's free will, not thine, To quicken both and make his love On both your hearts to shine. From "The Beauties of Erskine" (1745). This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com ÿÿ

S. Benefits Accruing to Believers from the Offices, Names, Natures, and Sufferings of Christ

Benefits Accruing to Believers from the Offices, Names, Natures, and Sufferings of Christ

By Ralph Erskine "Thy Maker is thy Husband."—Isaiah 54:5

Art thou by lusts a captive led,

Which breeds thy deepest grief?

To ransom captives is his trade,

Thy husband's thy relief. His precious name is JESUS, why?

Because he saves from sin;

Redemption's right he won't deny,

Thy husband's near of kin. His wounds have sav'd thee once from woes,

His blood from vengeance screen'd;

When heav'n, and earth, and hell were foes,

Thy husband was a friend. And will thy captain now look on,

And see thee trampled down?

When, lo! thy champion has the throne,

Thy husband wears the crown.

Yield not, though cunning Satan bribe,

Or like a lion roar;

The Lion strong of Judah's tribe,

Thy husband's to the fore. And that he never will forsake,

His credit fair he pawn'd ;

In hottest broils, then, courage take,

Thy husband's at thy hand. No storm needs drive thee to a strait,

Who dost his aid invoke:

Fierce winds may blow, proud waves may beat;

Thy husband is the rock.

Renounce thine own ability,
Lean to his promis'd might;
The strength of Isra'l cannot lie,
Thy husband's pow'r is plight. An awful truth does here present,
Whoever think it odd;
In him thou art omnipotent,
Thy husband is a God.
JEHOVAH'S strength is in thy head,
Which faith may boldly scan;
God in thy nature does reside,
Thy husband is a man.
Thy flesh is his, his spirit thine;
And that you both are one,
One body, spirit, temple, vine,
Thy husband deigns to own.
Kind, he assum'd thy flesh and blood
This union to pursue;
And without shame his brotherhood
Thy husband does avow.
He bore the cross thy crown to win,
His blood he freely spilt;
The holy One assuming sin,
Thy husband bore the guilt.
Lo! what a bless'd exchange is this?
What wisdom shines therein?
That thou might'st be made righteousness,
Thy husband was made sin. The God of joy a man of grief,
Thy sorrows to discuss;
Pure Innocence hang'd as a thief:

Thy husband lov'd thee thus.
Bright beauty had his visage marr'd,
His comely form abus'd :
True rest was from all rest debarr'd,
Thy husband's heel was bruis'd. The God of blessings was a curse,
The Lord of Lords a drudge;
The heir of all things poor in purse
Thy husband did not grudge. The Judge of all condemned was
The God immortal slain:
No favour in the woful cause
Thy husband did obtain.

S. Christ Suitable for All Christians' Needs

Christ Suitable for All Christians' Needs by Ralph Erskine

Let all believers learn to lay all things they need over against the all things that Christ hath; when you think on your guiltiness, look to Christ's righteousness, and lay this over against that; when you apprehend your weakness, then apprehend Christ's strength, and lay this over against that; when you consider your emptiness, consider Christ's fulness, and lay this over against that. Study Christ and your condition together; for, if you study your condition without studying Christ, then you will be full of despair and discouragement; and if you study Christ, without studying your condition, then you will be filled with pride and presumption. If you be ignorant, think upon Christ as a Prophet; if guilty, now think upon Christ as a Priest; if enslaved, now study him as a King; Christ hath titles suited to your condition; therefore lay his titles and your condition together. It is remarkable that all the epistles to the seven churches of Asia begin with some title of Christ suited to the condition of that church; for example, his title to the church of Smyrna, Revelation 2:8, is, "The first and the last, that was dead and is alive;" why so? Because they were to suffer hard things, and were called to be faithful unto death, and so on; he shews that he hath titles suited to every case. Thus, set you his names and titles that suit your condition, just over against it, and assure Yourselves that Christ will make good his titles that he is clothed with; if the title be, "The Lord is my shepherd," then I may assure myself, "I shall not want," Psalms 23:1. Thus do you; when you find distress among the saints, then remember his title, "The King of Saints;" when there is a disorder among the nations, remember his title, "The King of nations;" when you find darkness overspreading your souls, remember his title, "I am the Light of the world;" when you find death and deadness taking place, remember his title, "I am the resurrection and the life;" when you are reproached, troubled, and oppressed, remember his title that he is a "Refuge in time of trouble, a present help." Know that as Christ and the promise is yours, in the gospel-offer and publication, to be believed in, and rested upon; so, Christ is so far yours in possession, as you through grace improve him, and rest upon him; and the promise is so far yours in possession, as you improve it, and rest upon it. Thus you may be possessed of all things.

Again, hence learn how groundless the complaints of believers are when they complain of things they lack. Whatever you lack, yet still look to him, and you will see you lack nothing. Do you say, Alas! I lack such and such a near relation? Why, do you complain as long as you have such a relation as Christ living? Will you say, I miss a dear child? Is he not better to you than ten children? Do you want a father as long as your everlasting Father remains? Yea, here is comfort enough even in the case of parting with all things in the world; you may say joyfully, Farewell passing shadows and empty nothings, and welcome Jesus who hath all things that the Father hath, and who invites me to the everlasting enjoyment thereof. Let no extreme difficulty discourage you, and make you think, Oh! it is impossible relief can now come; What? Are not all things possible to him that hath all things in his hand? Yea, "All things are possible to him that believeth;" and it is possible for you to do all things through Christ strengthening you, even to overleap the highest walls, to break bows of steel in pieces, and wade through the deepest fords in your way. "What

ailed thee, O sea! that thou fleddest? and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Tremble thou earth at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob."

O believer! Let him that hath all things the Father hath be all things to you; let him be the all of your knowledge, saying with Paul, "I desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified;" what, Paul, was you not acquaint with the heathen poets, and all the learning of your age? True; but I count all dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; in knowing him I know all things. Let Christ be the all of your desire, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee, Psalms 73:25. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple," Psalms 27:4. This is my salvation and all my desire. Let him be the all of your love and delight; let him be the all of your esteem, the all of your joy, the all of your glory, the all of your life, and the all of your trust and confidence.

S. Christ the Believer's Adorning Garment

Christ the Believer's Adorning Garment

By Ralph Erskine "Thy Maker is thy Husband."—Isaiah 54:5

Yea, thou excell'st in rich attire

The lamp that lights the globe

Thy sparkling garment heav'ns admire,

Thy husband is thy robe.

This raiment never waxes old,

'Tis always new and clean:

From summer-heat and winter-cold,

Thy husband can thee screen.

All who the name of worthies bore,

Since Adam was undrest,

No worth acquir'd, but as they wore

Thy husband's purple vest.

This linen fine can beautify

The soul with sin begirt.

O bless his name, that e'er on thee

Thy husband spread his skirt.

Are dunghills decked with flow'ry glore,

Which Solomon's outvie: :

Sure thine is infinitely more,

Thy husband decks the sky.

Thy hands could never work the dress,

By grace alone thou'rt gay.

Grace vents and reigns through righteousness,

Thy husband's bright array.

To spin thy robe no more dost need

Than lilies toil for theirs;

Out of his bowels ev'ry thread

Thy husband thine prepares

S. Christ the Believer's Sweet Nourishment.

Christ the Believer's Sweet Nourishment.

By Ralph Erskine "Thy Maker is thy Husband."—Isaiah 54:5

Thy food conform to thine array,
Is heavenly and divine;
On pastures green, where angels play,
Thy husband feeds thee fine.
Angelic food may make thee fair
And look with cheerful face;
The bread of life, the double share,
Thy husband's love and grace.
What can he give, or thou desire,
More than his flesh and blood?
Let angels wonder, saints admire,
Thy husband is thy food.
His flesh the incarnation bears,
From whence thy feeding flows;
His blood the satisfaction clears,
Thy husband doth bestows.
Th' incarnate God a sacrifice,
To turn the wrathful tide,
Is food for faith; that way suffice
Thy husband's guilty bride.
This strength'ning food may fit and fence
For work and war to come;
Till through the crowd, some moments hence,
Thy husband bring thee home:

Where plenteous feasting will succeed

To scanty feeding here;

And joyful at the table-head

Thy husband will appear.

Then crumbs to banquets will give place,

And drops to rivers new:

While heart and eye will face to face

Thy husband ever view

S. Christ's Treasures Opened by Himself

Christ's Treasures Opened by Himself, Declaring He Hath All Things that God the Father Hath by Ralph Erskine "All things that the Father hath are mine."— John 16:15. The glorious excellency, fullness, and all-sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ is inexpressibly great; none can speak of it so well as himself; and indeed he himself is the preacher here; and as here we have his word, so, if his Spirit accompany it, we may, in this glass, see his matchless glory; for here it is so wonderfully described, that neither the tongues of men nor angels can tell so much of his glorious fulness and furniture, in so few words, "All things that the Father hath are mine." Our Lord fairly warns his disciples of what crosses they were to meet with in this world, John 16:2, "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service." But, at the same time, he assures them of what comforts he would afford them; and, as it was usual for the Old Testament prophets, to comfort the church in her adversity with the promise of the Messiah, Isaiah 9:6, Micah 5:5, so, the Messiah being come, he comforts his people with the promise of the Spirit, the Comforter; and this is the great New Testament promise.

Christ promises the Spirit here, from verse 5, as a fruit of his ascension, saying, "If I go, I will send him;" and that because the sending of the Spirit was to be not only the fruit of his purchase on earth, but the answer of his prayers in heaven, and of his intercession within the veil, John 14:16. The gift of the Spirit must be paid for, and prayed for, that we might highly value this privilege.

We are told, from John 14:8 and downward, what a great benefit the coming of the Spirit should be to a blind world; "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment," &c. Next, what a great benefit his coming would be to the disciples themselves, from John 14:13. "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth," &c.

Again, the great work of the Spirit is summed up, John 14:14. "He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and show it unto you." This I have spoken to formerly. And now this text comes in as a reason of the former; that is to say, Would you have a reason why the Spirit, when he comes, shall glorify me, by taking of mine and showing it to you? Even because, "All things that the Father hath are mine: Therefore said I unto you, that he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you:" he being the Spirit of the Father as well as the Spirit of the Son, when he comes to glorify me, he comes to glorify the Father in me; and by showing things of mine, which are not different from, but the same with the things of the Father; his showing of mine will show what a glorious One I am, because "All things that the Father hath are mine." Our Lord Jesus never speaks of his being glorified alone, without the Father's being glorified in him: nor of his own glory abstract from the Father's glory: see this in his entry upon his suffering work; "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him," John 13:31. See it in his entry upon his intercessory work on earth; "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee," John 17:1. And see it here in his declaring what should be the work of the Spirit in his name after his exaltation: "He shall glorify me by taking of mine and showing it to you." But will the glorifying of the Father be here neglected? No, no: by showing my glory, he will show the Father's glory; and by showing my things, he will show the Father's; for "All

things that the Father hath are mine;" and these things the Spirit shall show or make them known to you; that is, he shall so declare and evidence them to you and in you, that you shall understand and have experience of them in yourselves; and that both by revelation, instructing you in them; and by communication, imparting them to you.

It is the reason here given by our Lord Jesus, that I especially speak of at present; "All things that the Father hath are mine." Here is the vast extent of the things of Christ which are to be shewed to believers by the Spirit; they are all the things that the Father hath: they are mine, says Christ. Now, these things may be taken, either absolutely, respecting the person of the Father and the person of the Son: or restrictively, respecting the office of Christ, as Mediator betwixt God and man.

1. Viewing it absolutely; all things that the Father hath are his, even the whole entire divine nature, by having his personality from the Father, and that by an eternal, necessary, and ineffable generation: all the things of the Father must needs be his; for "He and his Father are one." In this sense Christ could say, All things that the Father hath are mine; even all the essential properties of the Godhead; there is no difference between his things and mine; his nature and essence are mine, only our personal properties are distinct: he is the first, and I am the second person of the glorious Trinity, according to the order of the subsistence of the three-one God: he is my eternal Father, and I am his eternal Son by ineffable generation. But the all things here spoken of seem not to be in this absolute sense, they are not the all things of the divine nature which he had by eternal generation. Therefore,

2. We are to view it in a more restricted sense respecting the office of Christ as Mediator. All things that the Father had in his heart and purpose from eternity, to reveal and dispense in time by voluntary donation are mine, according to these scriptures, Matthew 11:27. "All things are delivered to me of my Father," Luke 10:22, John 3:35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. John 13:3. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, took a towel and girded himself to wash his disciples' feet." ALL THINGS; that is, all the effects of the Father's love, grace, and will, whatever he had purposed in himself from eternity, and whatever his infinite power and goodness would produce in the pursuit thereof, were all given and committed to Christ: thus "All things that the Father hath are mine." The order of operation in the Holy Trinity, with reference to our salvation, is according to the order of the subsistence of the distinct persons of the Deity: and hence you have here, 1. The things to be declared to us, and bestowed upon us, they are originally the Father's things; he is the peculiar fountain of them all; his love, wisdom, grace, goodness, counsel, and will, is their supreme cause and spring; therefore here called the things that the Father hath. 2. They are the things of the Son: They are mine, says Christ, as Mediator; they are given to me and unto my disposal, on account of my mediation; by which they are prepared for us, and given out unto us to the glory of God. 3. They are actually communicated to us by the Holy Spirit; "Therefore, said I, he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." He does not communicate them immediately to us from the Father. We cannot deal, nor have to do with the person of the Father immediately; it is by the Son alone we have access to him, and by the Son alone he gives out of his grace and bounty to us: it is with Christ, as the great Treasurer of heavenly things, that all grace and mercy are entrusted. The Holy Spirit therefore shows them unto us, not first as the Father's things, but as they are the fruits of Christ's mediation; and thereby as the effect of the Father's love and bounty.

Here, then, is the honey we are to eat this day, as you read, Song of Solomon 5:1. "I am come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have eaten my honey comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." This honey is presented here according to the order of the subsistence of the three distinct persons of the Deity.

1. As honey in the flower, which is at such distance from us we could never extract it, namely, "All things that the Father hath." 2. Honey in the comb, prepared for us, in our EMMANUEL, God-man, Redeemer, the Word that was made flesh, saying, "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and mine for your use and behalf: for, 3. Here is honey in the mouth; the Spirit taking all and making application thereof, by showing them to us, and making us to eat and drink with Christ, and share of these all things; yea, not only eat the honey but the honeycomb with the honey; not only his benefits, but himself; his person with his benefits; himself and all things that the Father hath entrusted him with; here is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house: here is the steward saying, "All is mine to give out to you by the hand of my Spirit." The subject here spoken of is no less than all things that relate to our eternal salvation, and these are spoken of, 1. In respect of their origination; they are the Father's things. 2. Their donation to Christ, as Mediator, they are mine. 3. Their communication, they are actually communicated to us by the Holy Ghost. From the first part of this verse, we lay down the following doctrinal proposition.

OBSERVE. Such is the matchless glory of Christ, in his mediatorial fulness and furniture, that he can say, "All things that the Father hath are mine."

He, as Mediator, is possessed of all things that the Father hath for the benefit of sinners; and this is the reason why the Spirit, taking the things of Christ and showing them to us doth glorify Christ; because all the glorious things of the Father are things of Christ, they are mine, &c. How could the Spirit's revelation and communication of the things of Christ make his matchless glory to appear, if they were not the things of God? Or thus, Christ our Redeemer is entrusted with all things the Father hath for the benefit of sinners.

If these things were only the Father's and not the things of Christ, we could have no access to them, no share of them; we could never see them in the Father's bosom; for, "No man hath seen God at any time," though all things that relate to our eternal life are originally there; but the only begotten Son, that lay in the Father's bosom, he came out thence, laden with all the good, and great, and glorious things that were hidden there from eternity, and he hath declared him, and declared that all things that the Father hath there are his. In the prosecution of this subject, I would inquire, through divine assistance, into the following things:—

- I. What right and title Christ hath to all things that the Father hath.
 - II. Point out some of these all things that the Father hath which are his.
 - III. Inquire how, and in what sense they are his.
 - IV. Show for what reason it is so ordered; or, the beauty of this dispensation, that all things the Father hath are his.
 - V. Make application of the whole subject.
- I. The first thing proposed is, To show what right and title Christ hath to all things that the Father hath. And, in short,

1st, He hath a natural right to all things that the Father hath and that as he is God, one God with the Father and Holy Ghost in which sense he said, "I and my Father are one." And thus he hath the same essential right and title to all things with the Father, in regard of the unity of the essence among the glorious Three, and their equality in power and glory; "The Lord our God is one Lord."

2dly, He hath a mediatorial right and title to all things; and this may be considered under these following properties.

1. As Mediator he hath a federal right to all things; "I have made a covenant with my Chosen, my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him," Psalms 89:3, Psalms 89:24. It is said in verses Psalms 89:4 and Psalms 89:11, "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine;" intimating, that he hath a federal right to all things by covenant with his Father.

2. As Mediator he hath a donative right and title to all the things the Father hath: hence, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," John 3:35. And hence, says Christ, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me," Matthew 28:18.

3. As Mediator he hath an acquire right, by his own purchase of the things the Father hath to give out to the children of men; by his death upon the cross, he hath merited and obtained a name above every name, and being head over all things to the church.

4. As Mediator, he hath a bellipotent right, by conquest, having destroyed principalities and powers, and overcoming them that make war with him, Revelation 17:14. "He is able to subdue all things to himself," Php 3:21. And accordingly, all things are put in subjection under his feet, Hebrews 2:8. And he subdues his people to himself, and makes them willing in the day of his power, Psalms 110:3.

5. To these may be added, that he hath an hereditary right, being the heir of all things. It is said, Psalms 89:27. "I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth." And Colossians 1:18, he is called the first born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

6. He hath a right by the Father's consent. "It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell."

We find Christ, as Mediator, hath his title to all things that the Father hath secured and confirmed with a special solemnity. It is confirmed by a solemn election: "Behold, my servant whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isaiah 42:1. By a solemn vocation and formal call I have called thee, and given thee to be a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles, &c., Isaiah 42:6. By a solemn commission under the Father's broad seal; "Him hath God the Father sealed," John 6:24. Sealed to be all the things that the Father hath to bestow upon poor sinners. It is confirmed with the solemnity of a promise, Psalms 77:8-10. That his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth, &c. Also, with the solemnity of an oath, Psalms 89:35-37. "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David," &c. But not to enlarge.

II. The second thing proposed was, To point out some of these all things that the Father hath which are his. To speak of all things which the Father hath, that are entrusted to Christ is impossible but I mention a few.

1. All the perfections of the Father are his. There is nothing that the Father hath except his personality, or priority of order in subsistence, but the Son as Mediator hath; yea, he not only hath, but he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, 1 Corinthians 1:24. Here is wisdom for poor witless creatures who know nothing. Here is power for the impotent that can do nothing. He that saith. "All things that the Father hath are mine, he says, upon the matter, His wisdom is mine for your behalf; his power is mine, and all his other perfections. He that is the essential image is the representative image of God; the image of the invisible God, in whom are made visible or evident to our faith, all the invisible attributes of God. See the holiness of God, in this holy one of God, who is made of God to us sanctification; and who magnifies the holiness of God in the precept of the law, by fulfilling all righteousness. See the justice of God in Jesus Christ the righteous, who is made of God to us righteousness; and who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him: and so the guilty sinner may become more righteous in God's sight than ever he was guilty in his sight; and not only justified by his blood and righteousness, but may find and see God to be just in justifying through him, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, whereby justice is satisfied fully, and glorified highly. But, of some other perfections, more afterwards may be mentioned.

2. All the glory that the Father hath is his: yea, the glory of all his Father's perfections is to be seen in him. For, "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Hebrews 1:3. And hence, the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, is said to shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not only the light of the knowledge of God, but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God: where is it? Even in the face, or person of Jesus Christ.

3. All the fulness that the Father hath is his. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Colossians 1:19, Colossians 2:9. O! upon what solid footing does he say, "All things that the Father hath are mine," when all the Father's fulness is in him, and dwells in him? And, O! should not all poor souls look to and rely upon him, and out of his fulness receive grace for grace? O may we come and dwell where fulness dwelleth!

4. All the promises that the Father hath in his covenant are his; they are made to him first, and to us in him, in whom the covenant stands fast; "All the promises of God are in him, Yea, and Amen, to the glory of God," 2 Corinthians 1:20. As the promises of God are all affirmed by his word, and confirmed by his blood, so he is trusted with the donation and application of the promises: hence he is the Author and Finisher of that faith whereby we see Christ in the promise, and the promise in Christ.

5. All the grace and mercy that the Father hath in store for sinners are his; "Grace is poured into his lips," Psalms 45:2. And this is a notable part of the glory of God that is to be seen in him; "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace," John 1:14. There is such fulness and sufficiency of grace in him for us, that we need no more but this saying, "My grace is sufficient for you." The spirit of all grace is in him above measure; he is anointed with this oil, that he may pour it upon us. And as he hath grace for the graceless; so, he hath mercy for the miserable; as all the grace, so all the mercy of God is his. My mercy shall be with him, Psalms 89:24. Mercy goes forth through his blood, even as grace

is said to reign through his righteousness. God sent his law to Christ for obedience, and justice to Christ for satisfaction, that mercy might go forth, and grace might reign through his righteousness to eternal life.

6. All the truth and faithfulness of God the Father is his. "My faithfulness (as well as mercy) shall be with him," Psalms 89:24. "This of truth is added with grace," John 1:14. "Full of grace and truth." O what is Christ but just the love and faithfulness of God! The mercy and truth of God met together, and wrapt up in a garment of flesh and blood! I have observed in a former discourse, between thirty and forty places of scripture, where the mercy and truth of God, or his loving kindness are joined together. It was the work of mercy to make the promise; and it is the work of truth to make out the promise; therefore, O believer, when you have nothing to plead or prevail with a promising God for your succour or supply, remember there are two orators in his bosom that will effectually intercede for your relief; and these are his mercy and truth in Jesus Christ: "God is not man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent: heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away." Nothing did ever God say in his word but what he hath and will accomplish. He said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," Genesis 3:15; and he hath made it good, by Christ's coming in the flesh, and suffering in the flesh. God said to Abraham, he should have a son by Sarah; though the womb be dead, yet the promise lives: Isaac, the child of the promise, must come from this dead womb, to show that God is a faithful God. God said to Moses, that he should lead Israel out of Egypt; and therefore, notwithstanding of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and power of his opposition, yet God, by many miracles, made good his word. O sirs, he hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins: and the girdle being round about him, we may hold by this girdle, even when he turns his back, and hides himself in the darkest providences: "His mercy endureth for ever, and his truth faileth never." Man's mercy soon turns to cruelty, and his truth to falsehood; but the mercy and truth of God have met together in Christ: and when you can find no mercy nor truth in man, you may look and see all the mercy and truth of God in Christ, and rest there; for he says, "All things that the Father hath are mine."

7. All the works that the Father hath done are his; the work of creation, providence, and redemption. God's creation work was his; "All things were made by him; and without him was nothing made that was made," John 1:3. God's works of providence are all his; for, "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power, Hebrews 1:3. He is the Governor among the nations; and all the reins of providence are in his hand. God's work of redemption is his: the work of redemption by price was his; and he hath finished this work which the Father gave him to do: the work of redemption by power is his; and he will never rest till he hath finished that also; and for this end he promises the Spirit here to glorify him, by showing all the things that are his; and for this end all the influences of the Spirit of God are his. And we may say, all the winds of heaven are his: these are what his people seek to blow upon them; "Awake, O North wind, come thou south;" these are what he promises in the coming of the Comforter: "I will send him to you," Ezekiel 37:9. "Thus saith the Lord, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breath upon these slain that they may live;" O say, "Amen, Even so, come Lord Jesus;" come quickly in the power of thy Spirit. In a word, all his Father's works are his; therefore he says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," John 5:17.

8. All the authority that the Father hath is his, and he is entrusted with it as Mediator; therefore says God the Father, "My name is in him." and, he hath given him authority to execute judgment,

because he is the Son of man, John 5:27, yea, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; him hath God the Father sealed," and authorised to be both the Saviour and the Judge.

9. All the elect that the Father hath are his "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John 17:6. They were thine by election; and thou gavest them to be redeemed by me. They were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4. These are called his seed, Isaiah 53:10, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

10. Hence all the blessings that the Father hath to give out are his; he is constitute the Dispenser thereof; for, God hath set him to be blessings, as the word may be read, Psalms 21:6, "Thou hast made him to be most blessed for ever." Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever, to be the Dispenser of eternal blessings. It was promised, "Men shall be blessed in him," Psalms 72:17, and accordingly he is sent to bless us, Acts 3:26, "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquity." It is in him that God blesses us with all spiritual blessings; with the blessings of pardon, peace, and reconciliation with God; with the blessings of justification, sanctification, and consolation; with the blessings of grace and glory, and every good thing. Would you have God's blessing? You must have it out of Christ's hand; for the Father's blessing, and all the things that the Father hath are mine, says Christ; they are mine to dispense, and they would never have been yours, if they had not been mine. In a word, all things that the Father hath in his mind and council from eternity, and that lay hid in his everlasting bosom, they are mine to reveal to you; for, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." All things that the Father hath in his heart, and bowels of compassion to the children of men, they are mine to manifest; and I am come to speak out of his heart, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." All things that the Father hath in his thoughts that are an infinite depth, they are mine to put in words; though as the heavens are higher than the earth, so his thoughts are higher than our thoughts, yet behold they are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. All things that the Father hath in his sovereign will to be done for sinners, they are mine to do; and therefore, in the volume of his book it is written of me, "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God." O infinitely glorious Christ, that could say, "All things that the Father hath are mine," therefore shall the Spirit glorify me!

III. The third thing proposed was, To shew how and in what manner all things that the Father hath are his; I have already, upon the first head, relating to his right and title to all things that the Father hath shewed you, that all things are his naturally, as he is God; and donatively, or economically, as he is Mediator. I add, in a few words, these following particulars.

1. All things that the Father hath are his substantially, not symbolically, as Christ is said to be in the elements of bread and wine in the sacramental supper; or as God was said to be in the temple by the symbols of his presence; no, it is not symbolically, but substantially; it is not the shadow but the substance of all things the Father hath that are his; therefore it is said, Colossians 2:9, that "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" that is, substantially; and so in a glorious, eminent, superlative, and transcendent way. Christ is the substance of all the types, sacrifices, and

ceremonies under the law. They were but the shadow of good things to come, Hebrews 10:1. All the good things themselves are in Christ substantially.

2. All things that the Father hath are his communicatively. The Mediator's fulness is communicable to us. As they are the Father's things we have no immediate access to them; but as they are lodged in the hand of Christ, whom the Father hath made the Dispenser, we have access to him immediately. Christ hath opened the door of his Father's storehouse, and comes out with all things in his hand that the Father hath; and, indeed, all other shops are closed, if we may be allowed the expression, but Christ's shop stands open; and upon the door head is written this inscription, "Whosoever will, let him come, and share of all things that the Father hath, for they are mine." Christ's fulness, which is the fulness of God, is communicative; therefore, "Out of his fulness we may all receive," John 1:16. We needed not preach of this great store, if it were locked up in him; nay, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, that we may be complete in him," Colossians 2:10. Christ is a cabinet of rich and rare jewels, that can enrich you, sirs, to eternity. There are two keys that use to open this cabinet; faith is a key, for, out of his fulness we receive by faith; prayer is another key; "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." If these keys be not in your hand just now, yet surely they are in his hand, who says, "All things are mine." O sirs, beseech him to throw you the keys, and give you the Spirit of faith and prayer.

3. All things that the Father hath are his sufficiently; even bread enough and to spare, Luke 15:17. Fulness enough for the destitute; light enough for the dark; life enough for the dead; pardon in abundance for guilty sinners; and plenty of all things for poor and needy souls; bread enough to spare. If you think there is none to spare for you, it is because you do not believe there is enough in him; nor believe that all things that the Father hath are his. But, O let us not thus, by unbelief, disgrace our infinitely noble and glorious Lord, by supposing there is not enough in him! Philip said once to Christ, John 14:8, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" q.d., surely there is such a sufficiency in God the Father, that, if he be shewn to us, we will have what is enough to give full satisfaction to all the insatiable desires of the immortal soul; therefore, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Well, what is Christ doing here this day among us, but shewing us the Father and all his treasures in himself; in whom alone are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and in whom alone they can be seen; and by whom alone they can be opened up to us, which he is doing, by saying, "All things that the Father hath are mine?" O then, sirs, there is enough in him; and how easily can he satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things? Nothing else in this world can give satisfaction to the soul; he was a fool that said, when he had a full barn, "Soul, take thy rest;" we may as well dream of a coffer full of grace and glory, as a soul full of corn and wine. It is only Christ that hath suitable and satisfying fulness for the soul, enough to give complete, solid, permanent, and everlasting satisfaction.

4. All things that the Father hath are his efficiently, or effectively, so as to make us take and share of that store; he can make us comely, through his comeliness; righteous, through his righteousness; and glorious, through his glory; "I have made thee perfect through my comeliness which I have put upon thee," Ezekiel 16:14. He imputeth righteousness without works, Romans 4:6 "All we, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Corinthians 3:18. There is a power and efficacy in every saving uncovering of this glorious treasure; it enriches all that behold it; and completely satisfies all that have a title unto it, and an interest in it.

5. All things that the Father hath are his unchangeably; for, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Hebrews 13:8. Whatever supply you get out of his hand, his stock and store is still the same. Let faith draw never so many bills upon him for this and that supply, at this and the other time, and get never so much rent, annual rent, may I call it, or daily rent out of the stock; yet still the stock and interest both are in his hand; and the believer hath all his store secured for him, in Christ's band, even when all that you get in your hand is spent; this well of salvation springs up for ever, and that to everlasting life. You may be full and empty by turns; but he is invariably the same; "I am the Lord, I change not."

6. All things that the Father hath are his eternally; they are the everlasting things of the everlasting Father. The fulness of the Father that is his is a dwelling fulness; It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. "All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him;" and in him it dwells for ever; hence the blessings he communicates are everlasting blessings, everlasting peace, everlasting pardon, everlasting consolation; so called, because though perishing things may give people perishing comforts; yet the consolations of the Spirit are from everlasting things; such as everlasting love, everlasting righteousness, and everlasting inheritance. Here is a depth to dive for ever into, O poor mortal that would be happy for ever! All things that Christ hath to give are everlasting and eternal things; because, All things that the Father hath are his.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To shew why all things that the Father hath are the things of Christ. Or, wherein appears the beauty of this disposal of all things.

1. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that the right and property of no party is lost or alienated. When Christ says, "All that the Father hath are mine," the Father's right is not alienated. When, among men, an inheritance is conveyed from one to another, then the conveyer denudes himself of his right; and the other only can say, All is mine; but it is not so here; when Christ says, "All things that the Father hath are mine," he grants that God the Father hath all things; and yet he asserts his own title and possession also, they are all mine; yea, when God gives Christ, and all things to us, he still keeps his right to all that he gives, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Corinthians 3:22-23. Thus what the Father gives into Christ's hand remains still in the Father's hand; "And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one," John 10:28-30.

2. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, namely, in the fitness of the great Trustee to whom all things that the Father hath are committed, that he who is the centre of the glorious Trinity (so to speak) the middle person should be the centre of all things. O sirs, how fit is it that all things should move toward their centre, and meet there! That he should be the Mediator betwixt God and man, the central place of meeting, where God and man, might have all things common betwixt them; and that he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, hath which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him! Ephesians 1:10. All things good and bad, may be said to be given to Christ's management; all good things are put in his hand to be secured; and all bad things put under his feet to be over-ruled for the glory of God, and the good of his people. None but Christ was capable of such a trust: no mere creature among men or angels were able to bear this glory. It is he that shall build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory, Zechariah 6:13. None but he was capable to be the general receiver of all things that the Father hath and the disposer and

dispenser of all things.

3. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that in this dispensation the pleasure of all parties is consulted; even the pleasure of all the persons of the glorious Trinity; it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, Colossians 1:19. The word Father there is a supplement, and not in the original; therefore, this work of reposing all things, all fulness in Christ may be looked upon as not only the work of the Father, but the work of the whole glorious Trinity; it pleased the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that in Christ as Mediator, all fulness should dwell: the Father proposed, the Son accepted, the Holy Ghost consented, that in him all fullness should dwell: this was done with rapturous pleasure. It pleased the Father to propose it; for he says, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty;" and, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." It pleased the Son to accept: for he says, "Lo! I come: in the volume of thy book it is written of me I delight to do thy will, O my God!" It pleased the Holy Ghost to consent; for he rested upon Christ and furnished him for all his work; "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me," Isaiah 61:1. This unspeakable pleasure is expressed, Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth," &c. Also, Proverbs 8:30-31, "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him," &c. As God consulted his own pleasure herein so the pleasure of all the redeemed, whose eyes are opened to see the glory of this method of salvation: how does it fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory, that in Christ they have all things!

4. Herein appears beauty and wisdom, that in this dispensation. The credit and honour of all concerned is consulted: for,

(a.) Here God hath consulted the credit and honour of his own majesty and greatness, in putting all things in the hand of the second Adam, and not transacting any more with man immediately in his own person, now when turned a rebel to his crown and dignity, by transacting immediately with Christ, a person of equal dignity with himself, and giving out all things through him to us. Thus we are taught to keep at a due distance from this infinitely glorious Sovereign, and to come and receive blessings, not immediately from God, but by the hand of Christ the Mediator, who saith, "I am the way; no man cometh to the Father, but by me."

(b.) He consulted the credit of his name, and of all his other glorious excellencies: the credit of his broken law: how it might not only be fulfilled, but magnified to the utmost; the credit of his offended justice; how it might be not only satisfied, but glorified to the highest. Why, infinite Wisdom knew that there was nothing that the violated law or injured attributes of God could demand, for the reparation of their honour, but what the sinner's Surety, having all things, could answer with ease and to infinite satisfaction. The Creditor well knew that the Surety was not only creditable, but responsible and able to pay all the debt, but mighty to save, mighty to satisfy, mighty to give all the infinite satisfaction demanded; insomuch, that mercy to sinners goes forth without prejudice to justice; and the attributes of God seemingly inconsistent, harmoniously meet in Christ. "Mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other;" whereupon God pardons and justifies, so as not only to be merciful but even just in justifying the ungodly.

(c.) He hath herein consulted the credit of his Son, Christ Jesus, who thus is honoured with a name above every name; all things being his, not only to furnish him for his mediatorial service, but also to reward him for it; because "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," Php

2:9. He is honoured with a goodly train and a crowded court of supplicants; all things that the Father hath being his, that the gathering of the people might be to him for supply, and that revenues of praise might be given him to eternity. Yea,

4. Herein is consulted the credit as well as the profit of all the redeemed. God never honoured the church and people of God, nor advanced them to a higher dignity, than by making over to Christ an universal plenitude, as Head of the body the church; and every believer may say, my Head, my Husband, my Lord, hath all things that the Father hath; and this is the honour of all the saints, they have all things in Christ; and he is made of God unto them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things, that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.

V. The fifth and last thing promised was, To make application. If it be so, That our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is possessed of all things that the Father hath; then hence,

1. It is most proper to infer, what our Lord Jesus himself demonstrates by it, namely, that there is good reason why the Holy Spirit, by taking and shewing the things of Christ doth glorify him: even because all things that the Father hath are his. The things of Christ are glorious things: why? 1. They are the things of the Father, the things of God. Yea, 2. They are all things; nothing is lacking in our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. They are all things that the Father actually hath; they are actually his. They are all mine, saith Christ; and therefore, when the Spirit takes of mine and shews it to you, it cannot but glorify me, and shew my glory; because, if the things of the Father be glorious things, then mine are so; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine."

It is remarkable in the context, that every thing here that the Spirit is said to do, when he comes to enlighten the world, is done by a demonstrative light and by an evident, clear demonstration; when he shall convince the world of sin how does he it? Even by this demonstration, "Because they believe not in me;" this will above all things reveal and demonstrate the world's sin and enmity against God, when he convinceth them of unbelief, or of their not believing in me, but rejecting this greatest instance of divine love, "He will convince of righteousness;" how? Even by this demonstration, that "I have gone to the Father; for, this shews, that God is well-pleased with this righteousness of mine, otherwise I would not have been received thus into the Father's embraces, and to sit in the midst of the throne. He will convince of judgment; how? Even by this demonstration, that the prince of this world is judged; I have by death destroyed him that had the power over death, and execute judgment in person upon enemies; therefore, judgment shall be brought forth into victory in behalf of all his people. And now again, He shall glorify me, says Christ. How? And by what demonstration? Why, He shall take of mine and shew it to you. Well, how will this demonstrate my glory? Why, the argument shineth with demonstrative light, "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I unto you, he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you;" where our Lord, by doubling the expression, declares what way the Spirit demonstrates his glory; for, whenever the Spirit takes and shews any thing of Christ to us, then he lets in a ray and beam of the Father's glory; because all things that the Father hath are mine, and mine are his, therefore it is impossible when he shews my glory and glorifies me, but the glory of God the Father must shine in with it.

2. If all the things the Father hath are his, then the Father's Spirit is his. He is God equal with the Father; and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. The Father's Spirit is his, not only naturally, as God; but donatively, as Mediator; and he hath the giving

of the Spirit unto men in his power; for, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; and he gave gifts to men," Ephesians 4:8; and he still hath the giving of the Spirit in his hand. The Father says, "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth, and set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law," Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 42:3-4. Hence he says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me." And he having "received gifts for men, even for the rebellious;" see by what authority we go about such solemn work, and execute our ministerial service; why, all the gifts and graces of the Father's Spirit are his to be communicated to us; and therefore as he had power and authority to promise the Spirit, saying, "If I go, I will send him, and he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you:" so he hath the power and authority to accomplish his promise. His power is equally the same this day, as it was when he first gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; and, I hope, he is to this day giving and sealing our commission; for he that said, "All things that the Father hath are mine, and, All power in heaven and earth is given unto me," said with the same breath, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; and lo I am with you always."

It is therefore in his name, that says, "All things that the Father hath are mine, and in his authority, we execute this commission: and who are the men upon earth, or angels in heaven, that dare take upon them to say it is unlawful; or dare upon any new pretences, and new inventions of their own head, assume the power of counteracting his orders? No power or authority did our Lord ever give to the eminent apostles themselves, but what was for edification, and not for destruction: and what a humbling and astonishing providence is it, that any who bear the name of saints and servants of Christ, should be left of God to such amazing madness and distraction, as to assume to themselves a power for destruction, a power to commit sacrilege and robbery upon the sacred offices of ministers and elders; a power of shutting the door that he hath opened! Who alone hath authority to open and shut, and who alone can say, "I have the key of the house of David, that openeth and none shutteth;" of these keys, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, no man can say, they are mine to give and take; yea, no angel dare say, they are mine; but glory, glory to him whose prerogative alone it is to say, "All things that the Father hath are mine." As to the dear Brethren, who are left to arrogate such unlawful power to themselves? The worst thing I shall say of them, is, in the Spirit of meekness, what Christ said once to his disciples, "They know not what Spirit they are of." **** But to return to what I was saying. The Spirit of Christ is the Father's Spirit, and indeed a fatherly and friendly, not a furious nor violent spirit; "Thus saith the Lord, Fury is not in me;" and it is by this Spirit he seals the commission that he gives to the gospel minister; we read, John 20:22, that, "The Lord Jesus breathed on his disciples, and said to them, Receive ye the holy Ghost." We pretend to no new revelation of the Spirit, or such extraordinary effusions thereof, as the apostles had; but, yet, what we have heard and seen, we may declare unto you, that you may have fellowship with us in the same Spirit. I hope I can say, even since the time, I began to think upon this text, that now and then, the Lord hath breathed upon my soul; and may I not hope, since I began to speak upon it, he hath been breathing upon you? Yea, what do I know, but he is breathing upon some here, and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" For, as all things that the Father hath are mine, so all the gifts, and graces, and influences of the Father's Spirit are mine to give out to you: therefore, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and so far as this takes place in any measure, so far is he sealing our ministry; let men tear it, and trample on it at their peril.

3. See wherein it is, that the real personal glory of Christ, as Mediator, lies; and what is requisite for his declarative glory. His personal glory lies in this that all things that the Father hath are his; and that this glory may be declared, he manifests these things, and communicates them by his Spirit. It is not possible he can keep all these things to himself, and give out nothing; no: it stands upon his honour and credit as Mediator, and the church's Treasurer to give out of that treasure of grace and fulness that is laid up in him for our behalf. Here is a door of hope for sinners, that Christ, as a faithful Trustee, must give out of his grace to make his people willing and to bring them to himself; John 10:16, "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, these (Gentiles, as well as Jews), I must bring, and they shall hear my voice:" them I must bring. "He must needs go through Samaria," we are told, John 4:4. Why, for what end? It was even to give out of his grace to a poor harlot, a vile sinful woman there; even so, I hope, he must needs go through this congregation to-day, to give out of that store of all things, and of all fulness, which he hath for the sake of some poor vile sinner here. As there was a blessed necessity for his suffering at Jerusalem; yea, Luke 24:26, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Even so, there is a blessed necessity for his applying the virtue of his death and sufferings, by pouring out of his Spirit, and communicating of his fulness. The context here shews, that his glory and honour stands upon this, and his Father's glory too, that the Spirit be sent to show his treasures; which are both the Father's and his. Christ is not proud of his treasures; see how high, and yet how humble our Lord Jesus is, so as not to think it below him to stoop and distribute thereof among poor beggars. Unbelief says, O will he ever stoop down and wash such a leper as I, when he is so eminently and so infinitely glorious as to have all things that the Father hath? Yea, but his grandeur and glory does not make him disdainful and lordly; "Jesus knowing that all things were given him, he stooped down and washed his disciples feet," John 13:3. O sirs, it is strange! That a man, that hath nothing, is most proud; but he that hath all things is most humble: and because he is so highly exalted, therefore he stoops to wash polluted sinners, saying, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." He is exalted for this very end, to pardon and purge guilty polluted sinners; "Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel," Acts 5:31. It is no disparagement to his exalted state for him to stoop down and wash your feet, and wash your heart: and this is the way he washeth, by giving pardon and repentance. He knows, the lower he stoops, the higher will he be honoured in the hearts of his people. Do you think the less of him, O believer, that he stoops and condescends to wash you? No; you think the higher of him. O sinner, do not through unbelief think him too high to look towards you; nay, the higher he is the lower doth he stoop; and, therefore, the higher you conceive he is, the more hope you may conceive of his pity and favour towards you; and the more divine store you see he hath, the more let your expectation arise, for faith hath the more footing.

4. Hence see, how the infinite wisdom of God hath outwitted the policy of the devil, the old serpent, in robbing the first Adam of all his stock, and thereby thinking to destroy all mankind; but, behold, the second Adam appears with a stock incomparably greater than that which the first Adam lost! It was a dismal thing to hear such sad news upon the breach and violation of the old covenant. Behold, all things that man had are lost! But Christ, the new covenant Head, comes in with glad news: Behold, all things that God hath are mine! O happy change of Adams! Happy change of covenants, and covenant Heads! O what a well furnished Saviour is here! All things are mine. And, O how well is it secured in the hands both of the Father and of the Son: for, "All things that the Father hath are mine!" And, O how fully and divinely glorious is the treasure! What can be more

full and extensive than all things? And what more divine than all the things of God? These glorious things, that could never have been seen otherwise, even all the glory of God, to be seen in the face and person of Christ, who is the Father's representative, not in some things, but in all things here is all the glory of God represented, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

5. Hence see, what a great lack it is to lack Christ; for then they lack all things. Oh! the miserable case of the wicked, ungodly, Christless world; they are cursed in the lack of all things: they need all things that God hath, while they are without Christ; without him ordinances are nothing but an empty shell; the sacramental supper, without Christ, is but an empty table; sermons without Christ are but an empty sound; heaven without Christ would be but darkness, and if the Lamb were not the light of the place. But, on the other hand, what a great thing must it be to have Christ? For, they that have him, have all things, Romans 8:31. When God gives Christ, he cannot but with him freely give us all things; all things that Christ hath, and all things that the Father hath. O how happy are believers! "All things are yours; for, ye are Christ's and Christ is God's:" you have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all things in Christ: it is easy with Christ to supply all your needs, and to give you all-sufficiency in all things, 2 Corinthians 9:8. O what a well-furnished table is the Lord's table, when the Lord himself is presented upon it! There is an overflowing ocean of all good in Christ for sinners, infinitely exceeding all our sins and all our needs; it is unbelief that doth diminish and limit the fulness of Christ; it reveals a multitude of sins and deficiencies, but it conceals and overlooks the treasure of grace and fulness of all things, that are in Christ. But passing other inferences, at present,

6. Hence see the duty of all poor and needy sinners, and where they ought to go for supply, and for a share of all things they need and what a broad foundation for faith is here. God in Christ is the fountain of living waters. God the Father hath all things but how we come at them? Why, says Christ, come to me: for they are all mine; mine to give out, mine to distribute among poor needy sinners. Here is enough both to excite and direct your faith.

(1.) To move and excite faith. O may the Spirit come for this end. See that whatever you can object here is answered.

(a.) Do you think with yourself, Ah! I am universally destitute; I have nothing? Well, but here is all things; and they are all mine, says Christ; therefore come to me. But,

(b.) Do you think that God is displeased with you, because of your sin; and that the Father of Christ hath no favour for you? Nay, but the fulness here exhibited, is the fulness of God the Father; even ALL the things that the Father hath. But,

(c.) Do you think, O the Father is far away from me! How can I have all things that the Father hath? It is answered, They are all laid up in the hands of a near friend and kinsman; they are all mine, says Christ, for your use. But,

(d.) Do you think, Alas! I hear of these glorious things, but I do not see them; I am blind and in the dark, so as I cannot see any of these all things that Christ and his Father hath? Well, but says Christ; My Spirit is at hand to receive of mine, and shew it unto you: and thus to glorify me: he would not glorify me, if he did not shew it unto you. But now, in so far as he is shewing it to you, he is glorifying me, by making me appear glorious to you, more glorious than all the mountains of prey. The Spirit shews this glory of Christ just in this glass of the word, 2 Corinthians 3:18. And if

he be shewing it to you, surely you must be moved to believe with application, that when Christ hath so much, you shall not lack; and that he hath enough to spare unto you. Is it possible to believe his immense fulness, and that he hath all things, and yet hath nothing to spare for you? Nay, let faith say it is for me, for me: "He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious." O sirs, as the fulness of the Godhead is in him; so, if there were ten thousand millions of worlds, Christ could not be pinched to supply all their needs. Here is the well of life; but who knows how deep it is to the bottom? The due consideration of this might provoke all the world to come and draw water out of this well of salvation with joy, this fountain opened for you.

(2.) Here is enough to direct your faith, in and by the same topics that are here before you in the text,

(a.) Remember where all things are to be had; and that therefore, if you would believe, you must remember, that faith to believe in the Son of God is to be had where all other things are. Faith is the gift of God; and Christ is the Author of faith; therefore, seek not to bring faith out of your own bowels; for, as faith comes by hearing, so nothing but the power of God can produce it effectually; that is, by the gospel's coming, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost. This power works secretly and silently upon the heart in hearing, when, perhaps, the person little knows that it is the power of God that is dealing with his heart; when yet, while the Spirit is in the word, shewing the things of Christ, there may be a heart-beating towards him: a heart-bleeding, a heart-bursting, a heart-burning towards him: and possibly, the heart that was hard like a rock, now melting like water before the Lord; yea, under this drawing power of the Spirit, there may be heart-panting after the Lord, and yet the poor soul, perhaps, doth not know that the power of God is present. This faith cometh not by working or doing, or forcing yourselves up to some strong actings: but it comes by hearing: the actings of faith come by hearing of the object of faith presented in the word, and by hearing what the Spirit says of his glory.

Why then do you stand poring over your lack of power to act faith, as if you were to pull it out of your own breast? You will be nearer to your purpose, if you pore over the object of faith, wherein all things are. The soul, in believing, considers not, What can I do, but What can Christ do? Not, What have I in me, but, what hath Christ in him? It is taken up with nothing but Christ; and it is the best act of faith that loses itself, and is swallowed up in his fulness.

(b.) The next direction to your faith, is, Let the claim of right that Christ hath to all things that the Father hath, be your claim. Christ is the first receiver of all things from the Father; and we can receive nothing but through his hand. We have no claim to any thing that the Father hath, but in him whom the Father loveth, and to whom he hath given all things; they must be his before they can be ours. All is mine first, says Christ, before ever you can share; and they are mine, that they may be yours: my mediatorial right to them is on your account: his love falls upon me, that it may descend upon you; his blessing lights upon me, that it may light on you; his Spirit is given to me, and put upon me, that it may be put upon you; his fulness dwelleth in me, that out of my fulness ye may receive, and grace for grace; his promise lights upon me, that it may be accomplished to you: Psalms 2:9, Revelation 2:27. Therefore, let your claim of right to any thing the Father hath, be grounded on my right; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine." He is your God, because he is my God; and your Father, because he is my Father; he is yours, because he is mine; and all things the Father hath are yours, because they are mine; all things are yours: for ye are Christ's and

Christ is God's. God's kindness toward us is only through Christ, Ephesians 2:7. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings only in Christ, Ephesians 1:3; and accepted only in the Beloved, Ephesians 1:6.

(c.) The third direction to your faith is, O let faith take the testimony of Christ out of his own mouth concerning his own glory, which is here wrapped into the very midst of the Father's glory! "All things that the Father hath are mine," Christ, the Mediator, is the speaker here: and as he declares, to his Father's praise and honour, that all things he hath for us are originally the Father's, even that God, who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, &c., so he proclaims his own glory that he hath from the Father: "All things that the Father hath are mine." We need not commend Christ to you, as if we could say more than he says himself; there is ten thousand times more in this very word, than men or angels can tell: therefore, O hear his commendation out of his own mouth, "All things that the Father hath are mine." He says, elsewhere, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." Why? What rest? What happiness? What good things? Even all things that the Father hath, they are put in my hand to give. Christ himself is here the preacher, commending himself, and offering himself. O sirs, is there none here hearkening to him, and saying, O! "It is the voice of my Beloved; behold he cometh, skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills? It is the voice of my Beloved, saying, Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for, lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;" the heavy shower of the Father's wrath for your sins, hath fallen on my head, and now all the treasures of the Father's grace and love are put into my hand and will you not come to me? Rise, my love, my fair one, you shall be fair in my sight, though in yourself a vile monster, and black like hell, by lying among the pots of sin and guilt; yet, rise at my call; let your heart rise, let your soul rise: "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away: all things are ready, come to the marriage." If you intend to come to the marriage supper, come first to the marriage. All things are ready for you, whatever you lack; pardon, and peace, and grace, and glory, and every good thing; "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and, "I that speak unto you am he;" and, "To you, O men, do I call; my voice is to the sons of men. If any man thirst let him come to me and drink." Come and drink abundantly of all things that your souls stand in need of: only come to me, and then drink. The Father hath put the cup of salvation in my hand: come then, and take a large drink of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things that the eternal God hath; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine." A large drink of the Spirit is to be had here. See John 7:37.

(d.) The last direction I offer to your faith is, O! Would you take this testimony of Christ. Then receive it in the demonstration of the Spirit, who is come to glorify Christ. Look for the anointing that teaches all things; the Spirit takes and shews them to you. All the glorious things that are spoken of Christ will be tasteless, till the spirit give you a taste of them. But, O sirs, have you not now ground to expect the Spirit, when he that hath all things that the Father hath, hath said, "He shall come, he shall glorify me, he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you;" and again, "He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you?" And, O! is he not this day shewing you, that the things of God are the things of Christ, and the things of Christ the things of God? Yea, so far as he hath shewn you that all things that the Father hath are Christ's so far hath he glorified Christ, and made all the glory of God to appear in his face. If you have heard what Christ says of himself, you have heard what the Spirit says; and, O! The voice of the dove agrees in one with the voice of Christ. That is the turtle dove that rests upon Christ; and when the voice of the turtle dove is heard,

it is another argument by which Christ courts his bride: "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," Song of Solomon 2:10-13. The voice of the turtle is again heard in Dunfermline; the Spirit is come to glorify Christ, by making the words of Christ sound in our ears "All things that the Father hath are mine."

S. Comfort to Believers from the text, Thy Maker is thy Husband, inverted thus

Comfort to Believers from the text, Thy Maker is thy Husband, inverted thus,— Thy Husband is thy Maker; and the Conclusion of this Subject.

By Ralph Erskine Thy Maker is thy Husband."—Isaiah 54:5 Of light and life, of grace and glore,

In Christ thou art partaker,

Rejoice in him for evermore,

Thy husband is thy maker.

He made thee, yea, made thee his bride,

Nor heeds thine ugly patch;

To what he made he'll still abide,

Thy husband made the match.

He made all, yea, he made all thine,

All to thee shall be giv'n.

Who can thy kingdom undermine?

Thy husband made the heav'n.

What earthly thing can thee annoy?

He made the earth to be;

The waters cannot thee destroy,

Thy husband made the sea.

Don't fear the flaming element

Thee hurt with burning ire,

Or that the scorching heat torment

Thy husband made the fire.

Infectious streams shall ne'er destroy,

While he is pleased to spare;

Thou shalt thy vital breath enjoy,

Thy husband made the air. The sun that guides the golden day,
The moon that rules the night,
The starry frame, the milky way,
Thy husband made for light. The bird that wings its airy path,
The fish that cuts the flood,
The creeping crowd that swarms beneath,
Thy husband made for good. The grazing herd, the beasts of prey,
The creatures great and small,
For thy behoof their tribute pay;
Thy husband made them all.
Thine's Paul, Apollos, life and death,
Things present, things to be;
And ev'ry thing that being hath,
Thy husband made for thee. In Tophet, where the damn'd resort,
Thy soul shall never dwell,
Nor needs from thence imagine hurt;
Thy husband formed hell.
Satan with instruments of his
May rage, yet dread no evil;
So far as he a creature is,
Thy husband made the devil. His black temptations may afflict,
His fiery darts annoy;
But all his works, and hellish tricks,
Thy husband will destroy.
Let armies strong of earthly gods
Combine with hellish ghosts,
They live or languish, at his nods
Thy husband's Lord of hosts.
What can thee hurt? whom dost thou fear ?

All things are at his call.
Thy maker is thy husband dear,
Thy husband's all in all.
What dost thou seek? What dost thou want?
He'll thy desires fulfil;
He gave himself, what won't he grant?
Thy husband's at thy will. The more thou dost of him desire,
The more he loves to give:
High let thy mounting aims aspire,
Thy husband gives thee leave. The less thou seek'st, the less thou dost
His bounty set on high;
But highest seekers here do most
Thy husband glorify.
Would'st thou have grace? Well; but 'tis meet
He should more glory gain.
Wouldst thou have Father, Son, and Sp'rit?
Thy husband says AMEN.
He'll kindly act the lib'ral God,
Devising lib'ral things :
With royal gifts his subjects load;
Thy husband's King of kings. No earthly monarch has such store
as thou hast ev'n in hand
But, O how infinitely more
Thy husband gives on band;
Thou hast indeed the better part,
The part will fail thee never:
Thy husband's hand, thy husband's heart,
Thy husband's all for ever.

S. Comfort to Believers, in Christ's Relations, in His Dying Love, His Glory in Heaven,

Comfort to Believers, in Christ's Relations, in His Dying Love, His Glory in Heaven, to which He will Lead Them through Death, and Supply with Necessaries by the Way.

By Ralph Erskine "Thy Maker is thy Husband."—Isaiah 54:5

Behold, the patrimony broad

That falls to thee by line;

In him thou art an heir of God,

Thy husband's Father's thine.

He is of relatives a store,

Thy friend will help in thrall;

Thy brother much, thy father more,

Thy husband most of all.

All these he does amass and share,

In ways that most excell;

'Mong all the husbands ever were,

Thy husband bears the bell.

Whence run the streams of all thy good,

But from his piercèd side?

With liquid gold of precious blood

Thy husband bought his bride. His blood abundant value bore,

To make his purchase broad;

'Twas fair divinity in gore,

Thy husband is thy God. Who purchas'd at the highest price,

Be crowned with highest praise;

For in the highest paradise

Thy husband wears the bays.

He is of heaven the comely rose,
His beauty makes it fair:
Heaven were but hell, couldst thou suppose
Thy husband were not there.
He thither did in pomp ascend,
His spouse along to bring:
That hallelujah's without end
Thy husband's bride may sing.
Ev'n there with him for ever fix'd
His glory shalt thou see;
And nought but death is now betwixt
Thy husband's throne and thee.
He'll order death, that porter rude,
To ope the gates of brass;
For, lo! with characters of blood
Thy husband wrote thy pass. At Jordan deep then be not scared,
Though dismal-like and broad:
Thy sun will guide, thy shield will guard,
Thy husband paved the road.
He'll lead thee safe, and bring thee home
And still let blessings fall
Of grace while here, till glory come:
Thy husband's bound for all. His store can answer every bill,
Thy food and raiment's bought;
Be at his will, thou'lt have thy fill,
Thy husband wants for nought.
What can thy soul conceive it lacks?
His store, his pow'r is thine;
His lib'ral heart to lib'ral acts

Thy husband does incline.

Though on thy hand, that has no might,

He should not task enlarge;

Nor work, nor warfare, needs thee fright

Thy husband bears the charge.

Thou wouldst, (if left,) thyself undo,

So apt to fall and stray.

But he uplifts, and leads thee too; Thy husband knows the way.

S. Earth Despicable—Heaven Desirable

Earth Despicable—Heaven Desirable

by Ralph Erskine

There's nothing round the spacious earth
To suit my vast desires;
To more refined and solid mirth
My boundless thought aspires.
Fain would I leave this mournful place,
This music dull, where none
But heavy notes have any grace,
And mirth accents the moan: Where troubles tread upon reliefs,
New woes with older blend;
Where rolling storms and circling griefs
Run round without an end: Where waters wrestling with the stones,
Do fight themselves to foam,
And hollow clouds, with thund'ring groans,
Discharge their pregnant womb: Where eagles mounting meet with rubs
That dash them from the sky;
And cedars, shrinking into shrubs,
In ruin prostrate lie: Where sin the author of turmoils,
The cause of death and hell;
The one thing foul that all things foils,
Does most befriended dwell. The purchaser of night and woe,
The forfeiter of day,
The debt that ev'ry man did owe,
But only God could pay.
Bewitching ill, indors'd with hope,

Subscribed with despair:
Ugly in death when eyes are ope,
Though life may paint it fair.
Small wonder that I droop alone
In such a doleful place;
When lo! my dearest friend is gone,
My Father hides his face. And though in words I seem to show
The fawning poets style,
Yet is my plaint no feigned woe;
I languish in exile.
I long to share the happiness
Of that triumphant throne,
That swim in seas of boundless bliss
Eternity along. When but in drops here by the way
Free love distils itself,
I pour contempt on hills of prey,
And heaps of wordly pelf. To be amidst my little joys,
Thrones, sceptres, crowns, and kings,
Are nothing else but little toys,
And despicable things.
Down with disdain earth's pomp I thrust,
Put tempting wealth away;
Heav'n is not made of yellow dust,
Nor bliss of glittering clay.
Sweet was the hour I freedom felt
To call my Jesus mine;
To see his smiling face, and melt
In pleasures all divine.
Let fools an heav'n of shades pursue,

But I for substance am:
The heav'n I seek is likeness to,
And vision of the Lamb. The worthy Lamb with glory crown'd
In his august abode;
Enthron'd sublime, and deck'd around
With all the pomp of God.
I long to join the saints above,
Who crown'd with glorious bays,
Through radiant files of angels move,
And rival them in praise: In praise to JAH, the God of love,
The fair incarnate Son,
The holy co-eternal Dove,
The good, the great Three-one. In hope to sing without a sob
The anthem ever new,
I gladly bid the dusty globe,
And vain delights, Adieu.

S. Faith & Sense

Faith & Sense by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The following selection is taken from the twenty-fourth edition of Erskines' Gospel Sonnets (Edinburgh: Silvester Doig, Royal Exchange, 1743) pp 351-364. The original title of this piece appears as follows: "The Believers Principles Concerning Faith & Sense" (in six parts, three of which are presented here below). The electronic edition of this text has been scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. In a few cases antiquated characters have been replaced and the spelling has been modernized. This particular version therefore is not in the public domain. It may be copied and distributed only for personal or educational use.

SECTION I.

Faith & Sense Natural, compared and distinguished When Abram's body, Sarah's womb, Were ripe for nothing but the tomb, Exceeding old, and wholly dead, Unlike to bear the promised seed:

Faith said, I shall an Isaac see;

No, no, said sense, it cannot be:

Blind reason to augment the strife, Adds, How can death engender life? My heart is like a rotten tomb, More dead than ever Sarah's womb;

O! can the promis'd seed of grace Spring forth from such a barren place?

Sense gazing but on flinty rocks, My hope and expectation chokes: But could I, skilled in Abram's art, O'erlook my dead and barren heart; And build my hope on nothing less Than divine pow'r and faithfulness;

Soon would I find him raise up sons To Abram, out of rocks and stones.

Faith acts as busy boatmen do, Who backward look and forward row;

It looks intent to things unseen, Thinks objects visible too mean.

Sense thinks it madness thus to steer, And only trusts its eye and ear;

Into faith's boat dare thrust it oar, And put it further from the shore.

Faith does alone the promise eye;

Sense won't believe unless it see; Nor can it trust the divine guide, Unless it have both wind and tide.

Faith thinks the promise sure and good;

Sense doth depend on likelihood;

Faith ev'n in storms believes the seers;
Sense calls all men, ev'n prophets, liars.
Faith uses means, but rests on none;
Sense fails when outward means are gone;
Trusts more on probabilities, Than all the divine promises.
It rests upon the rusty beam Of outward things that hopeful seem;
Let these its supports sink or cease, No promise then can yield it peace.
True faith that's of a divine brood, Consults not base with flesh and blood; But carnal sense which ever errs, With carnal reason still confers.
What! won't my disciples believe That I m risen from the grave?
Why will they pore on dust and death, And overlook my quick'ning breath?
Why do they slight the word I spake? And rather sorry counsel take With death, and with a pow'rful grave, If they their captive can relieve?
Sense does enquire if tombs of clay Can send their guests alive away; But faith will hear JEHOVAH'S word, Of life and death the sov'reign Lord. Should I give ear to rotten dust, Or to the tombs confine my trust; No resurrection can I see, For dust that flies into mine eye.
What! Thomas, can't thou trust so much To me as to thy sight and touch?
Won't thou believe till sense be guide, And thrust its hands into my side? Where is thy faith, if it depends On nothing but thy finger ends? But bless'd are they the truth who seal By faith, yet neither see nor feel.

SECTION II.

Faith & Sense Spiritual, compared and distinguished. Where also the Difference between the Assurance of Faith, and the Assurance of Sense. The certainty of faith and sense Wide differ in experience:

Faith builds upon, Thus saith the Lord;

Sense views his work, and not his word.

God's word without is faith's resort, His work within doth sense support. By faith we trust him without pawns (i.e. pledges) By sense we handle with our hands. By faith the word of truth's receiv'd, By sense we know we have believ'd.

Faith's certain by fiducial acts, Sense by its evidential facts.

Faith credits the divine report, Sense to his breathings makes resort: That on his word of grace will hing, This on his Spirit witnessing. By faith I take the Lord for mine, By sense I feel his love divine: By that I touch his garments hem, By this find virtue thence to stream. By faith I have mine all on band, By sense I have some stock in hand: By that some vision is begun, By this I some fruition

win. My faith can fend ev'n in exile, Sense cannot live without a smile. By faith I to his promise fly,
By sense I in his bosom lie.

Faith builds upon the truth of God, That lies within the promise broad; But sense upon the truth of
grace His hand within my heart did place.

Thus Christ the object faith will eye, And faith's the object sense may see:

Faith keeps the truth of God in view, While sense the truth of faith may shew.

Hence faith's assurance firm can stand, When sense's in the deep may strand; And faith's
persuasion full prevail, When comfortable sense may fail.

I am assur'd when faith's in act, Though sense and feeling both I lack: And thus mysterious is my
lot, I'm oft assur'd when I am not;

Oft pierc'd with racking doubts and fears:

Yet faith these brambles never bears; But unbelief that cuts my breath, And stops the language of
my faith, Clamours of unbelieving fears, So frequently disturb mine ears, I cannot hear what faith
would say, Till once the noisy clamours stay. And then will fresh experience find, When faith gets
leave to speak its mind, The native language whereof is, My Lord is mine, and i am his.

Sad doubtings compass me about, Yet faith itself could never doubt;

For, as the sacred volume saith, Much doubting argues little faith. The doubts and fears that work
my grief, Flow not from faith, but unbelief; For faith, whene'er it acteth, cures The plague of doubts,
and me assures. But when mine eye of faith's asleep, I dream of drowning in the deep; But as
befals the sleeping eye, Though sight remain, it cannot see; the seeing faculty abides, Though
sleep from active seeing hides: So faith's assuring pow'rs endure Ev'n when it ceases to assure.

There's still persuasion in my faith, Ev'n when I'm fill'd with fears of wrath; The trusting habit still
remains, Through slumbers hold the act in chains. The assuring faculty it keeps, Ev'n when its eye
in darkness sleeps, Wrapt up in doubts; but when it wakes, It rouses up assuring acts.

SECTION VI.

Faith and Sense compared; or, Faith building upon Sense discovered Faith has for its foundation
broad A stable rock on which to stand, The truth and faithfulness of God, All other grounds are
sinking sand. My frames and feelings ebb and flow; And when my faith depends on them, It fleets
and staggers to and fro, And dies amidst the dying frame. That faith is surely most unstay'd, Its
stagg'ring can't be counted strange, That builds its hope of lasting aid On things that every
moment change. But could my faith lay all its load On Jesus' everlasting name, Upon the
righteousness of God, And divine truth that's still the fame. Could I believe what God has spoke,
Rely on his unchanging love, And cease to grasp at fleeting smoke, No changes would my
mountain move.

...When divine smiles in sight appear And I enjoy the heav'nly gale; When wind and tide and all is
fair, I dream my faith shall never fail: My heart with false conclusions draw, That strong my
mountain shall remain; That in my faith there is no flaw, I'll never never doubt again.

...But, ah! by sudden turns I see My lying heart's fallacious guilt, And that my faith, not firm in me,
On sinking sand was partly built:

For, lo! when warming beams are gone, And shadows fall; alas, 'tis odd, I cannot wait the rising
Sun, I cannot trust a hiding God.

...When drops of comfort quickly dry'd, And sensible enjoyments fail: When cheering apples are
deny'd, Then doubts instead of faith prevail. But why, tho' fruit be snatched from me, Should I
sistrust the glorious Root; And still affront the standing Tree, By trusting more to falling fruit? The
smallest trials may evince My faith unfit to stand the shock, That more depends on fleeting sense,
Than on the fix'd eternal rock. The safest ark when floods arise, Is stable truth that changes not:

How weak's my faith that more relies On feeble sense's floating boat.

...The frame of nature shall decay, Time-changes break her rusty chains;

Yea, heav'n and earth shall pass away; But faith's foundation firm remains.

Heav'n's promises so fix'dly stand, Ingrav'd with an immortal pen, In great Immanuel's mighty
hand, All hell's attempts to raze are vain. Did faith with none but truth advise, My steady soul
would move no more, Than stable hills when tempests rise, Or solid rocks when billows roar. But
when my faith the counsel hears Of present sense and reason blind, My wav'ring spirit then
appears A feather toss'd with ev'ry wind.

Lame legs of faith unequal crook:

Thus mine, alas! unev'nly stand, Else I would trust my stable Rock, Not fading frames and feeble
sand.

I would when dying comforts fly, as much as when they present were, Upon my living joy rely.

Help, Lord, for here I daily err.

S. God's Great Name, the Ground and Reason of Saving Great Sinners

God's Great Name, the Ground and Reason of Saving Great Sinners by Ralph Erskine

[This sermon was preached at Carnock, July 18th, 1730, before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.] "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake."— Psalms 106:8. My friends, the sacramental cup that some of you have in view, is a cup of salvation; and those that adventure to take that cup into their hand, had need to be persons duly informed, and heartily concerned about salvation. The very first piece of heart-exercise in all that are effectually convinced and awakened to a sense of sin and fear of wrath, is that or the like question, arising from the bottom of the heart; "Men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved?" Surely they are not fit for a communion-table, who have never yet come this length in religion, so as to be more concerned about salvation, and the solution of this question than ever they were about any temporal concern in the world; for such as stand fair to be worthy communicants, they have come yet a greater length than this, namely, to get that question resolved to their satisfaction, and their mind spiritually enlightened in the knowledge of the method of salvation through Christ, so as to see upon what terms, and for what reason it is that God saves them: and particularly, that there is no reason why he should save them, unless he bring the reason from himself, that it will not be for their sake, but for his own. God's great end, in all his works, is the glory of his own name; and especially his work of saving sinners through Christ; and that which makes it a great work, is, because his great name is so much concerned therein, and magnified thereby, that it is not so greatly glorified any other way, as it is here. God proposes, in this work, that the loftiness of man shall be brought down, and the Lord alone exalted; and hence all whom he saves, he humbles them so low for their sin and wickedness, as that to bring them to this acknowledgment, that, if ever God save them, it will be owing, not unto them, but unto his own glorious name. What thought and concern about salvation ye have, I know not; but if ye be of these that believe, to the saving of your souls, you will see so much of your own sinfulness and guiltiness before God, that you will be brought to despair of salvation in any other way, and upon any other account, that that which was his method of saving Israel of old; "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake."

How this people sinned, we are told in the two preceding verses: and how God saved them, we are told here in the text: "Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake." The more full history of their sinning, even in the extremity of danger they were in, and of God's saving them at the Red sea, ye have Exod. 14 throughout. And concerning this wonderful salvation, there are four things ye may notice in the words.

1. We have a glorious Saviour in the pronoun, He, namely, JEHOVAH, the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Angel of the covenant, that appeared to Moses in the bush, and delivered Israel by the hand of Moses. He is the Saviour; even he that says, "Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

2. The grievous sinners whom he saved, in the word, THEM. He saved them: namely, the Israelites, his professing people, when they were in great peril, having the Red Sea before them, the rude enemy behind them, and inaccessible mountains on each side of them: in the greatest extremity, and yet a sinful people; sinning against God even in that extremity; yet, he saved them.

3. The great argument that moved him to save them, or upon what account he thus appeared; it was, for his name's sake; that is, for his own sake, as Hezekiah prays to be saved from Senacherib, Isaiah 37:20, "That all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou art the Lord, even thou only:" or, for thy name's sake; that is for thy glory's sake, Psalms 79:9, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." That is, also for thy mercy's sake, for thy goodness' sake; or, because they were called by his name; this is urged, Jeremiah 14:9, "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name, leave us not."

4. The marvellous nature and circumstance of this salvation, in the word, Nevertheless; the glory of divine mercy is herein magnified, that he saved them for his name's sake, with a non obstante, with a nevertheless; that is, notwithstanding all their sin, though their sin cried to God, not to save them, but to damn them: not to help them, but to destroy them. Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake, notwithstanding their provocations.

Observe. That when God saves sinners, or a sinful people, he does it for his name's sake, notwithstanding their provocation, whereby they forfeit his help, and deserve destruction.

I shall first premise some general positions for clearing the text and doctrine. Secondly, illustrate the truth of the doctrine, from some parallel texts of scripture.

1st, I shall premise some general positions for clearing the text and doctrine.

First Position. That the salvation and temporal deliverance, that God, for his name's sake, wrought for Israel of old, in bringing them out of Egypt through the Red Sea to Canaan, was typical of the great salvation from sin and wrath, to eternal life, through Jesus Christ; which spiritual and eternal salvation this text itself leads me to speak of, not excluding the temporal deliverance, remarkable appearances of divine providence, for the visible church in general. As Israel's sin and provocation, and the judgments that came on them for the same, was our example and warning-piece, 1 Corinthians 10:6; and great destructions happened for ensamples and types, 1 Corinthians 10:11, "And written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come:" so the great deliverances God wrought for them were types of the great salvation that God works for sinners, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace; or, For his name's sake.

Second Position. Many unconverted persons, in the visible church, may be delivered from temporal judgments, and saved of God only in outward respects, and that for his name's sake; so, doubtless, many unconverted persons were among the Israelites; yea, most of them gave discoveries that they were so. They forfeited his help in many respects; yet he saved them in many respects, for his name's sake. See Ezekiel 36:22-23, "Thus saith the Lord, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel but for my holy name's sake. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God! be it known unto you." Their slavery was so great, that it opened the mouth of the heathen, as if the God of Israel were no God; therefore God, for his name's sake, helped them. See also, Deuteronomy 9:5, Israel was bad enough, but the heathen were no better, but rather worse;

therefore, for his name's sake, he appeared. Many whom God will not be merciful to in the world, may yet, for his name's sake, be delivered in time.

Third Position. Gracious souls do too much forfeit God's help in time of danger, and deserve to be forsaken of God, and exposed to misery; yet, for his name's sake he saved them; this is their acknowledgment, as you see in Jacob, Genesis 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies." Even so does the church acknowledge, Ezra 9:8, Ezra 9:13, and Lamentations 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed." And again,

Fourth Position. God may punish his people dolefully, whom yet, for his name's sake, he will not destroy; as in these instances just now recited. See Jeremiah 30:10. God may punish his people for their sin severely, whom yet he will save eternally, for his name's sake; yea, and punish them more than others, Amos 4:6-13, and Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Those whom, for his name's sake, he saved from sin to eternity, he will make them feel it to be an evil and bitter thing in time.

Fifth Position is, God may save a visible church, in many outward respects, for the sake of his name, which he resolves to magnify, especially, in behalf of his invisible remnant among them, his hidden ones. Isaiah 1:10, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Many are saved with a temporal salvation, for the sake of those whom God resolves, for his name's sake to save with eternal salvation. Hence it is said, with respect to the day of outward calamity, that, for the elect's sake, these days shall be shortened. The wicked are more obliged to God's people than they are aware of. Hence,

Sixth Position is, That that salvation, wherein God's name is most concerned, is salvation in Christ Jesus to eternal life: wherein he brings sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; from death to life; from a hell of sin and misery to a heaven of holiness and happiness. Having proposed these things shortly for clearing the text and doctrine in the general; before I proceed to the particular parts thereof, I shall,

2dly, Prove the doctrine by scripture instances; Ezekiel 20:8-9. Read 1 Samuel 12:22, Isaiah 48:22, Isaiah 48:25. Consider, for this purpose, God's promises; such as, Isaiah 48:8-9, Isaiah 48:11. His people's prayers; such as, Jeremiah 14:7. But an induction of particulars, to this purpose, may afterwards occur for the confirmation.

Now having promised some things, and confirmed the doctrine, the method may be as follows:—

I. To inquire what is that name of God, for the sake of which he saves.

II. What it is for God to save for his name's sake.

III. What salvation he works for his name's sake.

IV. What is imported in this Nevertheless; or, in God's saying with a notwithstanding; and so over what impediments, real provocations, and seeming impossibility, he brings about this salvation for his name's sake.

V. Offer some reasons why he thus saves for his name's sake.

VI. Deduce some inferences from the whole, for the application.

I. I am to inquire what is the name of God, for the sake of which he saves. And,

1. By the name of God we may understand his being, God himself; Deuteronomy 28:58, "That thou mayest fear this glorious and dreadful Name, The Lord thy God." Our Lord Jesus commands his apostles, to go and teach [or discipline] all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Matthew 28:19. Whatever then is intended by the name of God, each of the adorable persons of the glorious Trinity, are equally concerned therein. It is a name common to them all: and in this sense they have not distinct or diverse names for it is not simply the name Father, and the name Son, and the name Holy Ghost that is intended, but the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. By the name of God then, is meant God himself; and to save, for his name's sake, is to save for his own sake, as he says, Isaiah 43:20, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake." We find the names of things, taken for the things themselves; "A few names in Sardis;" that is, a few persons.

2. By the name of God, we may understand the authority of God, that is, his absolute right and power to do what he pleases with his own creatures. He hath right to order, and power to execute, whatsoever he will concerning them: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isaiah 66:10; so that when he saves, for his name's sake, he saves for the sake of his sovereign will and pleasure, and for manifesting his own absolute authority; his right and might to effectuate what he pleases.

3. By the name of God, we may understand the Christ of God for in our Lord Jesus Christ is the whole name and authority of God: Exodus 23:21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him." But in case any should think, This is not a part of God's name, that indeed he does pardon iniquity, transgression, and sin; Why then it is said of Christ, "He will not pardon your iniquity, for my name is in him;" I answer, The pardon here is not a pardon that respects condemnation, and freedom from hell; but castigation, as a father is said to pardon a child, when he will not spare the rod, nor forbear to chasten; thus he will not pardon your iniquity, without taking vengeance on your inventions; "For my name is in him;" i.e., my authority is in him. Christ is the very name of God; and when he pardons for his name's sake, he pardons for his Christ's sake. Thus the Old Testament saints, as they used to pray to be saved of God, for his name's sake, so they sometimes pray for his word's sake, 2 Samuel 7:21; that is, for Christ's sake, the Word that was made flesh; for the same prayer is rendered, "For thy Servant's sake," 1 Chronicles 17:19. (Also see Psalms 84:9 for this purpose.) David's prayer is, "Behold, O God, our Shield; look upon the face of thine Anointed;" And Daniel's prayer is, "For the Lord's sake," Daniel 9:17. And, O but God hath done much, and will do much for Christ; because his name is in him, and in him he is wellpleased and reconciled.

4. By the name of God we are to understand, the attributes of God. I shall mention some of these.

(1.) His Power is his name, and for the sake of that, he saves as in the text: "He saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power known." Compare Exodus 19:16, and Romans 9:17. For this cause God raised up Pharaoh, that he might show his mighty power in him, that his name, might be declared throughout all the earth, even his mighty power in saving of Israel out of his hand. This argument Moses makes use of, to divert God's threatened wrath, Numbers

14:15-16. This is the name God manifests to Abraham, Genesis 17:1. "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect." And the three children, Daniel 3:17 have recourse to his name: "Our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us." If there be anything that stands in the way of the accomplishment of his promises, he is able to remove it; so Abraham's faith fixed here, Romans 4:21, "Being thus persuaded, that he that had promised was able also to perform." When God saves for his name's sake, it is for the sake of his power, to shew, that he is able to do above all that we are able to ask or think; that he is able to do above our wants, above our deserts, above our prayers, and above our thoughts: we cannot want more than he can give; we cannot pray for so much as he can bestow; we are not able to think what he can do. God's power is a part of his name that faith may take hold of for salvation, and flee unto, even when there is no explicit view of his will; thus saith the leper, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." I cannot tell if he will help me, a soul may say, but I know he is able, and I am called to trust in his powerful name, and to take hold of his strength, Isa. 26:24, Isaiah 27:5. While you can do no better, it is good to trust in his power, and put his will in his own discretion, and refer that to himself; that soul is not far behind.

(2.) His mercy is another part of his name: when he saves for his name's sake, he saves for his mercy's sake; "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy," Micah 7:18. He is, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious," Exodus 23:6. He so far delights in mercy, that mercy rejoices over judgment, James 2:13. Hence the Psalmist's prayer is, Psalms 6:4, "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul, for thy mercy's sake:" and Psalms 79:8. "O remember not against us former iniquities; let thy tender mercy speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low;" and, Psalms 79:9, "Help, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." David had fainted, unless he had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, Psalms 27:13. Out of a sense of misery, we ought to go to the fountain of mercy, and so look to be saved for his name's sake.

(3.) His Wisdom is another part of his name: "The Lord is a God of knowledge, by him actions are weighed," 1 Samuel 2:3; Yea, "His understanding is infinite." The psalmist takes up the wisdom of God as his name, and for the sake thereof seeks to be led and guided; "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me," Psalms 31:3. God, in saving sinners, through Christ, has such a regard to his name, as a God of infinite wisdom, that in this method of salvation, the manifold wisdom of God is shown, Ephesians 3:10.

(4.) His Truth and Faithfulness is another part of his name, for the sake of which he saves and shows mercy; "His mercies are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness," Lamentations 3:3. It is declared to be one of the capital letters of his name, Exodus 34:6 "Abundant in goodness and truth:" and hence, how often did God remember, toward Israel, his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob notwithstanding their sin? Read Psalms 105:8-10, 2 Kings 13:23. And, O what will not God do for his truth's sake for his promise's sake! for, "He is not a man that he should lie." He that, for his mercy's sake, makes the promise, will, for his truth's sake accomplish it; "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old," Micah 7:20. In saving sinners, through Christ, his truth is exceedingly manifested; his truth in fulfilling the threatening of the law upon the Surety, in the room of the sinner: his truth in fulfilling the promises of the gospel, that are all Yea and Amen in Christ; his truth and faithfulness

in fulfilling the promises made to Christ in the eternal compact; which may be part of the meaning of that word, Romans 3:25, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sin, through that propitiation; when God forgives sin through his blood, he declares his righteousness and faithfulness in his promise made to Christ, with reference to his seeing his seed, upon his giving his soul an offering for sin, Isaiah 53:10.

(5.) His justice is another part of his name, for the sake of which he saves, and works salvation. The justice of God may be viewed as either retributive or vindictive; Retributive justice is that for the sake of which he saves either more generally, or in a more special way; In a general way, even some wicked sinners in the visible church may be unjustly oppressed by their enemies that are more wicked than they, as Israel was by the Egyptians; therefore God righteously took vengeance on them, and delivered Israel. In a special way it may be viewed in the saints themselves, who are sinners; yet, because objects of promised mercy in Christ Jesus, therefore, he saves and delivers for his righteousness and justice' sake: "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble," Psalms 143:11. Thus he is said to uphold his people with the right hand of his righteousness, Isaiah 41:10. His vindictive justice is also that for the sake whereof he saves, upon the supposition of its having got full satisfaction: and so we ordinarily understand, Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of the sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." It is ordinary for people to seek to be saved for his mercy's sake; but believing views of justice satisfied, and God reconciled in Christ, would make the soul as freely and boldly seek to be saved for justice's sake in and through Christ the atonement, in whom that name of God, justice, hath more glorious satisfaction than ever it will have in the damnation of sinners. This is expressly God's name, Exodus 34:7. "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty:" that is, in dispensing mercy, he will be so far from dispensing with justice, that, by no means, will he show mercy, in pardoning sin to the sinner, without the highest respect to justice, in punishing sin in the surety, in whom his vindictive justice, taking vengeance on sin, is so cleared and vindicated, that when he pardons sin, through Christ, he is as just in pardoning sin, as he is merciful in doing so; for he has so ordained it, to the glory of his great name, "That he might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus."

(6.) His Holiness is a part of his Name, for the sake of which he saves. This is declared to be his name, Exodus 15:11, "Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness." Isaiah 57:15. "The high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy." For the sake of this he pities and saves, Ezekiel 36:21. "But I had pity, for my holy name's sake, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen." Hence read, Ezekiel 36:22, "I do not this for your sake, but for mine holy name's sake." God, in saving sinners, through Christ's righteousness, hath his holiness, in the precept of the law, as much magnified by the active obedience of Christ, as his justice in the threatening of the law is magnified by his passive obedience.

I might here mention the Providence of God, as a part of his name his watchful care over his people: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to show himself strong in their behalf." 2 Chronicles 16:9. He rules and over-rules all for their good. I might mention his titles whereby he is designed—such as, "The Lord of hosts, the mighty God, the King of kings." And I might likewise notice his Word, which he is said to magnify above all his name. But, in a word, as the name is that

by which any thing or person is known; so the name of God is the very thing whereby he makes himself known; whether it be in his titles, attributes, ordinances, words, or works. He hath made himself known by his works of creation and providence, but a thousand times more clearly in the work of redemption and salvation; herein appear, not only those attributes that shine in creation and providence, but also some perfection of the divine nature, that would not have been displayed, in case the first covenant had stood; such as the infinite mercy and patience of God toward guilty sinners; nor such a pitch of condescension as he hath here discovered; nay, nor any other attribute had shined forth in such lustre and beauty as here it doth; therefore, while Satan thought to have deleted the name of God, that he wrote upon the creature at first, behold how infinite wisdom counteracts him, and makes that the occasion of making his name more known than before. These attributes of God, therefore, that are displayed in the new covenant of grace, and exerted in the salvation of sinners according to that covenant, is that name of God that is principally here to be considered.

II. The second thing was, to show, what it is for God to save for his name's sake; or, for the sake of his name. Having cleared what his name is, what is it, I say, for God to save for his name's sake? In general, beside what has been said, God's saying for his name's sake, imports, I think, his making his name the ALL of our salvation, because the sinful creature is nothing, hath nothing, will do nothing, can do nothing in the affair of his own salvation; therefore God himself will be all, and do all: Isaiah 59:16, and Isaiah 63:5. "He looked, and there was none to help; therefore his own arm brought salvation." Thus God designed to show himself to be, all in all. More particularly,

1. For God to save for his name's sake, is to make his name the motive whence he saves. What moved him to save any guilty sinner? It is his name; his own mercy moved him; his own grace moved him; his own bowels of pity and compassion moved him; his own love moved him; his own name moved him; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. For God to save for his name's sake, is to make his name the reason why he saves. Though his name be the motive, yet some may think there is surely some reason drawn from the creature: Arminians say, that it was the foresight of faith and good works, that he foresaw some would be better than others, and improve the means better; and for this reason he would save them; but the word of God says otherwise, Deuteronomy 7:7-8. God loves sinners, because he loves them. His sovereign mercy is the cause of his showing mercy; "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," Romans 9:15.

3. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the matter of their salvation, inasmuch as his name itself is their salvation. His name is their strong tower. Proverbs 18:10. His name, the eternal God himself, is their refuge, Deuteronomy 33:27. Inasmuch, that whom he saves, they have not only salvation from him, but in him: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation," Isaiah 45:17. Christ, therefore, who calls us to look to him, and be saved, he himself is the salvation of the sinner. "Now mine eyes have seen thy salvation," said old Simeon, Luke 2:22. "Behold thy salvation cometh," says God, Isaiah 62:11. Christ is not only the helper, but the help itself; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help," Hosea 13:9. See Psalms 18:2. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. He is given for a covenant of

the people, a light to the Gentiles," Isaiah 49:6-7. Again,

4. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the means of salvation; and so it must be, if his name itself be the all of our salvation. By what means doth he save? It is even by his name. By whom doth Jacob arise but by the God of Jacob? By whom are sinners saved, but by the name of God, by the Christ of God? And, "There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12. No man comes to the Father, but by him as the Way, by him as the Leader, and as the name of God.

5. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the measure of our salvation; he will, therefore, save as far as his name and honour is engaged by promise to Christ, or to his people in him; 1 Kings 8:56. Read also Joshua 21:45. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass. Thus God saves his people in particular cases, as far as his name, and faithfulness, and truth is concerned; "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," 1 Corinthians 10:13.

6. To save for his name's sake, is to make his name the end of our salvation, even the glory of his name; the great end he proposes in saving, is even the praise of the glory of his grace, Ephesians 1:6. The praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. This is the great end of God in his work of saving sinners through Christ; "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise," Isaiah 43:21. Christ's grand prayer, when he was accomplishing the work of our salvation and redemption, was, "Father glorify thy name." And here let us stay a little, and admire the great design that God had in hand in saving, for his name's sake. God's chief end herein being the glory and honour of his name, What is that? Why,

(1.) In saving for his name's sake, he designs the manifestation of his name, the declaration of his name, as it is said Romans 3:25. "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;" to make known his name in every salvation of Israel, or of his church, his great design still is, that his name may be, known, declared, published, and proclaimed.

(2.) In saving for his name's sake, he designs the vindication of his name. His name is abused and reproached in the world, which is filled with harsh thoughts of God, as if he were either unjust or unmerciful; therefore, in saving for his name's sake, he will vindicate his name, "That he may be just when he speaks, and clear when he judges," Psalms 2:4. That he may appear to be not only merciful in saving; but also just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus; and as just in saving believing sinners, that flee to his name, as he is just in damning unbelieving impenitent sinners.

(3.) In saving for his name's sake, he designs the exaltation of his name; "I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth," Psalms 46:10. He designs that the right hand of the Lord should be exalted in doing valiantly, Psalms 118:16; and make mention that his name is exalted, Isaiah 12:4, "Therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy on you," Isaiah 30:18. Wherefore hath God exalted Christ to his right-hand, but that his name may be exalted in him? "Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: that at the name [or, in the name] of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," Php 2:6, Php 2:10. On which account, God hath highly exalted him to the glory of

God the Father. And wherefore does he save, and glorify, and exalt any sinner through Christ, but that his name may be glorified and exalted.

(4.) In saving sinners for his name's sake, he designs the pleasure of his name; that his name should not only be exalted but delighted in, because it delights in shewing mercy, through Christ, Micah 7:18. We read of the good pleasure of his will, Ephesians 1:5, the good pleasure of his goodness, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. God being infinitely well-pleased in Christ, he takes pleasure in giving out of his goodness through him; and he saves to the good pleasure of his name, and to the contentment of all his attributes; to the good pleasure of his goodness, the good pleasure of his grace, the good pleasure of his holiness, the good pleasure of his justice, the good pleasure of his truth and faithfulness: all the perfections of God are well-pleased; "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psalms 85:10.

(5.) In saving sinners for his name's sake, he designs the aggrandising of his name; I mean, that his name should not only be glorified and exalted, but magnified to the highest, according to the song of the angel upon the coming of the Saviour; "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men," Luke 2:14. His name is magnified to the highest in this way of salvation through Christ. Damnation is but the lowest way, wherein God is glorified by the instrumentality of sinners, and it is to their eternal ruin. Let sinners consider this, that they may not go on in the road to hell, but may fall in love with that way, wherein God is glorified and magnified to the highest. For, herein God is glorified by the highest person, his eternal Son, in his doing and dying, and rising and reigning, and mediating at his right hand; glorified in the highest place, with the highest praise, in the highest manner, and to the highest degree.

(6.) In saving sinners for his name's sake, he designs the eternalising of his name; "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off," Isaiah 55:13, that is, that his name may be celebrated with Hallelujahs of praise to all eternity: "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever; the Lord shall rejoice in his works," Psalms 104:31. "Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever, and thy memorial throughout all generations," Psalms 135:13. Christ, the Saviour, was set up from everlasting, that the sinner saved of God in him might praise him to everlasting: "His name shall endure for ever;" and his ransomed shall come to Zion with everlasting songs, saying, "Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever," Revelation 7:12.

QUESTION. What is it in the name of God that he hath such regard to, when he saves for his name's sake?

ANSWER. He hath regard to his name in all the parts of it that I have already mentioned, and in every attribute, insomuch, that no attribute shall be injured, but every one of them extolled more than another. He also hath regard to his name in all the properties and qualities of it. His name is a glorious name; and, in saving sinners, through Christ, he hath regard to the glory of it; that it be glorified in the manner I have hinted at. His name is a great name; and, in saving sinners, through Christ, he hath regard to the greatness of it by bringing about such a great salvation. And, what will he not do for his great name? His name is a holy name, and therefore, in saving sinners, through Christ, he hath a regard to the holiness of it; not only in sanctifying all whom he saves, but in saving, by a righteousness, whereby his holy law is not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable; in providing a Saviour of such infinite dignity, that he casts a lustre on the law, by his

obedience to it. His name is a dreadful name; and therefore, in saying sinners, through Christ, he has such a regard to the dreadfulness of it, that his most dreadful vengeance lighted upon sin, in the person of the Surety, the Saviour, when he became a sacrifice for sin. His name is a precious name, and therefore, in saving sinners, he has such a regard to the manifesting the preciousness of it, so as to make it appear in the precious blood of Christ, which is the price of salvation. His name is a blessed name, and he cannot be more blessed and happy than he is in himself; yet, to manifest the blessedness of his name, he saves sinners, so as to show he loves not to be blest and happy alone, but will have men to be blest in him, that all nations may call him blessed. His name is a wonderful name, a mysterious and unsearchable name; and therefore it is said, Isaiah 9:6, "His name shall be called Wonderful." Angels have been prying into this depth, so many thousand of years, and yet are not at the bottom of it, but still are prying into the mystery of the gospel salvation through Christ; and such is the regard God hath to this wonderful name, in saving sinners, that every part of their salvation is a miracle and wonder, manifesting the wisdom of God in a mystery. In a word, his name is an everlasting and unchangeable name: and it is his regard thereunto that makes him, by the means of his everlasting righteousness, bring about this everlasting salvation.

III. The third thing proposed in the general method was, To show what salvation he works for his name's sake. Salvation is either temporal, spiritual, or eternal; and though God, for his name's sake, works many temporal deliverances for his church and people, as you see in Israel here, Isaiah 9:1-46, and all this for his name's sake: also, he saved the Church of Scotland many a time, for his name's sake: he saved us, from Paganism, for his name's sake, when he first sent gospel light to our land; he saved us from Popery, for his name's sake, at the glorious Reformation, which was here carried on by solemn National Covenants, that were the glory of our land, whatever contempt is now put upon them; he saved us from Prelacy, and arbitrary power and tyranny, at the merciful Revolution, for his name's sake; and he hath saved us, from time to time, from many attempts of enemies that were seeking to raze us to the foundation, as some are subtilly doing at this day, by damnable errors, which strike at the foundation of all religion; I mean, especially Arian blasphemy, but, whatever church salvation, or temporal salvation of this sort to a visible church, God works, for his name's sake, yet it is that spiritual and eternal salvation typified by Israel's salvation, that the name of God is most concerned with and exalted by; therefore, I especially speak of this everlasting salvation in Christ. And therefore, if the question be, What salvation of this sort he works, for his name's sake?

I answer, There is no part of this great salvation but the name of God is engraven upon it, as being what he works, for his name's sake. I shall offer a few instances thereof; from election to glorification, all the parts of salvation that lie betwixt these two words, from everlasting to everlasting, are brought about for his name's sake.

1. Wherefore did he elect any sinners from eternity? It was for his name's sake, to show his absolute sovereignty in making vessels of mercy, of whom he pleased; "And that he might make known the riches of his glory to them," Romans 9:23. He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace," Ephesians 1:4-6.

2. Wherefore did he redeem any sinners by the blood of his eternal Son? It was for his name's sake, Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." The redemption of Israel is designed and ordered for the glory of the God of Israel, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel," Isaiah 44:22.

3. Wherefore doth he call any sinners effectually? It is for his name's sake: this is illustrated at large by the apostle; "You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world," &c., 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. "He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which he purposed in Christ before the world began," 2 Timothy 1:9. Hence the saints ascribe their conversion and quickening to the name of God, and to the grace of God; "By grace I am what I am," says, Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:10, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory," Psalms 115:1.

4. Wherefore doth he justify and pardon any guilty sinner? It is even for his name's sake, Isaiah 43:25, "I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my name's sake." And Romans 3:24-26, "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past," &c. Again,

5. Wherefore doth he adopt any child of wrath into his family? It is for his name's sake, Ephesians 1:5, "We are predestined to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace." Again,

6. Wherefore doth he sanctify any filthy sinner? It is even for his name's sake, 1 Corinthians 1:30, "Christ is made of God to us sanctification, that no flesh might glory in his sight: but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord." And hence all the great things promised in the covenant of grace, Ezekiel 36:25-27. Among the rest, His putting his Spirit within them, and causing them to walk in his statutes, are said to be done for his holy name's sake, Ezekiel 36:22.

7. Wherefore will he carry on the good work, which he hath begun, and never utterly leave his people, nor suffer them altogether to depart from him? Why? It is even for his name's sake and his promise's sake, Jeremiah 32:40, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from me. Hebrews 13:5, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee finally."

8. Wherefore doth he glorify at last? It is for his name's sake, who is the giver both of grace and glory, Psalms 84:11. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus every part of salvation, from first to last, is wrought for his name's sake. "The Lord is a rock, and his work is perfect:" he begins for his name's sake; carries on for his name's sake, and completes work for his name's sake, that the headstone of salvation may be laid on with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." As all the parts of salvation, so all the means of salvation are granted for his name's sake. Is right hearing a means of salvation? Well, this is what he gives, for his name's sake, according to that promise, John 10:16, "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." Is

prayer a means? Well, right praying is what he alone grants, for his name's sake, according to the promise, Zechariah 12:10, "I will pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication." Is faith a means of salvation? Yea, and it is a part of salvation also, which God gives, for his name's sake, according to his word, Ephesians 2:8, "By grace you are saved, through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Is repentance a leading part of salvation? This is also what he gives for his name's sake, on the back of faith, as a fruit thereof, according to his promise, Zechariah 12:10, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn," and he hath exalted Christ to give it, Acts 5:31. My friends, if there be any other thing that we reckon pertain to salvation, which God doth not work, for his name's sake, you may realise it as no part of salvation; for, I will assure you, his name will have the glory of every part of salvation.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, What is imported in this Nevertheless, or in God's saving with a Notwithstanding; and so to show over what impediments, whether real provocations, or seeming impossibilities of bringing about this salvation, for his name's sake; "Nevertheless, he saved them, for his name's sake." It is impediments on the sinner's part that the text speaks of; therefore I confine myself to these. He saved Israel here, notwithstanding dreadful sins. Read verses 6, 7, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 29, 32, 34, 39, 43. Yet, "Nevertheless he saved them, for his name's sake." Did he notwithstanding all this, save them, for his name's sake? Then, what will not he do for his name? And what may not sinners expect upon this ground? What bar cannot God break, for his name's sake? What mountain cannot be come over, for his name's sake? What provocation can he not overlook, for his name's sake? Let all the sinners that hear this doctrine, beware of provoking God any more by their sins. When thus the saving mercy of God is proclaimed in your ears; for provoked mercy will turn to fearful vengeance: Damnation to eternity will be your doom, if this offered salvation be not received: and in order to allure you to the reception and welcoming of it, I am now telling you the freedom of it, and how God can save you with an everlasting salvation, notwithstanding of the most grievous provocations that hitherto you have been guilty of, and notwithstanding of the greatest impediments that you have laid in the way. More particularly,

1. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding grievous guilt and heinous transgressions. Hence his name is declared to be a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, "Come now, and let us reason together," says God, Isaiah 1:18. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Make not this objection against yourselves in coming to a God in Christ for salvation; for here you see mercy courting you, notwithstanding this very objection.

2. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding long continuance in sin; though you have been a transgressor from the womb to this day, be it never so long that you have been following that fearful trade of sin, yet mercy is now following you with a "how long, how long." Many a how long is he pursuing you with; one is, Numbers 14:11 "How LONG will this people provoke me? And how LONG will it be ere they believe me? Another how long is, Psalms 4:2, "How LONG will ye turn my glory into shame? How LONG will ye love vanity?" Another how long is, Proverbs 1:22, "How LONG, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" Another is, Proverbs 6:9 "How LONG wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" A sixth how long is, Jeremiah 4:14, "How LONG shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

3. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding manifold apostacies and backslidings, Jeremiah 4:14, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within you? Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you," Jeremiah 3:14. And Jeremiah 3:1, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 4:5, "I will heal your backslidings."

4. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding of your prodigious neglect and contempt of God hitherto. See Isaiah 43:22-25, "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins." O wonder of wonders! that such may be saved, for his name's sake.

5. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding grievous, rebellious incorrigibleness and frowardness. See Isaiah 57:17-18, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners."

6. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding outward afflictions and poor circumstances in the world, Zephaniah 3:12. And, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Isa. 76:87 "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." Though you be an out-cast, that no body cares for you, he may save you for his name's sake; for, "He gathers the outcasts of Israel," Isaiah 56:8.

7. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding baseness, unworthiness, and pollution, for there is a fountain opened, Zechariah 13:1 "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness."

8. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding gross darkness and fearful ignorance; "It is written in the prophets, They shall all be taught of God," Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45.

9. He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding long refusals, and resisting of many calls, and slighting many opportunities, Romans 10:21, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Importing, that after all these refusals, he is yet standing with open arms to receive all comers saying, "Whoever will, let him come."

10. He can save for his name's sake notwithstanding of nonesuch, and unparalleled wickedness; what, if there be no sinner like you, nevertheless, he can save for his name's sake; because there is no Saviour like him; if thy unbelieving heart suggests desperate thoughts, as if there were no salvation for thee, saying, Who is a sinner like unto me? Let Micah 7:18, be an answer, "Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity?" In a word, he can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding the greatest and highest mountains either of sin or misery, that seem to be in the way, Zechariah 4:7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before our Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." He can save for his name's sake, notwithstanding dreadful hardness of heart, and innumerable plagues of heart, atheism, unbelief, deadness, and security; the God that works for his name's sake can take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh; and out of stones

raise up children to Abraham. He can save, for his name's sake, notwithstanding of nameless maladies, nameless objections, that no minister in the world can mention, far less remove: may be the obstacles in the way of your salvation are out of the sight of man, out of the sight of ministers; but they are in God's sight, and the omniscient God, that knows it, is the omnipotent God, that can remove it, and save for his name's sake. Oh! but may some poor soul think, Do doubt, he can save for his name's sake: but my objection is, I doubt of his will. Why, man? Wherefore is God now telling you what he can do; but to remove your ill thoughts of him, and to manifest his good-will towards you; behold, he is more willing to save than you are willing to be saved: if it be salvation from sin, as well as salvation from hell, that you mean, then you are either unwilling to be thus saved, and so your ruin is, that you will not come to him for salvation; or, if you be willing, you are more than welcome to him for all the salvation he can work for you. It is his will to save you, notwithstanding of thousands and millions of objections in the way.

V. The fifth thing proposed, in the general method, was, To offer some reasons why he thus saves for his name's sake. Why,

1. He saves for his name's sake, because if he did not so, he would save none of Adam's race; the best saints on earth cannot deserve mercy; the salvation of the most righteous is an act of grace; therefore, the righteous run to his name; and even the just must live by faith, saying, "Though our iniquities testify against us, yet do thou it for thy name's sake," Jeremiah 14:7. And, "Help us for the glory of thy name," Psalms 79:9. He can save none, if he did not save them for his name's sake.

2. He saves for his name's sake, that sinners may hope in his name; that they may return to him, and call upon him for mercy; "There is mercy and forgiveness with him, that he may be feared," Psalms 130:4. Why, say you, could not God be more feared, if he had no mercy and forgiveness with him? It is true; man, in that case, could fear as devils do, desparingly; but not with any penitential fear; "The goodness of God leads to repentance," Romans 2:4. Thus God interprets his merciful providences, as a drawing with the cords of love. None could trust in his name, if he did not save for his name's sake.

3. He saves for his name's sake, that sinners may adore his name; that they may admire his mercy. God remembers his own glory; and therefore saves for his name's sake, that men may glorify his name. O wonder-working God, that can show mercy, when nothing is deserved but misery; this effect it had upon David, Psalms 8:1, Psalms 8:9. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Psalms 48:10, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth."

4. He saves for his name's sake, that sinners, who will not flee to his name as a strong tower, and afterwards glorify his name, by living to his praise, may be left inexcusable in their sins. The glory of God's justice will be conspicuous in those that have slighted his mercy; "Behold you despisers, and wonder and perish!" They that despise such mercy, treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, Romans 2:5.

5. He saves for his name's sake, because it is the only fit way for us to be saved in; if God should offer to save us for our own sakes, for our righteousness' sake, for our duties' sake; Oh! how unfit would that be. We might think God were mocking us, because we have nothing but sin and hell

about us; and our best righteousness deserves damnation; but when he offers salvation for his own name's sake, then it appears to be a fit offer; we cannot think God is mocking us; would he thus affront himself when his own name is the ground of faith laid before us?

6. He saves for his name's sake, because it is the only fit way for him to save us in; it is the only way of salvation suitable to his infinite excellency, who cannot but consult the glory of his perfections in all his works. Now, God's glory requires that no salvation should be found but in his name. Why hath he told us of mercy running in the channel of the new covenant? Why hath he told us that justice itself is drawn in to be upon the sinner's side, inasmuch as he can be justified in forgiving them? Why hath he displayed so much of wisdom in making judgment and mercy to kiss each other? Wisdom in punishing sin, and yet saving the sinner? Why? It is even that he might be glorified; that the pride of man might be brought down, and the haughtiness of man laid low, and that the Lord alone may be exalted, Isaiah 2:11. This way of saving is suitable to his nature.

VI. The sixth thing proposed, was to draw some inferences from the whole. And it is so, that when God saves sinners, or a sinful people, he does it for his Name's sake notwithstanding their provocations, whereby they forfeit his help, and deserve destruction: then, 1st, Hence learn, by way of caution, the following particulars

1. That this doctrine yields no encouragement to sin, though God saves sinners, for his name's sake; the current of his providence, the current of his word, the current of his dealing, all declare, his enmity at sin. What is there in the word that can encourage us in sin? All the threatenings of the law say, in effect, as you regard the wrath of God beware of sin; all the commands of the law say, as you regard the authority of God, beware of sin; all the promises of the gospel say, as you regard the grace, love, and mercy of God, beware of sin; and God's saying for his name's sake, says, as you regard the great name of God, beware of sin. The great salvation that he exhibits for his name's sake, is salvation from sin; and therefore, to make this an encouragement to sin is to affront his name, to abuse his name, to profane his name, and to take his name in vain; "And he will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain."

2. Think not that God will deliver any from eternal damnation, who are gone to hell, or save them for his name's sake; no, by no means: they are lost for ever, that die out of Christ.

2dly, Hence see, by way of information, a foundation for the following truths:—

1. The reason why the saints confide in God; and why believers trust in his name, and flee to his name in time of danger; they are acquainted with his name; "And they that know his name will put their trust in him," Psalms 9:10. They know his grace, his goodness, his power, his holiness, justice, and truth; and they have the encouragement of a promise so to do, Psalms 91:14. "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." And why is it that they pray for help, for his name's sake? Because they know God will do more for his name, than otherwise he could do, Psalms 25:11, Jeremiah 14:7. Thus Joshua, when Israel were smitten at Ai, chap. 7:9, "And what will thou do unto thy great name?" Again,

2. Hence see, to whom we ought to give the glory of experienced mercy, even to God's name; as Psalms 115:1, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." Thus you will find David frequently at this work, Psalms 145:1-2, "I will extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy

name for ever and ever." This is one ground of God's helping, Isaiah 29:22-23. This is in a manner, all that JEHOVAH gets by all his glorious salvations wrought for us, Ezekiel 36:23. Let us therefore learn to render the glory of all God's works unto his glorious name.

3. Hence see a door of hope opened for sinners in this gospel. Does God save for his name's sake these who may not put in for salvation? Whatever they be, whatever objections you can make, they are answered by this one argument, God saves for his name's sake, when there is no other reason for his doing so in the world; he can make a reason to himself, and find the answer in himself why he will save.

4. Hence see the freeness of the gospel-method of salvation; for God saves with a non obstante, that is, with a notwithstanding. O but the gospel-salvation is free! The law brings in so many provisos; that is, either the law of works, truly so called. It says, If ye do, ye shall live, if you be perfect, ye shall be happy; or the law, falsely so called, the many remainders of it in man's heart that makes the sinner think, Why, I cannot be saved, unless I do as well as I can; unless I be so and so qualified, I cannot expect to be saved; but the gospel opens a door of free access to sinners with a Nevertheless; notwithstanding whatever sins, guilt, disorder, confusion, death, distress, and ruin; notwithstanding whatsoever wickedness be about you, yet here is a way wherein you may expect salvation; "Nevertheless he saved them, for his name's sake."

OBJECTION. Must I not be saved upon my believing and repenting, is not faith at least the condition of my salvation?

ANSWER. Faith and repentance are parts of this salvation that God gives for his name's sake; and how can they be conditions of that salvation, whereof they are leading parts? "By grace you are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," Ephesians 2:8. Christ is exalted to give repentance, Acts 5:51. None are saved without faith and repentance; because all that are saved of the Lord, are saved thereunto; they are saved from unbelief, and brought to faith; saved from impenitency, and brought to repentance. Faith and repentance are the beginnings of this salvation, and salvation cannot be completed, without having a beginning; but both beginning and end are what God gives for his name's sake.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ," Php 1:6; because his name is "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending." Faith itself is not necessary to salvation, as a moral condition; but only a physical instrument. And hence as it is not possible a beggar can be the better of a free gift offered to him, if he does not take it, or accept of it; yet his taking of it is no moral condition, but only the natural instrument, or mean of possession, so neither can any possibly be the better of this free salvation that God offers in the gospel, if they will not take it, or have it in the manner it is offered, namely, Salvation from sin and wrath, unto eternal holiness and happiness, and all freely, for God's name's sake. Taking is no moral condition, otherwise it would contradict the design of the gospel. Faith is nothing else but a welcoming this salvation in this manner; it is the soul's acquiescing and falling in with this method; not a condition of it properly, but a closing with it freely it is a believing that God will save in this way for his name's sake and not for the sake of our faith, or any thing else done by, or wrought in us. It is a being content to be saved this way, that the name of God may for ever get the praise; and renouncing all other grounds of faith and reasons of hope, taking this name of the Lord for his strong tower, resolving to rest here.

5. Hence see, what is the last and ultimate refuge of faith. The first resort of faith is to a word, a "maybe the Lord will be gracious:" but a finding no rest here, then perhaps it goes to a direct promise; such as that, "A new heart will I give you," and pleads for the promise' sake: but needing to be better fixed, it goes to Christ, and pleads for Christ's sake; in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. But why should God save for Christ's sake? What obligation is God under to accept of that ransom and atonement in the blood of Christ for me? Why? Then last of all it flees to God's name, and sees that God's name will be more magnified in this way of salvation, than it can be in any other way of God's dealing with it; and hence it is never said he damns for his name's sake; for his name gets not so much glory that way. Here then is the last shift of faith, and its ultimate refuge and ground of hope and there is ground enough here.

Use 3. The next Use shall be for Examination. Try whether or not God hath begun to save you for his name's sake; or, if you have got his name engaged and concerned in your salvation-work. For the trial of this interesting point, consider the following things:

1. They whom God hath begun to save for his name's sake, and to whom he will be further merciful for his name's sake, they are made sensible that God hath hitherto helped them for his name's sake; and that they are beholden to God's name for every bit of bread; indebted, to his name for their preservation out of hell; obligated to his mercy and power, that hitherto he hath helped, pitied, and saved them from everlasting ruin: and they are so affected with his mercy, that they endeavour to live like persons sensible of this obligation they are under to his name; though, in strict justice, they deserve nothing, and God may say, as Judges 10:13, "I will deliver you no more;" and swear, as Jeremiah 44:26-27, "Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall be no more named in the mouth of any man." Yet, being a gracious God, will not utterly leave them, 1 Samuel 12:22, but save them, and others, for their sake; so good is he to them, Genesis 18:32.

2. Hath frowning providence done you good? Are you purged by afflictions? For these whom God delivers for his name's sake, their deliverance from trouble bears some resemblance to his name who delivers.

QUESTION. How shall we know, when God's rod hath done its work, and when God hath said, "It is enough?" 2 Samuel 24:16.

ANSWER. (1.) When you are humbled for the sin that caused God to take his rod in his hand; such as want of love, despising the gospel, abounding of error, division, unbrotherly animosities. Have these things been lamented, loathing the simplicity of the gospel, and the plain administration of God's ordinances? Professors groan when full in their stomach. Is the case altered? The abounding hypocrisy under the specious name of higher attainments, &c.

(2.) When a people can thrive under merciful providences without the rod; for God will not needlessly afflict any, much less his own people, 1 Peter 1:6, Lamentations 3:33. More particularly,

1. Are your salvation and God's glory twisted and conjoined? Will God's name be a loser, if your bonds be strengthened and continued? Joshua said, "What wilt thou do unto thy name?" This moved God to show mercy on a wicked people, Deuteronomy 33:26-27; lest God should lose his declarative glory in the wonders he had, wrought for Israel; lest the heathen should say, God

cannot save his people. Can you say, Oh! I think God will want much glory, if I be not saved; and I cannot think that his name should want that glory and praise that I see it will get in saving me.

2. They whom he saves, for his name's sake, are removed from any hope of being saved for their own sake; as God says, "Not for your sakes have I done this, but my own name's sake;" so they are brought to say, not for my sake will God do so and so, but for his name's sake.

3. They seek all they want from God, for his name's sake. Many a graceless beggar seeks an alms for God's sake, that know not what they say; but believers are beggars at God's door, and they seek for God's sake; they seek pardon for his name's sake with David; "For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." they seek, saying, Quicken me, for thy name's sake, purify, for thy name's sake; give grace, for thy name's sake: and every thing they seek is for his name's sake. Thus they lean upon his lap, and give evidence of their being loved with an everlasting love.

4. They will desire to do much for his name's sake; and will be content to suffer for his name's sake. Such is their regard to his name, that every duty they perform will be easy to them, when they have his name and honour in their eye; and they count their sufferings all to be light, when they suffer for his name: this made them take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, Hebrews 10:34.

5. They will set his name on high, as being a name above every name. Hence they will desire, and endeavour to have his name exalted in the world, that all men may know his name; they will be grieved when his name is profaned and blasphemed; they will be content that their name sink and be buried, that his may arise, saying, Let me decrease, and him increase; whatever may come of my name, let thy name be exalted: their ambition will be to have his name written in their foreheads; "I will write upon them my new name," Revelation 3:12.
<http://www.puritansermons.com/>

S. Gospel Humiliation

Gospel Humiliation

Ralph Erskine

(1685-1752)

AFTER great convictions of sin, and great denunciations of judgments against Israel, in the preceding part of the chapter, the Lord here, in the close, remembers mercy in the midst of wrath, and ends all his sad and heavy words with a sweet nevertheless, (Ezekiel 16:60). And, indeed, mercy must begin on God's side: "Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth; and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." And what will be the effect of this, we see in Ezekiel 16:61, "Then shalt thou remember thy ways and be ashamed." It is worthy our observation, that when God says, "I will remember my covenant," then he adds, "Thou shalt remember thy sins." Hence it is evident, that never a good thought, never a penitent thought would have come into our hearts, had not some thoughts of peace and good-will come into God's heart. When he remembers his covenant of mercy for us, so as not to remember our sins against us, then we remember our sins against ourselves with shame. And in the latter part of the verse he adds, "When thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger": that is, when the Gentile nations, some of them greater than thou art, and some lesser, both ancient and modern, shall be received into church-communion, and owned as members of the church of God; "And I will give them to thee for daughters": they shall be my gift unto thee as daughters; they shall be nursed up and educated by that gospel, that word of the Lord that shall come forth from Zion, from the Jews; insomuch, that Jerusalem below may, in some sense, be called the mother; and Jerusalem, which is above, which is free, shall be acknowledged to be the mother of us all (Galatians 4:26). "They shall be thy daughters, but not by thy covenant"; that is, thy covenant of duties, or which thou turnedst to a covenant of works: not by that old covenant, which was violated; but by that covenant, which promised to write the law in the heart, and to put the fear of God into the inward part. Now, when thou shalt receive them, and when Jews and Gentiles shall be united in Christ, the covenant-head, "Thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways." Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thy apostasy.

He farther signifies his gracious purpose, Ezekiel 16:62, "I will establish my covenant with thee." He had before said, "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant," Ezekiel 16:60. This covenant is God's covenant: it is of his making with his Son Jesus Christ: "I have made a covenant with my chosen: and it is established in him unto us; and therefore may be said to be established with us. As if he had said, As I will establish it with him unto thee; so I will re-establish it in him, with thee. And then the effect of that re-establishment of it shall be, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord"; that I am JEHOVAH, a God of power, and faithful to my promise. It had often been said in wrath, "You shall know that I am the Lord"; you shall know it to your cost: but here it is said in mercy, "You shall know that I am the Lord"; you shall know it to your comfort. And it is one of the

most precious promises of the covenant, “they shall all know the Lord”: by a justifying knowledge; so as to be delivered from the rule of sin, and from the punishment threatened in the law: by a sanctifying knowledge; so as to be delivered from the rule of sin, and to be fitted for gospel-service and obedience: by an evangelical knowledge; a knowledge of God in Christ, which is the beginning of eternal life; “This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”: and likewise by a humbling knowledge; and here is the humbling effect of it described in the words of the text: “That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.”

Here you may observe both the nature of true humiliation, and the ground of it.

1. The nature and properties of true humiliation, “Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame.”

2. The ground and spring of it, “When I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done”: when thou shalt so know the Lord, as to view him to be a reconciled God in Christ. He had before said, “I will remember my covenant,” and when he puts them in mind of the covenant, then they mind their sin and misery, their evil ways and are ashamed. And here, when the covenant is further opened, the humiliation is further enlarged also. Why, the clearer evidence that persons have of God’s being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed will they be for offending him.

I shall farther explain the words, in discoursing upon the following doctrine.

OBSERVATION. “True gospel-humiliation is rooted in the believing knowledge and view of divine reconciliation”: or, “Then is a soul truly humbled, when it apprehends God as truly pacified, and well-pleased in Christ Jesus.” To this purpose are these and the like words of scripture, “They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness, in the latter days. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”; the kingdom of grace reigning through the righteousness of Jesus, declaring God to be pacified in him, it is at hand, it is proclaimed in your ears. Repent, and in order to this, believe the gospel; the gospel of reconciliation. “Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.” Why? “He will have mercy; he will abundantly pardon.” The method we would lay down, for prosecuting this observation, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, shall be the following.

I. We would speak a little of this humiliation.

II. Of this reconciliation; or, of God’s being pacified.

III. Of the connection between them; or the influence which the view and knowledge of God’s being pacified, hath upon this humiliation.

IV. Make some application of the whole.

I. We will touch a little at that humiliation here before us. And, O Sirs, since we are here met about humiliation-work, let us look upon it as the subject-matter of a divine promise, “Thou shalt know that I am the Lord, that thou mayest remember and be confounded.” If you had this view, then you would have the more hope of coming speed, and meeting with success. This view may help you to know, that you are not come to do some great work of yourself, as if God were still standing upon

terms with you, according to the old covenant of works; but that you are come to get all the humbling and healing grace that you need, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, which is a giving covenant. But now, I shall mention four ingredients of this humiliation that is here promised, and that we are to look for, and pray for, to be brought forth out of the womb of the promise, namely, remembrance, confusion, shame, and silence.

1. The first ingredient is remembrance; "That thou mayest REMEMBER." The very first beginning of true repentance is, God's making a man thoughtful; "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies." Hence we are called to consider our ways. We forget God, and forget our sins against him; but whenever God begins the good work, he makes the man to remember and call to mind his sins: as the prodigal, when he came to himself, considered matters. This remembrance, I think, includes illumination and conviction. The first part of the physic that God gives, is the eye-salve, that they may see; for, until their eyes be opened, they will not turn from darkness unto light (Acts 26:18). The first creature that ever God made in the primitive creation was light, and the first thing in the new creation is spiritual light. The sinner before repentance, is like a man sleeping in a dark pit, in the midst of a great many vipers, asps, and serpents, and venomous beasts: while he lies in the dark pit, they neither hurt him, nor is he afraid of them himself; but whenever a ray of light comes in at a hole or window, presently they fall upon him, and sting and torment him, and he sees himself to be surrounded with them. So here, before repentance, the sinner sleeps in the darkness of ignorance, atheism, error, and unbelief; but whenever a beam of spiritual light breaks in upon the mind and conscience, by an effectual conviction and illumination, then sin revives, and the sinner finds himself encompassed, as it were, with living serpents, tainted and corrupted with the poison of asps, destroyed and defiled with all the trash of hell in his heart.

It is not a bare speculation, or notion of our sinful ways, that is imported here. We many times, by a bare notion of our sins and mercies, write them, as it were, upon the waters: they are no sooner thought, or spoke of, but they are forgot again; but it is a feeling remembrance, and an abiding remembrance: such as that the psalmist had, when he said, "My sin is ever before me": they haunt me like a ghost. The ghost of Uria is still before me, might he say; the thoughts of my murder and adultery never go out of my mind. Yea, it is a remembrance of sin, as against God; "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalms 51:4). This is the remembrance here also spoken of, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord: and so thou shalt remember thine evil ways and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame." It is a remembrance of some sin or other, so as to bring in the remembrance of the rest, like that of the woman of Samaria, when Christ told her of her lewdness, she got, as in a map, a view of all that she ever did. Yea, it leads back to the fountain of sin in the nature; "Behold, I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity" (Psalms 51:5).

2. Confusion is another ingredient of the humiliation here mentioned; "That thou mayest remember, and be CONFOUNDED." It is true, this confusion may be thought to be the same with the shame afterwards mentioned; but, I think they may be viewed as distinct. There is a confusion of heart, and a confusion of face. The last of these I take to be the shame with shame; but the former, namely, confusion of heart, I think seems, especially here, to be intended; because it is joined with heart-remembrance of sin: "Thou shalt remember, and be confounded"; i.e., Thou shalt have a heart-confounding remembrance of thy sin. And this confusion of heart, I think, takes in

heart-contrition, or some degree of brokenness; heart-compunction, whereby the heart is pricked and pierced; heart-sorrow and anguish, and most of these ingredients of repentance and godly sorrow mentioned (2 Corinthians 7:11), "For behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge." Yea, it seems to import the heart's being struck with astonishment at its own sinfulness, and with amazement at its own madness; like a man plunged into the deep, his senses are instantly confounded. O! when a man's thoughts are, by a spiritual remembrance, plunged into the depth of sin and wickedness, that he sees into his heart and ways, how he is confounded, so as he knows not what to think! His sins are beyond his understanding; "Who can understand his errors"? His very heart-sins do overflow his thoughts, and surpass his knowledge; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it" (Jeremiah 17:9)? The man is swallowed up in this great deep, "Thou shalt remember, and be confounded."

3. The next ingredient is SHAME, such as is mentioned here, and Ezra 9:6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto thee; for our iniquities are increased over our heads: Lord, our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." The poor penitent publican is the reverse of the proud Pharisee; he is ashamed to look up to heaven. Sin brings shame one way or another; but is best when it brings in a holy shame before God. One may be ashamed of sin, as it brings him to open ignominy before men; but the truly humbled soul is ashamed of sin before God, and that on many accounts. Sin makes him guilty. Adam never blushed for shame, until he was guilty of eating the forbidden fruit, and perceived himself naked. Sin makes him ungrateful, and so he is ashamed that he hath requited evil for good: "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise"? He is ashamed, because sin makes him naked; he sees he is naked, as Adam and Eve saw themselves to be, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit. Sin divests us of our garment of righteousness and holiness; and hence the gospel offers the righteousness of Christ as white raiment, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear (Revelation 3:18). The humbled soul sees itself naked, and therefore is ashamed. Sin makes him a beast, and therefore he is ashamed: "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee." The dog returning to his vomit, and the swine to his wallowing in the mire, is not so loathsome as the soul is to itself, when under a view of sin: "Truth, Lord, I am a dog." Sin makes him a fool, and therefore, he is ashamed. He views himself as a fool and a madman, that hath been mad on idols; and is not this ground of shame? Sin makes him a slave; and that is matter of shame. Alas! that I should have been a slave to Satan, and a captive to divers lusts! Yea, sin makes him a devil; and he sees himself to be an incarnate devil; and therefore blushes that he should be reckoned even among the children of men, let be the children of God; and how can he look up to God, while he sees his nature to be not only earthly, but hellish, not only sensual, but devilish (James 3:15). He sees his sin to be not only greater than the sin of heathens, who never had the gospel, but greater than the sin of devils. They never sinned against the blood of Christ, as I have done. In a word, he is ashamed because his sin brought shame and disgrace to the eternal Son of God, the God of glory, who, as he endured the cross, and despised the shame; so our sin brought him to it; yea, our continued sin put him to open shame (Hebrews 6:6). Ah! the shame that the penitent rubs upon himself for sin! I read of Diodorus, a logician, that he fell down dead for shame that he could not resolve an argument that was propounded to him. Oh! if we were apprehensive of the horridness of our sin how might we blush to death for shame before God!

4. The next ingredient is SILENCE; "And never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame." This holy silence before God, imports a not opening the mouth in opposition to God; not daring to quarrel with his dispensations, but owning that God only hath a right to speak against us; and that he will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth (Psalms 51:4). It imports a not opening his mouth in complaint of him, or reflections on him, whatever be his dispensations: "Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his iniquity"? It imports a silent submission to the will of God, saying, with the psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it" (Psalms 39:2). It imports a silent taking with the charge of sin and guilt justifying God and condemning ourselves; "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19). It imports a conviction of former pride, in opening of the mouth against God; a not opening it any more says, that this was the former practice. Men naturally justify and vindicate themselves by covering themselves with the fig-leaves of some silly excuse. Hence errors in principle are called but a free way of thinking; errors in practice are denominated freedom of action; drunkenness is termed but good fellowship; swearing declared but a piece of bravery; whoredom looked upon to be but a trick of youth; malice and revenge styled but just resentment: thus the mouth of the whole world is open against God in the justification of sin; but when once humiliation takes place, the mouth is shut. Finally, it imports a constant, habitual, self-condemnation, and silent taking with sin all the days of our life: for so the word runs, "Thou shalt never open thy mouth any more." The humbled soul's constant principle and habitual practice is never to open its mouth, but still to be silent before God.

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak of that which is the spring and ground of this humiliation: or, when it is that a sinner is brought to it; namely, when God is pacified towards him for all that he hath done; or when he is at peace with him. Now, I shall condescend upon six properties of this peace which are also included in the text.

1. It is a well-grounded peace; peace upon the ground of an atonement; for so the word pacified seems plainly to import: I am pacified and fully appeased with the blood of the covenant that I have established unto thee in Christ. "I have found a ransom; I have set forth Christ to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:25, Romans 3:26). He hath made peace through the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:20). The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, who gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." Hence,

2. It is a divine peace; "I am pacified, saith the Lord God." It is a peace of God's contrivance, a peace of God's revealing, a peace of God's making; it is a peace that God glories in; "I am pacified." O good news, to hear of a pacified God.

3. It is a present peace; "I AM pacified"; though I was offended, yet now "I am pacified." I was displeased by sin, but I am well-pleased in Christ. "I am pacified"; for the sacrifice is offered. It is true, this was said in our text before ever Christ died, and before he appeared in our nature; but Christ having engaged to do it, it was as good as done; and therefore he then said, "I am pacified": and therefore much more may we believe that now God is saying, "I am pacified."

4. It is a particular peace; "I am pacified towards THEE." It is true, it is a general peace that is published through Christ, according to the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men"; but particularly published in Zion, even to all sinners of Zion, and to every sinner in particular, who hears the gospel. If you know the joyful sound, you may know it is God saying, "I am pacified towards THEE"; and I have given a commission to all my ambassadors to preach the gospel of peace to THEE; "Go preach the gospel to every creature," to every sinner of mankind, declaring that "I am pacified towards HIM." "To YOU is the word of this salvation sent." To thee, man; to thee, woman: to every individual, whether young or old. Alas! what think you of your sinning against this God, who says, "I am pacified towards thee"? Will not this break your heart for your enmity, when he is expressing such love to you, saying, "I am pacified towards thee"?

5. It is a wonderful and surprising peace, with a non obstante; "NOTWITHSTANDING all that thou hast done"; or, "FOR all that thou hast done." "Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst" (Jeremiah 3:5). Thou mayst remember, but I am not to remember it: "Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them"; but imputing the righteousness of Christ unto them. I have got payment for all that thou hast done; therefore, "I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done." Not one of thy sins, greater or less, but are answered for. The price of redemption is paid to the full.

6. It is a proclaimed peace, a spoken of and published peace; and who speaks it? It is said, "The Lord will speak peace to his people": and here it is a peace and reconciliation spoken with a "Thus saith the Lord God"; "When I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, SAITH THE LORD God." Thus saith the Lord God to thee, "For all that thou hast done, and NOTWITHSTANDING all that thou hast done, I am pacified towards thee."

Here is a sure footing and firm ground for thy faith; it is the word gone out of the mouth of the Lord; the God that cannot repent, that cannot revoke his word, and that can never unsay what he hath said: "The word of the Lord endureth forever"; and upon this word thou mayst build thy faith, confidence, and hope. O sinner, it is the word of that JEHOVAH, who can give a being to what he says; it is a word of pardon and peace, for thee, guilty sinner. O! wilt thou accept of the free indemnity proclaimed by the great God over the red cross of the blood of Christ, and over the market-cross of this everlasting gospel?

III. The third thing was, To shew the influence that this hath upon the former; or, the influence that the view and knowledge of this peace and reconciliation, through Christ, proclaimed to the sinner, hath upon the sinner's humiliation; for, the connection between the two is evident from the particle WHEN, "That thou mayst remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, WHEN I am pacified: or, when thou shalt so far know the Lord, as in the verse preceding, as to see and apprehend that I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done." This is the main-spring of true repentance and humiliation. Hence, in our Lesser Catechism, repentance, or returning from sin to God, with grief and hatred of sin, is said to proceed from a true sense of sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Now, if thou art sensible that thou art truly a sinner, then, O listen to the news of mercy in God through Christ; the apprehension thereof will tend to humble thee: and here is mercy proclaimed, "I am pacified towards thee."

Now, the influence that the knowledge and view of God's being pacified in Christ hath upon gospel humiliation, may be opened in these following particulars.

1. The gospel-news of God's being pacified in Christ, is the vehicle of the Spirit of God; "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith" (Galatians 3:2). The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit. If by the hearing of the gospel of peace and reconciliation the Spirit comes, then gospel-humiliation must come that way; for he is the Spirit of grace and supplication, repentance and humiliation.

2. It is by the view of God's being pacified that faith comes; "Faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17). Faith comes by hearing this good news: and then it purifies the heart, and works by love. Who ever had faith, but by the revelation of the grace and mercy of God in Christ? And who ever had this faith of mercy, but was melted and humbled thereby?

3. It is by this view of God's being pacified, that hope is begotten: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope" (1 Peter 1:3); the hope of life, the hope of glory: and then, "He who hath that hope, purifieth himself"; and the more of this purification, the more is the soul humbled and ashamed for sin.

4. It is by the view of God's being pacified in Christ that life comes into the soul; and hence the gospel of peace is called the ministration of life (2 Corinthians 3:7), in opposition to the law, that is the ministration of death. Hence let a man preach the law as a covenant of life, upon doing, promising one heaven, if he do so and so: or let him preach it as a covenant of death, for not doing, and so threaten hell and damnation with all the art and rhetoric of the world; yet never shall he be able to raise one soul to a lively hope; or bring one soul from death to life by it. No; it is impossible. It may preach them dead, but never alive. It is the news and view of God's being pacified, that quickens the soul; and then it remembers, and is confounded and ashamed of its sins.

5. It is the view of God's being pacified, or the revelation of the grace of God in Christ, that brings in liberty, true liberty; "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). Every legalist is in chains and fetters; but so much of the knowledge of peace with God, as any have, so much liberty and freedom; freedom from soul-fetters; freedom of heart to mourn for sin, and turn from it: O! does mercy vent to the like of me? Then the bonds are loosed, and the heart dissolved.

6. The view of God's being pacified begets love; for his love kindles ours, and so kills the enmity; "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The great God, manifesting his great love to the hard-hearted sinner, makes his heart to break; and so the love of God in Christ constrains it, and makes it ashamed of its enmity, and confounded for its rebellion against such bowels of mercy.

7. The view of God's being pacified brings in joy and health to the soul; and then, the joy of the Lord being our strength, we are able, with tears of joy, to fall down before the Lord our Maker: and having the conscience healed by the pacifying blood of Christ, then the soul is ready to say, O! let me sin no more; let me never open my mouth any more against God.

8. The view of God's being pacified, or the revelation of the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of Christ, is the channel of the power of God; "I am not ashamed of the gospel of

Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith” (Romans 1:16, Romans 1:17). And this being the channel of divine power, it is this power of God that brings down the pride of the heart, and humbles the soul under the mighty hand of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Thus God’s being pacified in Christ hath a moral and a physical influence upon humiliation: a moral and argumentative influence; Oh! shall I not be ashamed and confounded for my ingratitude against such love and grace manifested towards me? And also, a physical, powerful, and operative influence; for thus the Lord draws the soul with cords of love, or melts down the hard and icy heart with the fire of his infinite love. So much for this head, viz., the influence that a view of God’s being pacified, through Christ, hath upon the sinner’s humiliation.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was the application. Is it so, as has been said, that true gospel humiliation is rooted in the believing knowledge of divine reconciliation, hence see,

1. What are the grounds of God’s controversy, and of his being angry with the visible church, and of his not being pacified toward them. I mention these two from the text and context here.

(a) When that church or land does not know that the Lord is God: when they are ignorant of him, and of his being Lord; Lord of all in general, and Lord of his church in a special way: when he is not owned and acknowledged as Lord of the vineyard, but is denied in his Sovereignty and Supremacy over his church, and affronted in his Headship; hence it is said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” When Christ is affronted openly in his supreme Deity, and in his supreme Headship, this cannot but be a great ground of controversy.

(b) When that church or people do not believe in him, as a God pacified and reconciled in Christ; do not take him up as he is revealed in his word: believe not that he is pacified in Christ, but go about to pacify him themselves, and establish a righteousness of their own; contriving some other way of pacifying God, than God hath revealed: thinking to please God by their moral virtues and legal performances; and so going off from the gospel.

2. Hence see what are the fruits and evidences of God’s anger and controversy with a church or land, and of his not being pacified; and, consequently, of their want of knowledge of the Lord as a pacified God in Christ.

(a) When they are not brought to remembrance of their sin; for, when God is pacified, then they remember. Here is an evidence of God’s continued anger with a church; when they do not remember their sin; are not remembering their apostasy; are not remembering that they and their fathers have sinned, and will not remember the same; will not be put in remembrance; will not remember their covenant-breaking and perjury; will not remember the dishonours they have done to God. When God remembers mercy to a people, then they remember their sin: When he forgets their sins, then they remember them: But, when they forget their sins, God remembers them.

(b) When they are not brought to confusion of heart for their sins; when it is not a remembering so as to be confounded. If they barely remember, without confusion, it is as good as no remembering: when they remember, and think nothing of their sin; when they remember their sin, and yet do not remember against whom they have sinned; nor remember the heinousness of their sin, nor the aggravations thereof, nor the danger thereof, and the wrath their sins deserve, so as to be touched to the heart, and affected before God, or confounded.

(c) When they are not brought to shame or confusion of face, as well as confusion of heart: when, instead of remembering their sin with shame, they sin without shame, are not ashamed of their sin; but declare their sin as Sodom, and are bold in their sinning; hardening their face against shame and blushing. When people are become shameless in their sinning, shameless in their apostasy, shameless in their defection, shameless notwithstanding all their corruptions; yea, shameless in going on in their sin, notwithstanding all the convictions offered.

(d) When they are not brought to silence, so as not to open their mouth against God, and in their own vindication: when they open their mouth, and say, they are innocent, then the controversy remains; "Thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me: behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned" (Jeremiah 2:35), when they stand up in their own vindication with open mouth; instead of opening their mouth in confessing of their sin, and in justifying of the Lord: when they will not openly and judicially confess their sin; when they do not confess freely, nor confess full, nor confess nationally, or as a church, that they have sinned; but rather open their mouth in justifying themselves, and condemning these that aim and endeavour at confessing or witnessing against their sin.

3. Is it so, that a soul is then truly humbled, when it apprehends God as truly pacified, and well-pleased in Christ Jesus? Hence see then, the miserable case of secure sinners, that know not God in Christ. They do not remember their sin against God. They sin without shame; and they have their mouth open against God, vindicating themselves, and justifying themselves. They glory in their shame; they see not their sinfulness.

4. Hence see what is the cause of so little humiliation. Because there is so little faith of the gospel of peace; unbelief, in not knowing and remembering that God is a pacified God in Christ, is the main cause of it; therefore they do not remember their sin. They do not believe that God is at peace with them; therefore they are at war with God. Perhaps they think and fancy that he is at peace with them; but if they had the faith of it, it is impossible they could be at peace with sin.

5. Hence see the matchlessness of the grace and mercy of God, that he should proclaim peace with rebels, and declare himself pacified towards them, for all that they have done: and, that he should send forth ambassadors, to publish peace in his name, and commit to them the word of reconciliation, to pray you in his name to be reconciled to God, because he hath made Christ to be sin for us, a sacrifice for us, through which he is pacified.

6. Hence see the necessity of preaching the gospel of peace: otherwise no true repentance, no gospel-humiliation. People will never remember their sins, and be ashamed for them, until they hear, and know, that God is pacified toward them, for all that they have done. Gospel-doctrine is a heart-humbling and heart-softening doctrine: but, such is the hardening nature of legal-doctrine, that, let a man preach life to the doer of the law, and death to the transgressor of it never so much, it will only tend to harden the man's heart against God, and to foster his rebellion and rage against God; for, "the law worketh wrath." Never will a sinner remember his sins, and blush or be ashamed, until he understand that God insists not upon the doing covenant with him, or upon the threatening covenant, denouncing wrath from Sinai: but, when God declares himself pacified, and when the sinner hears the doctrine of free remission, pardon to guilty sinners, and peace to rebel sinners; then will he remember his sins, and be ashamed; What! is there mercy, peace, and pardon for me! Then the soul melts.

7. Hence see what is the leading sin of the day and generation wherein we live; what is Scotland's chief sin, and the root of all our sin and rebellion, namely, unbelief and rejecting of the gospel of peace; not believing this report, That God is pacified in Christ. Nothing provokes him to wrath so much, as the slighting and despising of his mercy. Why does not Scotland remember their sins? Why are they not ashamed of their sins? Why will they not confess their sins with shame and confusion of face? Why will they not humble themselves? Even because they do not believe in Christ, or that God is pacified in Christ. We have forgotten our God, and our resting-place, do not know and believe in him as a pacified God. Nothing kindles his anger so much as the slighting of his love. Why does he appear in arms against us, but because we refuse the peace which he proclaims? Why is he arming Popish powers against us, and appearing in fury, but because we reject his favour? He may justly let us taste the bitterness of war, because we distaste the sweetness of peace; the peace that he proclaims through Christ.

8. Hence see an evidence of true gospel-humiliation. When is a person truly humbled for sin? Even when the mercy of God melts him, when the love of God in Christ shames him for his enmity; when the view of God's being at peace, makes him at war with himself; when, in view of God's grace, he is confounded at his own ingratitude: when he begins to fear the Lord and his goodness; when he loves much, because much is forgiven him: when the grace of God, that appears to him teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; when the news of God's being pacified towards him, for all that he hath done, melts him more than all the flames of Sinai could; when his mouth is stopped from speaking ill against God, because God's mouth is open in speaking peace to him; when the view of peace and pardon and the sense of God's kindness to him, confounds him for his unkindness to God.

9. Hence see what is the proper work of a humiliation-day, namely, to remember your sin, and be ashamed. O that Scotland would remember their sin; that king and parliament would remember their sin; ministers and judicatories would remember their sin, and be ashamed. Let every one of us remember our sin, and all that we have done. Remember the sin of your heart and nature; the sin of your youth, and follies of your non-age: remember the sin of your riper age; remember the sin that hath accompanied your calling: ye that inordinately desire to be rich, how you lie, and cheat, and swear, and break the Sabbath: remember the sin of your holy things, of your reading, praying, hearing, communicating; remember the sins of omission and commission you are guilty of: remember, and be confounded; remember, and be ashamed, and be silent, and never open your mouth, because of your shame.

10. Hence see, how, and in what way, you may come to this right remembrance and due humiliation for sins. Why, the great and leading duty, in order to this humiliation, is a look to a pacified God. If you would be brought to holy shame and confusion of face for your sin; then, O know and believe that God is pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done; that there is mercy in God toward thee.

QUESTION. How shall I know that God is pacified toward me? For I thought rather to have heard that God was angry at me for my sin: since he is angry with the wicked every day, and hath revealed his wrath against sinners.

ANSWER. Yea, in the law his wrath is revealed; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them"; and the law-threatening shall be executed upon

you, if gospel-grace be not received: and, as you may know the wrath of God is what you are liable to; because it is revealed in the law; so, you may know the mercy of God is what you may obtain, because it is revealed in the gospel; and it is to you that this mercy is given in the gospel dispensation. To you the door of hope is open. God hath commanded us to go and preach the gospel to every creature: and what is this gospel of peace? Even that God is pacified in Christ towards thee, for all that thou hast done.

OBJECTION. But God hath no purpose or design of mercy toward all; and therefore, how can I apply this gospel-offer to myself?

ANSWER. God hath not made his secret purpose the rule of thy faith, but his word: and you may and shall know his merciful purpose, if once you take his word, and believe his word, saying, "I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done."

"But, say you, I am a monster of sin; I am an old sinner, a hardened and stout-hearted sinner." Well, but hear his word, saying, in Christ, "I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done." Alas! but I have done evil as I could. Nay, but says he, "I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done."

OBJECTION. "Oh! but I have done dishonour to God; I have done affronts to Christ; I have done despite to the Spirit; I have done injury to my neighbour; and I have done many villainies that you know nothing of." Well, but what of all that? Says God, Behold, I am pacified in Christ; and "I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

"Alas!" say you, "but I have done more wickedness than ever any sinner before me did; and if you knew what I have done, you would neither think nor say that there is peace in God's mind toward me."

ANSWER. Why, little matter what I think or say; but, O hear what God says; he is saying, "I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done"; you cannot think it; but my thoughts are not your thoughts; for, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

"Why, Sir," say you, "if that be the case, that God is, in Christ, pacified towards me, for all that I have done, and thought, and spoken against him; this is such astonishing doctrine, and such astonishing grace in God, manifested toward me, that I am confounded at the thoughts of this marvelous grace; and I am confounded at the thoughts of my woeful wickedness against such a gracious God." Are you so? Confounded may you be, in God's great name, and ashamed to the dust! This is the great thing that God would have you brought to, by making known his covenant of grace to you, even "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord."

S. Hear Christ's Testimony about Himself

Hear Christ's Testimony about Himself by Ralph Erskine The third direction to your faith is, O let faith take the testimony of Christ out of his own mouth concerning his own glory, which is here wrapped into the very midst of the Father's glory! "All things that the Father hath are mine," Christ, the Mediator, is the speaker here: and as he declares, to his Father's praise and honour, that all things he hath for us are originally the Father's, even that God, who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, &c., so he proclaims his own glory that he hath from the Father: "All things that the Father hath are mine." We need not commend Christ to you, as if we could say more than he says himself; there is ten thousand times more in this very word, than men or angels can tell: therefore, O hear his commendation out of his own mouth, "All things that the Father hath are mine." He says, elsewhere, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." Why? What rest? What happiness? What good things? Even all things that the Father hath, they are put in my hand to give. Christ himself is here the preacher, commending himself, and offering himself. O sirs, is there none here hearkening to him, and saying, O! "It is the voice of my Beloved; behold he cometh, skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills? It is the voice of my Beloved, saying, Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for, lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;" the heavy shower of the Father's wrath for your sins, hath fallen on my head, and now all the treasures of the Father's grace and love are put into my hand and will you not come to me? Rise, my love, my fair one, you shall be fair in my sight, though in yourself a vile monster, and black like hell, by lying among the pots of sin and guilt; yet, rise at my call; let your heart rise, let your soul rise: "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away: all things are ready, come to the marriage." If you intend to come to the marriage supper, come first to the marriage. All things are ready for you, whatever you lack; pardon, and peace, and grace, and glory, and every good thing; "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and, "I that speak unto you am he;" and, "To you, O men, do I call; my voice is to the sons of men. If any man thirst let him come to me and drink." Come and drink abundantly of all things that your souls stand in need of: only come to me, and then drink. The Father hath put the cup of salvation in my hand: come then, and take a large drink of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all things that the eternal God hath; for, "All things that the Father hath are mine." A large drink of the Spirit is to be had here. See John 7:37.

S. Heaven's Grand Repository

Heaven's Grand Repository; or The Father's Love to the Son, and Depositing All Things into His Hand, A Strong Encouragement to Faith. (Second Sermon) by Ralph Erskine "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." John 3:35.

[What follows was delivered immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, June 27, 1731.]

It is in the holy and over-ruling providence of him, in whose hand all things and all hearts are, that I have been inclined to pursue this subject, on this solemn occasion. I have not found my mind determined to enter on any other theme; and, I suppose, no subject can be more suitable to the work of the day; for, we cannot commemorate the boundless love of Christ to us, in dying for our sins; nor can we remember it more effectually than by remembering the Father's bountiful love to him, for his so doing; and that evidenced by his giving all things into his hand.

Nothing in the world, will sweeten the remembrance of Christ's love to us, so much as the believing remembrance of the Father's love to him; even as nothing can provoke us more to put honour upon Christ, than to see how much honour the Father puts upon him; and for this end, "That all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Why, what honour has the Father put upon him? It is even the greatest honour; and that wherein our greatest happiness lies He hath given all things into his hand." As this is laid down here for a foundation of faith, if you compare it with John 3:36, and with Matthew 11:27-28; so here we have a full feast, and plentiful provision for our faith to feed upon this day, and all in the best hand; "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." The doctrinal observation we deduced from these words was as follows, namely—

OBSERV. "That the Father's love to the Son, evidenced by his giving all things into his hand, is a strong argument and encouragement for faith to believe in him." The method laid down, for prosecuting this subject, was the following, viz.:

I. I would speak a little of the Father's love to the Son.

II. Speak of this evidence of the Father's love; and that, 1. Shew some of these things the Father gives to the Song of Solomon. 2. Notice the import of the expression, "He gave all things into his hand." 3. How this evidences the Father's love to him. 4. Why he hath thus manifested his love to him.

III. How this love of the Father, thus evidenced, in giving all things into his hand, is a ground of Faith.

IV. Make some Application of the whole.

We have already discussed the doctrinal part of this subject, and likewise made some improvement thereof: what I now intend farther, upon this subject, is by way of Exhortation. And

the exhortation I would offer this day from this doctrine, is, That all that hear me would come to this full and sufficient Saviour, believing that the Father hath furnished him with all things necessary for your everlasting salvation; for, he that thus believeth on the Son hath everlasting life in him. That which is the great matter and ground of faith, is also the great motive and argument for it, namely, that the Father hath, in love to him, and to sinners in him and through him, given all things into his hand. That I may, therefore, pursue and enforce this exhortation to believe in Christ, upon this ground, I shall, as the Lord may enable, observe the following method of discourse:

First, That our faith may be fixed in this truth, I shall offer some demonstrations of it; and evidence that all things are given into the hand of Christ, the Father's beloved.

Secondly, That faith may be cleared on this head, I shall notice a little the beauty of this disposure of infinite wisdom, in giving all things into Christ's hand.

Thirdly, That our faith may be enlarged and widened in the view thereof, I shall speak a little of the extent of the matter, the treasure, that Christ hath in him, while it is said that all things are given into his hand.

Fourthly, That faith may be enlightened and assisted further herein, I shall consider the manner how all things are in the hand of Christ.

Fifthly, that faith may be quickened and excited, I shall offer some motives and considerations, arising from, and accompanying this truth, that all things are given into Christ's hand.

Sixthly, That our faith may be regulated and squared, according to the gospel rule, I shall close with a few directions, as the Lord may enable.

And, O sirs, since faith comes by hearing of the object of faith, by hearing what Christ, the object of faith is, and what he hath, let your eye be towards him, and your ear be open to hear what is said of him; that, in bearing, you may believe, without seeking to draw faith out of your own heart and bowels, whence you will never find it. If there be any subject in the world, the hearing whereof tends, through grace, to work saving faith, it is this, that faith, and all grace, all good, all fulness, all things, are in Christ's hand.

First, The first thing I have proposed, that faith may be fixed, and settled, and assured of this truth, is to offer some demonstrations thereof. And, O that it may be in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

I shall only premise, that when we say, All things are in the hand of Christ, we mean not only generally, all things in the kingdom of providence; because his kingdom rules over all; and, "He is the Head of all things unto the church," Ephesians 1:22, but also, particularly, all things in the kingdom of grace, of which he says, "My kingdom is not of this world," John 18:36. But blessed be God, he hath not said, his spiritual kingdom is not in this world; but it is not of this world: he hath his spiritual invisible kingdom in the hearts of his people in this world; who, though they are in it, yet they are not of it, but chosen out of the world; yet, sometimes this kingdom of his is visible, in the remarkable tokens of his spiritual presence in his ordinances. And, O for many such tokens this day! But now, that all things are in Christ's hand, will be evident from the following demonstrations:

1. Demonstration of it is this, "If they that inherit Christ, inherit all things; then all things are in his hand; but so it is, they that inherit him, inherit all things, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come: all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." This golden chain, together with all things present, and all things to come, is linked to the believer, because he is united unto Christ. The believer hath an interest in Christ; by an interest in Christ, he hath an interest in God; and by an interest in God, he hath an interest in all things. As Solomon says, "Money answers all things;" because all things that are vendible may be procured by it; so Christ answers all things to the believer. He is meat and drink to them; "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." He is gold and silver to them: "The merchandize of wisdom is better than silver; and the gain thereof than pure gold." Come, buy of me gold tried in the fire." He is raiment to them when naked; and they put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is health to them when diseased: I am the Lord that healeth thee." He is all things to them; He that overcometh shall inherit all things," Revelation 21:7. Why? It is added. "I will be his God."

2. Demonstration of this truth is, "If all things, without Christ, be but empty nothing, then all things only are in Christ's hand but so it is, all things are nothing without Christ: "Vanity of vanity, says the preacher, all is vanity," Ecclesiastes 1:2. All the riches, pleasures, profits, and preferments of the world are but emptiness; your wisdom, your parts, your children, your lands, your revenues, without Christ, can amount to nothing; they are but like zeros without a number. It is said of believers, 2 Corinthians 6:10. Having nothing, they possess all things; because, though they had nothing in the world, yet, having Christ, they have all things; and on the other hand, it may be truly said of the wicked and unbelieving, that, having all things, they possess nothing; because, though they had all things in the world at their will, yet, being without Christ, they have nothing; all they have is but emptiness; yea, all they have is a curse, because they have not Christ. And thus all things, without him, are not only nothing, but worse than nothing.

3. Demonstration of this truth is, "If all things in the world be but a shadow of what is in Christ, then all things are in Christ's hand substantially; but so it is, all good things in the world are but shadows of what is in Christ." Outward riches are but a shadow of the unsearchable riches of Christ; outward life is but a shadow of him who is the way, the truth, and the life; outward liberty is but a shadow of that freedom that is to be had in Christ; If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed," John 8:36 importing that no freedom is freedom indeed, and in truth, but this; outward rest is but a shadow of the rest that is to be had in him; "Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The sun in the firmament is but a shadow of the Sun of righteousness, and of his glory; roses and lilies are but shadows of his beauty, who is the rose of Sharon, and lily of the valley; rivers and fountains are but shadows of his fulness, who is the fountain of living waters; not a fountain closed, but a fountain opened to us: plants and trees are but a shadow of the verdure of him who is the plant of renown, the tree of life. All things that have any excellency in them are but shadows of him in whom all excellencies do centre. All the stars of creature-excellencies are but shadows of him who is the bright and morning Star.

4. Demonstration of this truth is, "If the knowledge of all things be worth nothing, in respect of the knowledge of Christ; then all things are only in his hand; but so it is, that all things are but loss and dung in respect of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Php 3:5." The great apostle desired to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified; yea, this is life eternal to know him, and God in him,

John 17:3. The knowledge of Christ is the most certain, the most profitable, and the most comfortable knowledge. It is the most certain knowledge; we know other things only by their shape and species; but we know Christ by the Spirit; we know other things by the testimony of men; but we know Christ by the testimony of the Spirit; now, as the testimony of the Spirit is more certain than the testimony of man; so the knowledge of Christ is the most certain knowledge. It is the most profitable; it is a knowledge that gives us the possession of the things we know; by the knowledge of Christ we are possessed of Christ by our knowledge of his fulness, we are possessed of his fulness; By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many." If it be life eternal to know him, surely it is most profitable. It is the most comfortable; all our lack of comfort and satisfaction flows from our lack of the knowledge of Christ; and all our true comfort arises from the knowledge and view of him. John wept, because he though none was able to open the seals of the book of God's decrees, concerning man's redemption; but, upon the revealing of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the weeping was stilled; he wept no more, Revelation 5:4-5.

5. Demonstration, or scriptural argument for this truth is, if Christ can supply all wants; then all things must be in his hand; but so it is, he can supply all wants which we labour under, Php 4:19. "My God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Whatever you labour under, there is that in Christ which can supply and support. Do you labour under desertion? Then, he says, "I will never leave nor forsake thee," Hebrews 13:5. Do you labour under corruption and bondage to sin? It is he that says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," Romans 6:14. Do you labour under temptation? It is he who, as the God of peace, will tread down Satan under your feet, Romans 16:20, and says, "My grace shall be sufficient for you." Do you labour under weakness? It is he who says, "My strength shall be perfected in thy weakness, 2 Corinthians 12:9. Do you labour under affliction, inward or outward? "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Do you labour under fears of public calamities upon the land? It is said of him, "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." Do you labour under the fears of death? It is he who says, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

6. Demonstration of this truth is, if Christ can satisfy all the desires, suit all the conditions, and answer all the objections of sinners, then he must have all things; but so it is, he can satisfy all desires of sinners; for he is the Desire of all nations, and everything desirable is in him; 'He is altogether lovely' (or all desires, as the word imports), Song of Solomon 5:16, made up of desirable things." Is worth desirable? He is the treasure hid in the field. Is wisdom desirable? In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom hath builded her house, Proverbs 9:1; it is in the plural number, wisdoms. Christ is a compound of wisdom. He can suit all conditions of poor sinners; there is no condition you can be in, but he hath a promise suited to it; so that there is in Christ what suits all cases; for the promises are nothing else but the veins where the blood and fulness of Christ doth run. Are you wandering? Christ says, I am the way. Are you in darkness? Christ says, I am the light of the world. Are you in deadness? Christ says, I am the resurrection and the life. Are you guilty? Christ says, he is the Lord our righteousness. Are you polluted? Christ says, he is the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Are you dejected? Christ says, He will send the Comforter. Do you need protection? Christ affirms that he is the Rock of Ages, in whom is everlasting strength. Do you need direction? Christ is the wonderful Counsellor, and he says, I will lead the, blind by a way they know not. As Christ can satisfy all

desires and suit all conditions, so he can answer all objections. If any of you say, "Alas! I am a poor lost sinner, then Christ says, "I came to seek and to save that which is lost," Luke 19:10. "Oh!" says another, I am unrighteous, and I am a great sinner." Well, Christ says, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matthew 9:13. Oh," says a third, "but I cannot repent." Well, it is answered, Him hath God exalted to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins, Acts 5:31, "Alas!" cries another, "but I cannot turn from sin." It is answered, Christ is sent to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities, Acts 3:26. It is his work to turn away transgression from Jacob; to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. "Ah! but I have no might or ability to come unto Christ." It is answered, "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he createth strength," Isaiah 40:29-31. He is the Author of faith, Hebrews 12:2. "Oh! but I have sinned to the uttermost." Why, then, he tells you he is able to save to the uttermost, Hebrews 7:25. "Alas! I am a backslider, and bent to backsliding." To this it is answered, "I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely," Hosea 14:4. "Oh! but though I should come to him, I cannot follow him his sheep follow him." Well, what says he to this? Even that He will carry the lambs in his arms, and gently lead those that are with young," Isaiah 40:11. Whatever the objection is, he can answer it; whatever the case is, he can remede it; whatever the desire is, he can satisfy it: why then, all things must be in his hand; and no wonder, for all the treasures of divine plenitude and fulness are in his hand. This may suffice to demonstrate the truth hereof.

Secondly, The next thing proposed was, in order to clear our faith in this matter, to notice the beauty of this disposure of infinite wisdom, in giving all things into Christ's hand. And,

1. In this contrivance infinite wisdom hath consulted the Father's right and property, and manifested that he is the giver of all things, and the possessor of all things; insomuch that, when he gives all things, he cannot lose thereby the possession of any thing he gives; for, the Father's giving all things into Christ's hand doth not imply that he alienates his own right. It is true, when we give a thing to another, we lose a right to it; but it is not so with God; for when he gives all things to Christ, and when he gives Christ, and all things in him to us, he still keeps his right to all that he gives; "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Corinthians 3:22-23. Thus, what the Father gives into Christ's hand, remains still in the Father's hand; "And I give unto them eternal life, and none shall pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one," John 10:28.

2. In this contrivance infinite wisdom hath consulted the Son's right and title. This donative right that he hath, as Mediator, as it is well adapted to him, who, as God, hath the same essential right and title to all things with the Father and the Holy Ghost. For, as to his eternal Godhead, he is the everlasting Father, Isaiah 9:6, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting, Micah 5:2. "By whom are all things, and we by him," 1 Corinthians 8:6. And, as Mediator, his donative right is attended with an acquisitive right, by his purchase, by which he hath merited and obtained a name above every name, and a being head over all things to the church, Php 2:9, Ephesians 5:23. A bellical right, by conquest, making the people to fall under him, Psalms 110:4; making them willing in a day of his power, Psalms 110:3.; and overcoming those that make war with him, Revelation 17:14. He is able to subdue all things to himself," Hebrews 2:8. An hereditary right, being the heir of all things, Hebrews 1:2, and being the first-born, higher than the kings of the earth, Psalms 89:27; the first born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, Colossians

1:18.

3. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the security of the stock and treasure, with which Christ is intrusted; and taken the best method for securing all things in his hand. We will find it is done with a special solemnity: It is done by solemn election, he being chosen to this trust; "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isaiah 42:1. It is done by solemn transaction between the Father and him, when the counsel of peace was between them both; "I have made a covenant with my chosen," Psalms 89:3. It was done by a solemn call, a formal and legal call; "I the Lord have called thee, and given thee for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles, Isaiah 42:6; and so to be all things to his people. It was done by a solemn commission, under the broad seal of heaven, whereby he is authorised to be all things that sinners need Him hath God the Father sealed, John 6:27. All things are given to him with the solemnity of a promise; such as, Psalms 72:8-11, "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." To the same purpose, Psalms 89:24-25, "But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers." Yea, all things are given into his hand with the solemnity of an oath, Psalms 89:34-35 MY covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that hath gone out of my mouth; once have I sworn by my holiness, I will not lie unto David." Psalms 110:4-7, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck, &c.; not only so, but a King, for ever, upon a throne, ruling over all things; "The Lord, at thy right hand, shall strike through kings in his wrath; he shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the head over many countries." This vast treasure, then, is well secured.

4. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the fitness of the great Trustee, to whom all things are granted. O what wisdom is in this, that he who is, so to speak, the centre of the glorious Trinity, I mean, the middle person, should be the centre of all things: Thus he hath, as it were, consulted the convenience of all things. How fit is it that all things should move towards their centre, and meet there! He is the central place, not only the middle person of the glorious Trinity, but also the Mediator between God and man, that all things between God and man, they might have all things common between them, for his own glory and their good. Read concerning this, Ephesians 1:10, "That he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him." All things good and bad may be said to be given into his hand; all evil things, such as, the devil, the world, and sin, and death, that they may be ruled and overruled; and all good things, that they may be managed and secured. All our enemies are put in his hand, that they may be destroyed; and all our blessings put in his hand, that they may be preserved. None but Christ was capable of such a trust; no mere creature, among men or angels, was capable to bear this glory; "It is he that builds the temple of the Lord, and bears the glory," Zechariah 6:13. None but he was capable to be the disposer of all needs and dispenser of all blessings: therefore he is made the general receiver of all things.

5. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the pleasure of all parties, even the pleasure of all the persons of the glorious Trinity; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, Colossians 1:19, where you may notice that the word FATHER is not in the original; and, therefore, this work of reposing all things, all fullness in Christ, may be looked upon not only as the work of the Father, but the work of the whole glorious Trinity. It pleased Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost, that in Christ should all fulness dwell; that into his hand should all things be given; the Father proposed, the Son accepted, and the Holy Ghost consented, that in Christ, as Mediator, should all fulness dwell; and this was done with rapturous pleasure. It pleased the Father to propose it; for he says, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty." It pleased the Son to accept, for he says, Lo! I come! It pleased the Holy Ghost to consent, for he rested on Christ, and furnished him for his work; "The Spirit of the Lord God was upon me, for he hath anointed me," Isaiah 61:1. This ravishing pleasure of the glorious Trinity is not only plainly imported in the words of our text, where it is the Father's love to the Son, as our Saviour and Surety, is made the spring of his giving all things into his hand; but you have it plainly expressed, Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." And Proverbs 8:30, "Then," says Christ, namely, from all eternity, "I was by him, as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight." Now in what respect was he the Father's delight? Even in respect of his rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights being with the sons of men. The Father delighted in me, because I delighted in the sons of men, in the very prospect of saving and redeeming them by my blood. He delighted to see him delighting in this mediatorial service, for which all things were given into his hand, with infinite pleasure.

And, as God consults his own pleasure herein, so the pleasure of all poor sinners, for whose sake and benefit all things were given unto him; and hence, whenever the glory of this method of salvation, through Christ, is open to the heart of any poor sinners, they are not only pleased and satisfied, but ravished and filled with sweet wonder, and strong consolation, Hebrews 6:18, and rejoice with joy unspeakable, 1 Peter 1:8. The soul is, by a glorious and ravishing power, carried out to rest in this device, as every way worthy of God, and every way suitable and satisfying to their case.

6. In this contrivance, infinite wisdom hath consulted the credit and honour of all concerned. He hath herein consulted the credit and honour of his own majesty and greatness, in giving all things into the hand of Christ, the second Adam, and not transacted any more with man, in his own person, now when turned rebel to his crown and dignity; but transacted immediately with Christ, a person of equal dignity with himself, giving all things to him, and through him to us. Thus we are taught to keep at a due distance from this infinitely glorious Sovereign, and to come and receive blessings, not immediately out of his hand, but by the hand of Christ, the Mediator; "I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me."

He hath consulted the credit of his name, and of all his glorious excellencies; the credit of his broken law, how it might not only be fulfilled, but magnified to the utmost; the credit of his offended justice, how it might not only be satisfied, but glorified to the highest. Why, infinite wisdom knew that there was nothing that the violated law, or the injured attributes of God, could demand for the reparation of their honour, but what the sinner's Surety, having all things given to him, could answer with ease, and to infinite satisfaction. The creditor well knew that the Surety was not only creditable, but responsible, abundantly able to pay all the debt; mighty to save, mighty to satisfy, mighty to give all the infinite satisfaction demanded; insomuch, that mercy vents to sinners, without any prejudice to justice; and the attributes of God, seemingly inconsistent one with another., are reconciled in Christ, "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." And God pardons and satisfies so as not only to be merciful, but even just, in justifying the ungodly. He hath consulted the credit of his Son Christ Jesus, who thus is honoured

with a name above every name that can be named; all things being given into his hand, not only to furnish him with his mediatorial service, but also to reward him for it, Php 2:9. He is honoured with a goodly train, a throng court of supplicants, all things being given unto him, that the gathering of the people might be to him for supply, and that the revenue of praise might be given to him, through all eternity. Yea, he hath consulted the credit as well as the profit of ill the, redeemed, by giving all things into the hand of Christ. God never honoured the church, nor advanced them to greater dignity, than by giving them an universal plentitude, as head of the body the church; and every believer may say, "My Head, my Husband, my Lord, hath all things in his hand." This is the honour of all the saints, they have all things in Christ; and he is made of God unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; yea, and all things, that he that glorieth may glory in him. So much for a hint at the beauty of this disposure.

Thirdly, The next thing proposed was, in order to enlarge and widen our faith in this matter, to speak of the Extent of this store and treasure that Christ hath; the Father having given all things into his hand. Why then, besides what we said on the doctrinal part, consider,

1. If all things are in his hand, then all the attributes of God are in him. There is nothing that the Father hath, excepting his personality, but the Son hath, as Mediator; "All things that the Father hath are mine," John 16:15. All things that God hath, they belong to the Mediator also, the God-man. Here then is an ocean where you and I may dive for ever, and never get to the bottom. Having all things, he hath all the wisdom of God, Colossians 2:3, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Poor foolish sinner, who hath no wisdom, knowledge, nor understanding, here is a treasure for you: "Christ, the wisdom of God, made of God unto you wisdom," 1 Corinthians 1:30. Having all things, he hath all the power of God; "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God," 1 Corinthians 1:24.

Poor feeble soul, who can do nothing, here is a good bargain for you to lay hold upon; it is he that can work in you, both to will and do; and make his people willing in a day of his power. You are not called to come to Christ, but by the power of Christ, which is the power of God. You are to receive him that can give you power to receive him; and, as one absolutely weak, to take hold of his strength, and look to his power, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth. Having all things, he hath all the holiness of God; he is said to be made of God unto as sanctification; and surely here is an immense fountain of sanctity, the infinite holiness of God. O poor, vile polluted sinner, who hath lost the image of God, by the fall of the first Adam, and the deficiency of his holiness, here is a better head and husband for You, in whom is all the fulness of the divine holiness, that you may be complete in him.

Having all things, he hath all the justice of God, and all the righteousness of God in him, and justice satisfied in him, by his mediatorial righteousness; for, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake;" yea, he that is the righteousness of God, is made unto us righteousness, 1 Corinthians 1:30, and, O wonderful word! "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. O guilty, guilty sinner! here is a joyful sound in your ears, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." You may, in Christ, be more righteous in God's sight than ever you was guilty in his sight; yea, you may be the very righteousness of God in him.

You may not only be justified, but find God to be just in justifying you, because the justice of God is in him; and it is satisfied in him, magnified in him, glorified in him. Having all things, he hath all the mercy of God in his hand; all the infinite love, pity, and compassion of God is in his hand, and in his heart. What is Christ, but the love of God wrapt up in a garment of flesh and blood? 1 John 4:9-10, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And Jude 1:21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God;" how? "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." O poor miserable sinner! Would you wish to find mercy in the moment of death, and mercy at the great day? Know that there is no mercy to be expected out of God's hand, unless you look to his mercy as in the hand of Christ; for, he will never shew mercy to the prejudice of his justice; and it is only in Christ that mercy and justice meet together and embrace each other. Having all things, he hath all the faithfulness and truth of God, "My mercy and my faithfulness shall be with him," Psalms 89:24.

I have observed between thirty and forty places of scripture, where mercy and truth, mercy and faithfulness, are joined together; and here you see they are joined together in Christ. In him the mercy and love of God vents to the honour of divine truth, pledged even in all the threatenings of the law, as well as divine truth, pledged in all the promises of the gospel; because in him all the threatenings and curses of the law have spent their force; "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Galatians 3:13. And, "In him are all the promises, Yea and Amen to the glory of God," 2 Corinthians 1:20. He is the way and the truth; truth itself, the God of truth, and the truth of God.

O perfidious, faithless, unfaithful, and treacherous sinner! who hath many times lied to the God of truth; wouldst thou have thy falsehood all done away, and swallowed up in the truth and veracity of God, and your salvation secured notwithstanding of your falsehood, fickleness, and instability? Here is a pillar on which you may stand firm and fixed, amidst all changes, whether in your outward lot or inward frame; for, "All flesh is grass; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The truth of God standeth unalterably the same. Again, having all things, he hath all the authority of God in his hand. "My name is in him," Exodus 23:21.

O! poor lost sinner, when Christ, in this gospel, comes to seek and save that which was lost, say not, by what authority doth he these things? He is the Sent and Sealed of God, and he hath all the authority that God can give him. And if you ask by what authority we, poor sinful mortal worms like yourselves, do offer him and all his store to you? Indeed, we would have no authority if he had not said, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature; and lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world." In a word, having all things, he hath all the fulness of God in his hand; "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Colossians 1:19. "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Not only all the attributes of God, but all the fulness of all the divine attributes. Not only the wisdom of God, but all the fulness of divine wisdom; not only the power of God, but all the fulness of divine power; not only the holiness of God, but all the fulness of divine holiness; not only the justice and righteousness of God, but all the fulness of divine righteousness; not only the mercy of God, but all the fulness of divine mercy; not only the truth and faithfulness of God, but all the fulness of divine faithfulness; not only the authority of God, but all the fulness of divine authority; not only is God in him, but all the fulness of the Godhead. O! poor empty sinner! here is

unsearchable riches, a bottomless well of everlasting salvation for you.

2. If all things are in his hand, then all the reins of providence are in his hand; this must follow upon what hath been said, having all the perfections of God, surely his kingdom ruleth overall. What a vast field is here! I shall only touch at some of the border thereof. For all things in heaven, earth, and hell, are under his government as Mediator, Php 2:10, Ephesians 1:22. All the reins of common providence, in the world, and special providence, in the church, and among the children of God, are wholly in his hand. Why then, having all things, he hath all kingdoms and churches in his hand; "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice," Proverbs 8:15. When he will, he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth, Psalms 75:6-7, "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge, he putteth down one and raiseth up another." It is by him that the churches are planted and watered; and again displanted and turned into a barren wilderness when he pleases, Isaiah 41:18.

Whatever disorders and confusions be in the church of God, it is best for us to keep about the hand of Christ, who hath the overruling of all things to his Father's glory, and his people's good. Having all things, he hath all the stars of heaven in his hand; not only the sun, moon, and stars of these visible heavens; for, he could make the stars in their courses fight against Sisera; but also, all the stars in the church's firmament, Revelation 1:16, and he orders them to shine so long in this place, and so long in the other, as he pleases. Having all things, he hath all the winds of heaven in his hand. When the church and children of God pray, Song of Solomon 4:16, "Awake, O north wind; come, thou south," &c. Whence do they expect these winds of the Spirit's influences? Even from him who hath said of the blessed Comforter, "I will send him unto you," John 16:7. It is he that prophecies unto the winds, Ezekiel 37:9. "Thus saith the Lord, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

If there be little of this quickening wind blowing about your hearts, yet he can order the winds to arise when he pleases; for all the influences of the Spirit are in his hand, as well as the natural winds, Psalms 135:7. Having all things, he hath all the waters of the sea, and all the dust of the earth, in his hand; "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span? and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure?" Isaiah 40:12.

Perhaps you have friends buried in the sea, or buried in the earth; whether the earth or sea be their graves, are they friends in Christ? Rejoice in the faith of their happy resurrection; "He will raise them up at the last day." It is easy with him to command the earth and the sea to give up their dead; for he hath every drop of water, and every pile of dust within the view of his omniscient eye, and within the hollow of his omnipotent hand. Having all things, he hath all the mountains and hills in his hand, as in the forecited, Isaiah 40:12. He is said to weigh up the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. The mountains and hills are in his hand, both in a literal and metaphorical sense; they are in his hand and under his feet, so that it is easy with him to cast them out of the way with his hand, or tread upon them, and come skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills, Song of Solomon 2:8. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before our Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain," Zechariah 4:7.

How doth faith remove mountains, but by the hand of Christ? Possibly you may find mountains of sin and guilt, mountains of trouble and distress, mountains of fears and objections, mountains of difficulties and discouragements in your way; but let them not fright you from coming to Christ for

he hath them all in his hand; and he can overturn the mountains as easily as he can turn his hand. Having all things, he hath all weathers in his hand, whether fair or foul, calm or stormy weather, as he pleases to order; whether prosperity or adversity, plenty or penury: In the day of prosperity be joyful in him; in the day of adversity consider that it is he also that hath appointed it; for God hath set the one against the other, Ecclesiastes 7:14. Having all things, he hath all times and seasons in his hand; he hath given to the stork and swallow to know their appointed times, and to observe the times of their coming," Jeremiah 8:7.

O sirs, how infinitely well then does he know the fit time of his own coming, and the proper season of visiting his people! "He waits to be gracious; and he is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him," Isaiah 30:18. The time of our sojourning here, and the number of our months is in his hand. The time of his approaches to the soul, and the time of his staying, is in his sovereign hand. Again, having all things in his hand, he hath all the chains of devils and of evil spirits in his hand; they are held in his chains, and under his check and control; they cannot touch a herd of swine without his permission; and his hand is famed for casting out devils; and, perhaps, there are many such here to be cast out; but he hath no more ado but, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee to come out;" thou unclean spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou drunken spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou profane spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou atheistical unbelieving spirit, I charge thee to come out.

All the chains wherewith poor prisoners of hope are held, are in his hand; and glory to God that hath anointed him to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, Isaiah 41:1. Again, having all things, he hath all the keys of hell and death in his hand; "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death," Revelation 1:18. When death and hell thought to have detained him prisoner, behold our mighty Samson came off with all the gates, and all the keys in this hand. Why, he had promised, saying, "O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction," Hebrews 13:14. And having done as he said, therefore his people, even staring death in the face, may, and sometimes do, sing that triumphant song, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Again, having all things, he hath all work upon his hand: having finished the work the Father gave him to do, even the work of redemption, by price; he hath yet upon his hand all the work that the redeemed have to do, even the work of redemption by power. In point of means, you are called to be much about his hand; but in point of power, you must put all in his hand; for, "Without him you can do nothing," John 15:5. It is he who worketh in us, to will and do of his good pleasure, Php 4:13. It is he that works all our works in us and for us, Isaiah 16:12, therefore we should pray, with the psalmist, Psalms 109:21. "Do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake; and Psalms 57:2. I will cry unto God, most high, unto God that performeth all things for me." But this leads me to another particular.

3. If all things are in Christ's hand, then all offices, all saving offices are in his hand. You know, the Father hath anointed him to the office of Prophet, Priest, and King. O sirs, what employment will you put in his hand? It is he, as a Prophet, that says, "They shall be all taught of God;" look to him for the promised teaching. It is he, as a Priest, that says, upon the ground of the sacrifice he hath

offered, "I, even I am he that pardoneth thine iniquity, for my name's sake." Look to him for remission in his blood. It is he, as a King, that says, "I will subdue your iniquities: Sin shall not have dominion over you." O! ignorant sinner, will you find in your heart to refuse such a Prophet as Christ is? Who teaches like him? O! guilty sinner, will you refuse such a High Priest as this? O! enslaved sinner, will you refuse the help of such a King and Conqueror as this? If there be none of these offices to be dispensed with, then take hold of him in them all.

4. If all things are in his hand, then he is clothed with all relations that can contribute to the happiness of sinners. What friend or relation do you lack, O sinner? Lack you a father to pity you? Behold, here you may have an everlasting Father, that is his name, Isaiah 9:6. "In him the fatherless findeth mercy." Lack you a mother to be tender of you? Behold, here motherless children may have their loss made up: when father and mother leaveth you, he is one to take you up, Psalms 27:10. He is one that can be a thousand times better to you than father and mother and manifests more love than the tenderest mother that ever was "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget you," Isaiah 49:15. Lack you a husband? O! What would you think to be married with the heir of all things? Wily if the ear of faith be open, you may hear him saying, "Thy Maker is thy Husband," Isaiah 54:5, and again, Hosea 2:19. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." If you say, "O! how will it be consistent with the justice of God for him to marry such a black bride?" Why, he says, "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness; I will betroth thee unto me in wisdom; I will betroth thee unto me in judgment, in loving kindness; yea, and in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord;" thou shalt know God in Christ. How can he betroth thee to himself, and yet be infinitely just, and wise, and merciful, and faithful in doing so? Because mercy and truth have met together in Christ, the glorious Bridegroom; they struck up a match together, and embraced each other, that there might be nothing to hinder the match between Christ and you. Lack you a proper match then, O sinner, or a needed help, poor bankrupt, run in such deep arrears to the law and justice of God? Is not he that hath unsearchable riches a fit match for you? Poor dying creature, that will be food for worms in a little, here is a living Head for you, that can make you live for ever— O! mortal worm, here is an immortal Husband for you. Poor changeable creature, here is an unchangeable match for you "Christ the same yesterday to-day, and for ever." Lack you a lover? Are you an outcast, that reckons yourself despised by all the world, insomuch that none cares for you, or loves you? Behold, an infinitely loving and lovely Jesus, offering and boding his love upon you, saying, "I will heal your backslidings; I will love you freely," Hosea 4:5. And he is seeking your heart, your conjugal love, saying, "My son, give me thy heart." Lack you a leader through the dark and difficult steps of your way? A guide, a director, and counsellor in whatsoever affair you have upon your hand wherein it is needful to be directed? O! here is a wonderful Counsellor, who says, Isaiah 42:16, "I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known." Lack you a shepherd to feed you, or a captain to fight your battles for you? Lack you a physician, when in sickness, to heal you? Lack you a refiner and purifier, when you are in the furnace, to purge away your dross? Behold he who hath all things in his hand, has all the relations that you can desire.

5. If all things be in his hand, then all graces are in his hand. This is a great part of the glory of the only begotten of the Father, that he is full of grace and truth, and, "Out of his fulness have all received, and grace for grace, John 1:14. Grace is poured into his lips," Psalms 45:2, and I hope

he is pouring grace from his lips by his word among some of you this day. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon him, for he hath anointed him." He is anointed with the oil of gladness, anointed with the Spirit of all grace. Lack you grace to believe? Behold it is in his hand, as he is the Author of faith. Lack you grace to repent? Behold it is in his hand, as a Prince and Saviour exalted to give repentance. Do you lack grace to pray? It is he that has the Spirit of prayer in his hand to give, Zechariah 12:10. Do you lack grace to communicate? Grace to mortify sin? Grace to bear the cross? Grace to resist temptation? Grace to do and suffer? It is he that has all grace in his hand to give, and who says, "My grace shall be, sufficient for you:" hence his people are called to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

6. If all things are in his hand, then all blessings are in his hand to give. He is the Lord-dispenser of temporal blessings; for, "The earth is in his hand, and the fulness thereof;" the Lord-dispenser of spiritual blessings; for, behold heaven is in his hand, and the fulness thereof: the Lord-dispenser of eternal blessings; for eternal life is in his hand. It was promised of him, that men should be blessed in him; and accordingly he is sent to bless us, Acts 3:26, "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." I might here enumerate many particular blessings. The blessings of illumination is in his hand; for, he is a Light to enlighten the Gentiles. The blessing of conversion is in his hand: for, he says, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." The blessing of justification is in his hand; for, "We are justified freely by his grace." The blessing of reconciliation with God is in his hand; for, it is he that maketh peace by the blood of his cross. The blessing of sanctification is in his hand: for, "He is made of God unto us, sanctification." The blessing of acceptance is in his hand; for, "By him we have boldness and access, with confidence, through the faith of him." The blessing of consolation is in his hand; for, he is the Consolation of Israel. The blessing of a happy death is in his hand; for, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." The blessing of a happy resurrection is in his hand; for, He is the resurrection and the life. The blessing of a happy sentence at the great day is in his hand; for, All judgment is committed to him; and it is he that will say to the wicked, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" and to the righteous, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." The blessing of eternal glorification is in his hand; for, as he is the glory of the higher house, so he says, "Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory: and so shall they be ever with the Lord." Can you tell me any spiritual blessing that is not in his hand? No: Ephesians 1:3, "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, only in Christ." And now, after all, what think ye of him? Have you no heart to join hand with a well-furnished Saviour, that hath all things in his hand? If you have got no heart to such a good bargain, this is very sad; but because it is a day of glad tidings, I will tell you among other things, that all hearts are in his hand, and it is his prerogative to open the locked heart. It is easy with him to create a clean heart, to melt the hard heart, to still the wandering heart, to cleanse the filthy heart, to elevate the drooping heart, to conquer the stubborn heart, to quicken the dead heart, to draw the backward heart, as I noticed on another subject; and if any thing draw your heart to him, it will be the revelation of his grace and fulness, as having all things in his hand. Thus much may suffice for a comprehensive view of the extent of this treasure.

Fourthly, I come to the fourth thing I proposed, which was, in order to the further assisting of faith, to consider the manner how all things are in Christ's hand. I have already told you, all things are in

Christ's hand naturally as he is God; and donatively, as he is Mediator; but, besides, there are these following ways wherein all things given him of his rather are in his hand.

1. All things are in his hand substantially; not symbolically, as Christ is said to be in the elements of bread and wine in the sacrament; or, as God was said to be in the temple, by the symbol of his presence. It is not the shadow of all things, but the substance which is in his hand; therefore it is said, Colossians 2:9, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" that is, substantially, and so in a glorious, eminent, superlative, and transcendent way. Christ is the substantial All of his people; the substance of all the types, and sacrifices, and ceremonies under the law. They were but the shadow of good things to come, Hebrews 10:1. All the good things themselves are in Christ substantially.

2. All things are in him communicatively; his Mediatorial fulness is communicable and omnipotent. All shops are closed, but Christ's house stands open; and on it this inscription, Whosoever will, may come and share of this treasure. Christ's fulness is communicable; and therefore, out of this fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace, John 1:16. We needed not preach of this store that is in Christ's hand, if it was locked up in him. Why is it, that in him, as Mediator, dwells all fulness of the Godhead bodily? Why, but that we may be complete in him, Colossians 2:9-10. Christ is a cabinet of rich jewels and faith is a key to open the cabinet: we receive out of his fulness by faith. Prayer is a key, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." If these keys be not in your hand, surely they are in his, who hath all things in his hand. O solicit him to cast you the key, and give you the spirit of faith and prayer.

3. All things are in his hand sufficiently; there is bread enough and to spare, Luke 15:17. Fulness enough for the destitute; light enough for the dark; life enough for the dead: there is grace enough in him, pardon enough in him, help enough in him; bread enough and to spare. If you think there is none to spare for you, it is because you do not believe there is enough in him; but will you disgrace our infinitely noble and glorious Lord, by supposing that there is not enough in him? O! He can satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with good things. Nothing in this world gives satisfaction to the soul: he was a fool that said, when he had a full barn, "Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years." We may as well dream of a coffer full of grace and glory, as of a soul full of corn and wine; it is only Christ that has in him suitable and satisfying fulness for the soul, and enough to give complete, solid, permanent, and everlasting satisfaction.

4. All things are in his hand efficiently and effectively, in so much, that he can make others to share of a Conformity to him, in that store that is in his hand. For example, hath he all comeliness? Well, what says he? "I have made thee perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee," Ezekiel 16:14. Hath he all righteousness? Well, the believer is made righteous through his righteousness. Hath he all glory? The believer is made glorious through his glory, and all glorious within Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Corinthians 3:18. There is a power and efficacy in every saving discovery of the glorious treasure that is in Christ, a smiling savour in his face; and, O happy they, that are smitten with a conformity to him: who, beholding the of his grace, are made gracious; beholding the glory of his holiness, are made holy; beholding the glory of his mercy, are made merciful.

5. All things are in his hand unchangeably; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Hebrews 13:18. He is always the same; and his stock and treasure is invariably the same.

Whatever you get out of his hand, yet still the stock and store is in his hand. Let faith draw never so many bills upon him, for this and that supply, at this time and the other time, and get never so much rent, annual rent, or daily rent, out of the stock; yet still the stock and interest both are in his hand; and the believer hath his all to the fore; even when all that was in your hand is spent, yet all things remain as they were in Christ's hand; yea, and this well of salvation springs up for ever, and that to everlasting life. O great encouragement! The fulness of Christ, as it is in our hand, may ebb and flow; but as it is in Christ's hand, it is unchangeably the same. The believer may be sometimes full, and sometimes empty; sometimes up, and sometimes down; but Christ is always the same: "I am the Lord, I change not." All believers, since the beginning of the world, have been always putting down their buckets of faith, and drawing water out of this well of salvation; yet still it is full, and running over; and no wonder, for his fulness is infinite; it is the fulness of God.

6. All things are in his hand eternally, Colossians 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell:" it is a dwelling fulness. In him it is, and in him it dwells for ever. "In him are durable riches and righteousness; and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." Hence also the blessings he communicates are everlasting; everlasting peace, everlasting pardon, everlasting consolation, everlasting life: "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life." Here is a depth to dive into forever: Christ hath an eternity of all perfection in him. An eternity of all excellency, an eternity of all blessings: here is a portion that will make you up to eternity. Here is eternal wisdom, eternal power, eternal holiness, eternal happiness. He is the true God, and eternal life. Every thing is everlasting in him; his righteousness is everlasting righteousness; his strength is everlasting strength; his wisdom is everlasting wisdom. Poor dying mortal, here is an everlasting treasure. O! come here, come here, poor mortal, that art to die in a few days; and no matter though you give up the ghost shortly, when, instead of this short lasting life, here is everlasting life for you, as well as security from everlasting death. All things are in his hand eternally. But I shall go on,

Fifthly, To the next thing I proposed, which was, in order to the quickening and exciting of our faith, to offer some motives and considerations, arising from, and accompanying this truth, that all things are given into Christ's hand. O let us be exhorted to come to, and close with, and believe in, this glorious One. And, for motive, consider,

1. Is it possible that we can have or desire a better pattern to follow or imitate, in trusting in Christ, than his eternal Father, who hath entrusted him with all things? "Behold my Servant whom I uphold!" Isaiah 42:1; or, as the word is observed to signify, "My Servant whom I trust;" and accordingly hath entrusted him with all things. And, Oh! may not this shame us out of our distrust? Thus the Father entrusted him with all the great concerns of his everlasting glory? And may not we well trust him with all the concerns of our everlasting welfare? O sirs, is it not safest laying our help where God has laid it? Where the waters go, the fish will go; God and all his fulness is gone with Christ Is it not best going where God goes, and resting where he rests, and loving whom he loves, and trusting whom he trusts.

2. Consider, is it possible that we can have or desire a better hand for all things to be put into, than the hand of Christ, whom the Father thus loves? All things you need to make you for ever happy, are in the hand of a God-man. That your stock may be sure to you, it is in the hand of a God; and that it may be near to you, it is in the hand of a Man. How can it be surer to you than in his hand, who is God as well as man? How can it be nearer to you than in his hand, who is man as well as

God? O then, is not the stock in a friend's hand? A great friend, a near friend? God could not choose a better hand, both for his own interest and yours.

It is more honourable for God, more profitable for you, that all things are put in the hand of Christ, the second Adam, the new covenant head, than if all things had remained in the state they were in before. The covenant of works was broken: but if you look believingly towards Christ, not only will God get more glory this way than if he should damn you for your sins, and satisfy his justice upon you to eternity; but also more glory than if he should have rewarded you with life, for your righteousness, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, supposing it had never been broken. Why all the glory of God was designed to concentrate in Christ as in a bright constellation; and will you cross this design, that tends so much more to God's honour, and your profit, than if matters had stood in their old primitive posture? See how Job was taken up with the way of grace, beyond that of works, Job 9:15, Job 9:20-21, "Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer; but I would make supplication to my Judge. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, I would despise my life."

3. Consider, as another motive, that as it is not possible to miss everlasting life, if you look believingly to him that hath all things in his hand, so it is not possible to escape everlasting wrath, if you believe not in him; read the verse immediately following the text, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth cannot miss salvation; for, it is in the hand of Christ to give to all comers; he that believeth not cannot escape damnation: for, "How shall we escape, if we reject so great salvation?" So great a Saviour, who hath all things in his hand?

It is established in heaven, and it stands now upon the honour of God to save all believers in Christ and to damn all unbelievers. Only, as God gets more honour and greater satisfaction in your salvation, through Christ, in a way of believing in him, than he can get in your damnation, if you remain in your unbelief; therefore, though you had no regard to your salvation or damnation, there is something here, of infinitely greater worth than your eternal life, or eternal damnation, that should move you to this glorious Jesus for all things; and, that is, for the sake of the eternal honour and glory of God and Christ; for, the Father hath put honour upon the Son, by giving all things into his hand. As you cannot put more honour upon Christ, so you cannot put more honour upon his Father that crowned him with this honour, than by putting all things you have ado in his hand, and coming to him for all things you stand in need of. Christ is glorified in such: for, they are his glory; yea, his crown of glory, Isaiah 62:3. When you come to him and make use of this treasure that the Father hath put in his hand, you join with his Father in putting a crown of glory on his head.

4. Consider, for motive to look to this Jesus, that it is not possible, O sinner, that all things are given into Christ's hand, and yet you have no concern in it, since all is given to him that he may give it out to you. Why has he received the Spirit above measure? He tells you himself, Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me:" Why, even to preach good tidings to the meek and to proclaim liberty to the captives. His Father also tells you, Isaiah 42:1, "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;" that is, give life and understanding, life and salvation to the Gentiles. Why hath our Lord Jesus received gifts, even

the gift of all things? See Psalms 68:18, compared with Ephesians 4:8. "He hath received gifts for men."

So, not only are all things in Christ's hand communicatively, as I said before, but all things are given him for this very end, that they may be communicated for the benefit of sinners. When Christ says, Matthew 28:10, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth," he immediately adds, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations:" As if he had said, Why have I received all power in heaven and in earth, but for this end, that I may be able to save and relieve poor sinners, and therefore, "Go ye, and teach all nations," and tell them where their help lies.

Say not, then, you have no concern, O sinner; it is because the Father hath given all things into his hand, that therefore he says to us, in your behalf, "Go preach the gospel to every creature;" every sinner, though they have sinned themselves into monsters; sinned themselves into devils; yet, if they be creatures, preach the gospel to them; tell them I have life, and salvation, and all things in my hand for them; "Whosoever will, let him come." Put not away this grace of God from you through unbelief, saying, It cannot be for me; yea, it is for you; "To you is the word of this salvation sent." Let faith say, It is for me, for me, that all things were given into Christ's hand.

No, says unbelief, and the devil together, it is for the elect and not for me. O sinner, let not the devil cheat you about the object of faith; though indeed, "The election only shall obtain;" yet the thing you are called first to believe, is not what is for you in the purpose of God, but what is for you in the promise of God, and in the offer of this gospel; and if you take what is for you here, you are safe in spite of all the devils of hell. Therefore let your heart say, "O! here is life and salvation, and all things in Christ's hand held out in this gospel for me; and even so I take it as offered to me." If it were not for you, we could not preach the gospel to every one here; but, in his great name, I preach it to every creature that hears me, that the Father hath given all things into Christ's hand for you; and, therefore take him to you, and all things with him.

S. How a Sinner Becomes a Believer

How a Sinner Becomes a Believer by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The following selection is taken from the first chapter of Erskine's Gospel Sonnets as found in *The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine* (Glasgow: W. Smith and J. Bryce Booksellers, 1778) vol. 10, pp. 59-71. The original title of this piece appears as follows: "The Manner of a Sinner's Divorce from the Law in a Work of Humiliation, and of his Marriage to the Lord Jesus Christ; or, the Way How a Sinner comes to be a Believer." The electronic edition of this text has been scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. In numerous cases antiquated characters have been replaced and the spelling has been modernized. In some instances sections have been edited for clarity. This particular version therefore is not in the public domain. It may be copied and distributed only for personal or educational use.

FEATURING :

Section I. Of a LAW-WORK, and the Workings of Legal Pride Under It.

Section II. Conviction of SIN and WRATH, Carried on More Deeply and Effectually in the Heart.

Section III. The Deeply Humbled Soul RELIEVED with Some Saving Discoveries of CHRIST the Redeemer.

Section IV. The Workings of the Spirit of Faith in Separating the Heart from All Self-Righteousness, and Drawing Out Its Consent to, and Desire After CHRIST Alone and Wholly.

Section V. Faith's View of the freedom of grace, cordial renunciation of All Its Own Ragged Righteousness, and Formal Acceptance of and Closing with the Person of Glorious CHRIST.

SECTION I. Of a LAW-WORK, and the Workings of Legal Pride Under It. So proud's the bride, so backwardly dispos'd;

How then shall e'er the happy match be clos'd?

Kind grace the tumults of her heart must quell, And draw her heav'nward by the gates of hell. The bridegroom's Father makes by's holy Spirit His stern command with her stiff conscience meet; To dash her pride, and shew her utmost need, Pursues for double debt with awful dread.

He makes her former husband's frightful ghost Appear and damn her, as a bankrupt lost; With curses, threats, and Sinai thunder claps, Her lofty tow'r of legal boasting saps.

These humbling storms, in high or low degrees, Heaven's Majesty will measure as he please; But still he makes the fiery law at least Pronounce its awful sentence in her breast, 'Till through the law convict of being lost, She hopeless to the law gives up the ghost: Which now in rigour comes full debt to crave, And in close prison cast; but not to save. For now 'tis weak, and can't (through our default) Its greatest votaries to life exalt. But well it can command with fire and flame, And to the

lowest pit of ruin damn.

Thus doth it by commission from above, Deal with the bride, when heav'n would court her love.

Lo! now she startles at the Sinai trump, Which throws her soul into a dismal dump;

Conscious another husband she must have, Else die for ever in destruction's grave.

While in conviction's jail she's thus inclos'd, Glad news are heard, the royal mate's propos'd. And now the scornful bride's inverted stir Is racking fear, he scorn to match with her.

She dreads his fury, and despairs that he Will ever wed so vile a wretch as she. And here the legal humour stirs again, To her prodigious loss and grievous pain: For when the Prince presents himself to be Her Husband, then she deems; Ah! is not he Too fair a match for such a filthy bride?

Unconscious that the thought bewrays her pride, Ev'n pride of merit, pride of righteousness, Expecting Heav'n should love her for her dress;

Unmindful how the fall her face did stain, And made her but a black unlovely swain, Her whole primeval beauty quite defac'd, And to the rank of fiends her form debas'd, Without disfigur'd, and defil'd within, Incapable of any thing but sin.

Heav'n courts not any for their comely face, But for the glorious praise of sov'reign grace, Else ne'er had courted one of Adam's race, Which all as children of corruption be, Heirs rightful of immortal misery.

Yet here the bride employs her foolish wit, For this bright match her ugly form to fit; To daub her features o'er with legal paint, That with a grace she may herself present.

Hopeful the Prince with credit might her wed, If once some comely qualities she had. In humble pride, her haughty spirit flags;

She cannot think of coming all in rags. Were she a humble, faithful penitent, She dreams he'd then contract with full content.

Base varlet! think she'd be a match for him, Did she but deck herself in handsome trim.

Ah! foolish thoughts! in legal deeps that plod;

Ah! sorry notions of a sov'reign God! Will God expose his great, his glorious Son, For our vile baggage to be sold and won? Should sinful modesty the match decline, Until its garb be brisk and superfine;

Alas! when should we see the marriage-day? The happy bargain must flee up for ay.

Presumptuous souls, in surly modesty, Half-favours of themselves would fondly be, Then hopeful th' other half their due will fall, Disdain to be in Jesus' debt for all.

Vainly the first would wash themselves, and then Address the fountain to be wash'd more clean;

First heal themselves, and then expect the balm:

Ah! many slightly cure their sudden qualm.

They heal their conscience with a tear or pray'r; And seek no other Christ, but perish there.

O sinner, search the house, and see the thief That spoils thy Saviour's crown, thy soul's relief,
The hid, but heinous sin of unbelief. Who can possess a quality that's good, 'Till first he come to
Jesus' cleansing blood? The pow'r that draws the bride, will also shew Unto her by the way her
hellish hue, As void of ev'ry virtue to commend, And full of ev'ry vice that will offend.

'Till sov'reign grace the sullen bride shall catch, She'll never fit herself for such a match.

Most qualify'd they are in heav'n to dwell, Who see themselves most qualify'd for hell;

And, ere the bride can drink salvation's cup, Kind Heav'n must reach to hell and lift her up: For no
decorum e'er about her found, Is she belov'd; but on a nobler ground.

JEHOVAH's love is like his nature, free; Nor must his creature challenge his decree; But low at
sov'reign grace's footstool creep, Whose ways are searchless, and his judgments deep.

Yet grace's suit meets with resistance rude From haughty souls; for lack of innate good To
recommend them. Thus the backward bride Affronts her Suitor with her modest pride.

Black hatred for his cover'd love repays, Pride under mask of modesty displays: In part would save
herself; hence, saucy soul!

Rejects the matchless mate would save in whole.

SECTION II.

Conviction of SIN and WRATH, Carried on More Deeply and Effectually in the Heart. So proudly
forward is the bride, and now, Stern Heav'n begins to stare with cloudier brow;

Law-curses come with more condemning pow'r, To scorch her conscience with a fiery show'r, And
more refulgent flashes darted in; For by the law knowledge is of sin.

Black Sinai, thund'ring louder than before, Does awful in her lofty bosom roar.

Heaven's furious storms now rife from ev'ry airth, In ways more terrible to shake the earth, 'Till
haughtiness of men be sunk thereby, That Christ alone may be exalted high.

Now, stable earth seem from her center tossed, And lofty mountains in the ocean lost, Hard rocks
of flint, and haughty hills of pride, Are torn in pieces by the roaring tide.

Each flash of new conviction's lucid rays Heart-errors, undiscern'd till now, displays;

Wrath's massy cloud upon the conscience breaks, And thus menacing Heav'n in thunder speaks;

"Black wretch, thou madly under foot hast trode "Th' authority of a commanding God;

"Thou, like thy kindred that in Adam fell, "Art but a law-reversing lump of hell, "And there by law
and justice doom'd to dwell."

Now, now, the daunted bride her state bewails, And downward furls her self-exalting sails; With
pungent fear, and piercing terror brought To mortify her lofty legal thought.

Why, the commandment comes, sin is reviv'd, That lay so hid, while to the law she liv'd;

Infinite majesty in God is seen, And infinite malignity is sin: That to its expiation must amount A sacrifice of infinite account.

Justice its dire severity displays, The law its vast dimensions open lays.

She sees for this broad standard nothing meet, Save an obedience, sinless and complete. Her cob-web righteousness, once in renown, Is with a happy vengeance now swept down.

She who of daily faults could once but prate, Sees now her sinful miserable state. Her heart, where once she thought some good to dwell, The devil's cab'net fill'd with trash of hell. Her boasted features now unmasked bare, Her vaunted hopes are plung'd in deep despair. Her haunted shelter-house in bypast years Comes tumbling down about her frighted ears. Her former rotten faith, love, penitence, She sees a bowing wall, and tott'ring fence.

Excellencies of thought, and word, and deed, All swimming, drowning in a sea of dread: Her beauty now deformity she deems; Her heart much blacker than the devil seems. With ready lips she can herself declare The vilest ever breath'd in vital air. Her former hopes, as refuges of lies, Are swept away, and all her boasting dies.

She once imagin'd Heav'n would be unjust To damn so many lumps of human dust, Form'd by himself; but now she owns it true, Damnation surely is the sinner's due:

Yea, now applauds the law's just doom so well, That justly she condemns herself to hell; Does herein divine equity acquit, Herself adjudging to the lowest pit. Her language, "Oh! if God condemn, I must "From bottom of my soul declare him just.

"But if his great salvation me embrace, "How loudly will I sing surprising grace?

"If from the pit he to the throne me raise, "I'll rival angels in his endless praise.

"If hell deserving me to heaven he bring, "No heart so glad, no tongue so loud shall sing.

"If wisdom has not laid the saving plan, "I nothing have to claim, I nothing can.

"My works but sin, my merit death I see;

"Oh! mercy, mercy, mercy! pity me."

Thus all self-justifying pleas are dropp'd, Most guilty she becomes, her mouth is stopp'd.

Pungent remorse does her past conduct blame, And flush her conscious cheek with spreading shame. Her self-conceited heart is self-convict, With barbed arrows of compunction prick'd:

Wonders how justice spares her vital breath, How patient Heav'n adjourns the day of wrath;

How pliant earth does not with open jaws Devour her, Korah-like, for equal cause;

How yawning hell, that gapes for such a prey, Is frustrated with a further hour's delay.

She that could once her mighty works exalt, And bast devotion fram'd without a fault Extol her nat'ral pow'rs, is now brought down, Her former madness, not her pow'rs, to own. Her present beggar state, most void of grace, Unable even to wail her woful case, Quite pow'rless to believe, repent, or pray;

Thus pride of duties flies and dies away.

She, like a harden'd wretch, a stupid stone, Lies in the dust, and cries, Undone, undone.

SECTION III. The Deeply Humbled Soul RELIEVED with Some Saving Discoveries of CHRIST the Redeemer. WHEN thus the wounded bride perceives full well Herself the vilest sinner out of hell, The blackest monster in the universe:

Pensive if clouds of wo shall e'er disperse. When in her breast Heaven's wrath so fiercely glows, 'Twixt fear and guilt her bones have no repose. When flowing billows of amazing dread Swell to a deluge o'er her sinking head; When nothing in her heart is found to dwell, But horrid atheism, enmity, and hell; When endless death and ruin seems at hand, And yet she cannot for her soul command A sigh to ease it, or a gracious thought, Though heaven could at this petty rate be bought. When darkness and confusion overcloud, And unto black despair temptations crowd; When wholly without strength to move or stir, And not a star by night appears to her: But she, while to the brim her troubles flow, Stands trembling on the outmost brink of wo.

Ah! weary case! But, lo! in this sad plight The sun arises with surprising light. The darkest midnight is his usual time Of rising and appearing in his prime. To shew the hills from whence salvation springs, And chase the gloomy shade with golden wings, The glorious Husband now unveils his face, And shews his glory full of truth and grace;

Presents unto the bride in that dark hour, Himself a Saviour, both by price and pow'r: A mighty helper to redeem the lost.

Relieve and ransom to the uttermost; To seek the vagrant sheep to desert driv'n, And save from lowest hell to highest heav'n. Her doleful case he sees, her bowels move, And make her time of need a time of love.

He shews, to prove himself her mighty shield, His name is JESUS, by his Father seal'd: A name with attributes engrav'd within, To save from every attribute of sin. With wisdom sin's great folly to expose, And righteousness its chain of guilt to loose, Sanctification to subdue its sway, Redemption all its woful brood to slay.

Each golden letter of his glorious name Bears full deliv'rance both from sin and shame.

Yea, not privation bare from sin and wo, But thence all positive salvations flow, To make her wife, just, holy, happy too.

He now appears a match exactly meet, To make her every way in him complete, In whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells, That she may boast in him, and nothing else. In gospel-lines she now perceives the dawn Of Jesus' love with bloody pencil drawn;

How God in him is infinitely pleas'd, And Heaven's revenging fury whole appeas'd:

Law-precepts magnify'd by her belov'd, And ev'ry let to stop the match remov'd.

Now in her view the prison-gates break ope, Wide to the walls flies up the door of hope; And now she sees with pleasure unexpress'd For shatter'd barks a happy shore of rest.

SECTION IV. The Workings of the Spirit of Faith in Separating the Heart from All Self-Righteousness, and Drawing Out Its Consent to, and Desire After CHRIST Alone and Wholly. THE bride at Sinai little understood, How these law-humblings were design'd for good, To enhance the value of the Husband's blood. The tow'r of tott'ring pride thus batter'd down, Makes way for Christ alone to wear the crown.

Conviction's arrows pierc'd her heart that so The blood from his pierc'd heart to hers might flow. The law's sharp plough tears up the fallow-ground, Where not a grain of grace was to be found, Till straight perhaps behind the plow is sown, The hidden seed of faith, as yet unknown.

Hence now the once reluctant bride's inclin'd To give the gospel an assenting mind, Dispos'd to take, would grace the pow'r impart, Heaven's offer with a free consenting heart. His Spirit in the gospel-chariot rides, And shews his loving heart to draw the bride's Though oft in clouds his drawing pow'r he hides, His love in gracious offers to her bears, In kindly answers to her doubts and fears, Resolving all objections, more or less, From former sins, or present worthlessness.

Persuades her mind of's conjugal consent, And then empowers her heart to say, Content.

Content to be divorced from the law, No more the yoke of legal terms to draw.

Content that he dissolve the former match, And to himself alone her heart attach.

Content to join with Christ at any rate, And wed him as her everlasting mate.

Content that he should ever wear the bays, And of her whole salvation have the praise.

Content that he should rise, though she should fall, And to be nothing, that he may be all.

Content that he, because she nought can do, Do for her all her work, an in her too.

Here she a peremptory mind displays, That he do all the work, get all the praise, And now she is, which ne'er till now took place, Content entirely to be sav'd by grace.

She owns that her damnation just would be, And therefore her salvation must be free: That nothing being hers but sin and thrall, She must be debtor unto grace for all.

Hence comes she to him in her naked case, To be invested with his righteousness.

She comes, as guilty, to a pardon free; As vile and filthy, to a cleansing sea; As poor and empty, to the richest stock; As weak and feeble, to the stongest rock; As perishing unto a shield from thrall; As worse than nothing, to an all in all.

She, as a blinded mole, an ign'rant fool, Comes for instruction to the Prophet's school.

She, with a hell-deserving conscious breast.

Flees for atonement to the worthy Priest.

She, as a slave to sin and Satan, wings Her flight for help unto the King of kings.

She all her maladies and plagues brings forth To this physician of eternal worth.

She spreads before his throne her filthy sore, And lays her broken bones down at his door. No mite she has to buy a crumb of bliss, And therefore comes impov'rish'd as she is. By sin and Satan of all good bereft, Comes e'en as bare as they her soul have left. To sense, as free of holiness within, As Christ, the spotless Lamb, was free of sin.

She come by faith, true; but it shews her want, And brings her as a sinner, not a saint; A wretched sinner flying for her good To justifying, sanctifying blood.

Strong faith no strength nor pow'r of acting vaunts. But acts in sense of weakness and of wants.

Drain'd now of ev'ry thing that men may call Terms and conditions of relief from thrall;

Except this one, that Jesus be her all. When to the bride he gives espousing faith, It finds her under sin, and guilt, and wrath; And makes her as a plagued wretch to fall At Jesus' footstool for the cure of all. Her whole salvation now in him she seeks, And musing thus perhaps in secret speaks, "Lo! all my burdens may in him be eas'd;

"The justice I offended, he has pleas'd;

"The bliss that I have forfeit, he procur'd;

"The curse that I deserved, he endur'd;

"The law that I have broken, he obey'd;

"The debt that I contracted, he has paid:

"And though a match unfit for him I be, "I find him ev'ry way most fit for me.

"Sweet Lord, I think, would thou thyself impart, "I'd welcome thee with open hand and heart.

"But thou that sav'st by price, must save by pow'r;

"O send thy Spirit in a fiery show'r, "This cold and frozen heart of mine to thaw, "That nought save cords of burning love can draw.

"O draw me, Lord; then will I run to thee, "And glad into thy glowing bosom flee.

"I own myself a mass of sin and hell, "A brat that can do nothing but rebel:

"But didst thou not, as sacred pages shew, "(When rising up to spoil the hellish crew, "That had, by thousands, sinners captive made, "And hadst in conqu'ring chains them captive led) "Get donatives, not for thy proper gain, "But royal bounties for rebellious men;

"Gifts, graces, and the Spirit without bounds, "For God's new house with man on firmer grounds?

"O then let me a rebel now come speed, "Thy holy Spirit is the gift I need.

"His precious graces too, the glorious grant, "Thou kindly promis'd, and I greatly want.

"Thou art exalted to the highest place, "To give repentance forth and ev'ry grace.

"O giver of spiritual life and breath, "The author and the finisher of faith;

"Thou Husband-like must ev'ry thing provide, "If e'er the like of me become thy bride."

SECTION V.

Faith's View of the freedom of grace, cordial renunciation of All Its Own Ragged Righteousness, and Formal Acceptance of and Closing with the Person of Glorious CHRIST. The bride with open eyes, that once were dim, Sees now her whole salvation lies in him; The Prince, who is not in dispensing nice, But freely gives without her pains or price. This magnifies the wonder in her eye, Who not a farthing has wherewith to buy; For now her humbled mind can disavow, Her boasted beauty and assuming brow; With conscious eye discern her emptiness, With candid lips her poverty confess.

"O glory to the Lord that grace is free, "Else never would it light on guilty me.

"I nothing have with me to be its price, "But hellish blackness, enmity, and vice." In former times she durst presuming come, To grace's market with a pretty sum Of duties, prayers, tears, a boasted set, Expecting heav'n would thus be in her debt.

These were the price, at least she did suppose, She'd be the welcomer because of those: But now she sees the vileness of her vogue, The dung that close doth ev'ry duty clog, The sin that doth her holiness reprove, The enmity that close attend her love, The great heart-hardness of her penitence, The stupid dulness of her vaunted sense, The unbelief of former blazed faith, The utter nothingness of all she hath. The blackness of her beauty she can see, The pompous pride of strain'd humility, The naughtiness of all her tears and pray'rs; And now renounces all her worthless wares; And finding nothing to commend herself, But what might damn her, her embezzled pelf; At sov'reign grace's feet doth prostrate fall, Content to be in Jesus' debt for all. Her noised virtues vanish out of sight, As starry tapers at meridian light;

While sweetly, humbly, she beholds at length Christ, as her only righteousness and strength.

He with the view throws down his loving dart, Imprest with pow'r into her tender heart. The deeper that the law's fierce dart was thrown, The deeper now the dart of love goes down:

Hence, sweetly pain'd, her cries to heav'n do flee;

"O none but Jesus, none but Christ for me!

"O glorious Christ! O beauty, beauty rare!

"Ten thousand thousand heav'ns are not so fair.

"In him at once all beauties meet and shine, "The white and ruddy, human and divine.

"As in his low, he's in his high abode, "The brightest image of the unseen God.

"How justly do the harpers sing above, "His doing, dying, rising, reigning love?

"How justly does he, when his work is done, "Possess the center of his Father's throne?

"How justly do his awful throne before "Seraphic armies prostrate, him adore;

"That's both by nature and donation crown'd, "With all the grandeur of the Godhead round?

"But wilt thou, Lord, in very deed come dwell "With me, that was a burning brand of hell?

"With me, so justly reckon'd worse and less "Than insect, mite, or atom can express?

"Wilt thou debase thy high imperial form, "To match with such a mortal, crawling worm?

"Yea, sure thine errand to our earthly coast, "Was in deep love to seek and save the lost:

"And since thou deign'st the like of me to wed, "O come and make my heart thy marriage-bed.

"Fair Jesus, wilt thou marry filthy me!

"Amen, Amen, Amen; so let it be." This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com

S. Improve God's Name in Every Case, for It is Suitable to Every Need

Improve God's Name in Every Case, for It is Suitable to Every Need by Ralph Erskine
"Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake."— Psalms 106:8.

We tender our exhortation to believers, in particular, who have run to this strong tower of salvation, the name of the Lord. O admire his goodness, admire his name. He knows all your sins against him, and against his name; yet for his name's sake, he shows mercy. O! let sin against so good a God be abhorred: let his goodness lead you to repentance more and more: "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." O believer, are you called by his name; praise him for his mercy, truth, faithfulness: "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth; thy right hand is full of righteousness," Psalms 18:10. O sirs, ascribe all the mercy you met with to his name; and study to be meet objects for God's name, to be more and more glorified, upon his engaging his name for your help. Study to become such persons as the scriptures require: for though sinners have a ground of hope, that he MAY do, for his name's sake; yet saints have a ground of hope that he WILL do for his name's sake: the graceless may run to him with hope, that he may begin the good work, for his name's sake; but the gracious may run to him with hope that he will perfect the good work for his name's sake. His name is engaged. In a word, O improve his name in every case; for he hath a name suiting every want, every need. Do you need wonders to be wrought for you? His name is Wonderful; look to him so to do, for his name's sake. Do you need counsel and direction? His name is the Counsellor: cast yourself on him and his name for this. Have you mighty enemies to debate with? His name is the mighty God; seek that he may exert his power for his name's sake. Do you need his fatherly pity? His name is the everlasting Father; "As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Plead his pity, for his name's sake. Do you need peace external, internal, or eternal? His name is the Prince of Peace; seek, for his name's sake, that he may create peace. Do you need healing? O sirs, his name is JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord the healer and physician; seek, for his name's sake, that he may heal all your diseases. Do you need pardon? His name is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness; seek, for his name's sake, that he may be merciful to your unrighteousness. Do you need defence and protection? His name is JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord your banner. Seek for his name's sake, that his banner of love and grace may be spread over you. Do you need provision in extreme want? His name is JEHOVAH-JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide. Do you need his presence? His name is JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, the Lord is there: IMMANUEL, God with us: look to him to be with you, for his name's sake. Do you need audience of prayer? His name is the Hearer of prayer. Do you need strength? His name is the Strength of Israel. Do you need comfort? His name is the Consolation of Israel. Do you need shelter? His name is the city of refuge. Have you nothing and need all? His name is All in All. Sit down and devise names to your wants and needs, and you will find he hath a name suitable thereunto; for your supply, he hath wisdom to guide you; and power to keep you; mercy to pity you; truth to shield you; holiness to sanctify you; righteousness to justify you; grace to adorn you;

and glory to crown you. Trust in his name, who saves for his name's sake.

S. Man's Fall in Adam, & the Remedy in Christ

Man's Fall in Adam, & the Remedy in Christ by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The following selection is taken from the first chapter of Erskine's Gospel Sonnets as found in "The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine" (Glasgow: W. Smith and J. Bryce Booksellers, 1778) vol. 10, pp. 48-58. The original title of this piece appears as follows: "A general account of Man's Fall in Adam, and the Remedy provided in Christ; and a particular account of man's being naturally wedded to the Law as a covenant of works." The electronic edition of this text has been newly type set and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. In numerous cases antiquated characters have been replaced and the spelling has been modernized. In some instances sections have been edited for clarity. This particular version therefore is not in the public domain. It may be copied and distributed only for personal or educational use.

Preface Section I. The Fall of Adam.

Section II. Redemption Through Christ.

Section III. Man's Legal Disposition Section IV. Man's Strict Attachment to Legal Terms, or to the Law as a Condition of Life.

Section V. Man's Vain Attempt to Seek Life by Christ's Righteousness Joined with Their Own; and Legal Hopes Natural to All.

PREFACE HARK, dying mortal, if the Sonnet prove, A song of living and immortal love, 'This then thy grand concern the theme to know, If life and immortality be so. Are eyes to read, or ears to hear a trust? Shall both in death be cram'd anon with dust?

Then trifle not to please thine ear and eye, But read thou, hear thou, for eternity.

Pursue not shadows wing'd, but be they chase, The God of glory on the field of grace: The mighty hunter's name is lost and vain, That runs not this substantial prize to gain.

These humble lines assume not high pretence, To please thy fancy, or allure thy sense; But aim, if everlasting life's thy chase, To clear thy mind, and warm thy heart through grace. A marriage so mysterious I proclaim, Betwixt two parties of such diff'rent fame, That human tongues may blush their names to tell, To wit, the PRINCE of HEAV'N, the heir of hell!

But, on so vast a subject who can find Words suiting the conceptions of his mind?

Or, if our language with our thought could vie, What mortal thought can raise itself so high? When words and thoughts both fail, may faith and pray'r Ascend by climbing up the scripture stair: From sacred writ these strange espousals may Be explicated in the following way.

SECTION I. The Fall of Adam.

Old Adam once a heav'n of pleasure found, While he with perfect innocence was crown'd: His wing'd affections to his God could move In raptures of desire, and strains of love.

Man standing spotless, pure, and innocent, Could well the law of works with works content;

Though then, (nor since), it could demand no less Than personal and perfect righteousness:

These unto sinless men were easy terms, Though now beyond the reach of wither'd arms. The legal cov'nant then upon the field, Perfection sought, man could perfection yield.

Rich had he and his progeny remain'd, Had he primeval innocence maintain'd: His life had been a rest without annoy, A scene of bliss, a paradise of joy. But subtle Satan, in the serpent hid, Proposing fair the fruit that God forbid, Man soon seduc'd by hell's alluring art, Did, disobedient, from the rule depart, Devour'd the bait, and by his bold offence Fell from his blissful state of innocence.

Prostrate, he lost his God, his life, his crown, From all his glory tumbled headlong down, Plung'd in a deep abyss of sin and wo, Where, void of heart to will, or hand to do:

For's own relief he can't command a thought, The total sum of what he can is nought.

He's able only now t'increase his thrall, He can destroy himself, and this is all. But can the hellish brat Heaven's law fulfill? Whose precepts high surmount his strength and skill. Can filthy dross produce a golden beam? Or poison'd springs a salutif'rous stream? Can carnal minds, fierce enmity's wide maw, Be duly subject to the divine law?

Nay, now its direful threatnings must take place On all the disobedient human race, Who do by guilt Omnipotence provoke, Obnoxious stand to his uplifted stroke.

They must engulf themselves in endless woes, Who to the living God are deadly foes; Who natively his holy will gainsay, Must to his awful justice fall a prey: In vain do mankind now expect, in vain By legal deeds immortal life to gain:

Nay, death is threatned, threat must have their due. Or souls that sin must die; as God is true.

SECTION II.

Redemption Through Christ. THE second Adam, sov'reign Lord of all, Did, by his Father's authorizing call, From bosom of eternal love descend, To save the guilty race that him offend; To treat an everlasting peace with those, Who were, and ever would have been his foes. His errand, never-ending life to give To them, whose malice would not let him live; To make a match with rebels, and espouse The brat which at his love her spite avows.

Himself he humbled, to depress her pride, And make his mortal foe his loving bride.

But, ere there marriage can be solemniz'd, All lets must be remov'd, all parties pleas'd.

Law-righteousness requir'd, must be procur'd, Law-vengeance threatned, must be full endur'd, Stern justice must have credit by the match, Sweet mercy by the heart the bride must catch.

Poor Bankrupt! all her debt must first be paid, Her former husband in the grave be laid: Her present Lover must be at the cost, To save and ransom to the uttermost.

If all these things this Suitor kind can do, Then he may win her, and her blessing too.

Hard terms indeed! while death's the first demand: But love is strong as death, to take the upper hand To carry on the suit, and make it good, Though at the dearest rate of wounds and blood. The burden's heavy, but the back is broad, The glorious Lover is the mighty God.

Kind bowels yearning in the eternal Son, He left his Father's court, his heav'nly throne:

Aside he threw his most divine array, And wrapt his Godhead in a veil of clay.

Angelic armies, who in glory crown'd, With joyful harps his awful throne surround, Down to the crystal frontier of the sky, To see the Saviour born did eager fly; And ever since behold with wonder fresh Their Sov'reign and our Saviour wrapt in flesh. Who in this garb did mighty love display, Restoring what he never took away; To God his glory, to the law its due, To heav'n its honour, to the earth its hue; To man a righteousness, divine, complete, A royal robe, to suit the nuptial rite.

He in her favours, whom he lov'd so well, At once did purchase heav'n, and vanquish hell.

O! unexampled love! so vast, so strong, So great, so high, so deep, so broad, so long! Can finite thought this ocean huge explore, Unconscious of a bottom or a shore? His love admits no parallel; for why, At one great draught of love he drank hell dry. No drop of wrathful gall he left behind, No dreg to witness that he was unkind. The sword of awful justice pierc'd his side, That mercy thence might gush upon the bride. The meritorious labours of his life, And glorious conquests of his dying strife; Her debt of doing, suff'ring, both cancell'd, And broke the bars his lawful captive held.

Down to the ground the hellish hosts he threw, Then mounting high, the trump of triumph blew, Attended with a bright seraphic band, Sat down enthron'd sublime on God's right hand; Where glorious choirs their various harps employ To sound his praises with confed'rate joy.

There he, the bride's strong Intercessor sits, And thence the blessings of his blood transmits, Sprinkling all o'er the flaming throne of God, Pleads for her pardon his atoning blood;

Sends down his holy co-eternal Dove, To shew the wonders of incarnate love, To woo and win the bride's reluctant heart, And pierce it with his kindly killing dart: By gospel-light to manifest that now She has no further with the law to do; That her new Lord has loos'd the fed'ral tie, That once hard bound her to do or die; That precepts, threats, no single mite can crave.

Thus for her former spouse he digg'd a grave; The law fast to his cross did nail and pin, Then bury'd the defunct his tomb within, That he the lonely widow to himself might win.

SECTION III.

Man's Legal Disposition BUT, after all, the bride's so malcontent, No argument, save pow'r, is prevalent To bow her will, and gain her heart's consent. The glorious Prince's suit she disapproves, The law her old primordial husband loves;

Hopeful in its embraces life to have, Though dead and bury'd in her Suitor's grave;

Unable to give life, as once before;

Unfit to be a husband any more.

Yet proudly she the new address disdains, And all the blest Redeemer's love and pains;

Tho' now his head, that cruel thorns did wound, Is with immortal glory circled round;

Archangels at his awful footstool bow, And drawing love sits smiling on his brow.

Though down he sends in gospel-tidings good Epistles of his love, sign'd with his blood:

Yet lordly she the royal suit rejects, Eternal life by legal works affects; In vain the living seeks among the dead, Sues quickning comforts in a killing head. Her dead and bury'd husband has her heart, Which can nor death remove, nor life impart.

Thus all revolting Adam's blinded race In their first spouse their hope and comfort place.

They natively expect, if guilt them press, Salvation by a home-bred righteousness:

They look for favour in JEHOVAH's eyes, By careful doing all that in them lies.

'Tis still their primary attempt to draw Their life and comfort from the vet'ran law;

They flee not to the hope the gospel gives; To trust a promise bare, their minds aggrieves, Which judge the man that does, the man that lives. As native as they draw their vital breath, Their fond recourse is to the legal path.

Why, says old nature in law-wedded man, "Won't Heav'n be pleas'd, if I do all I can?"

"If I conform my walk to nature's light, "And strive, intent to practise what is right?"

"Thus, won't I by the God of heav'n be bless'd, "And win his favour, if I do my best?"

"Good God!" he cries, when press'd with debt and thrall, "Have patience with me, and I'll pay thee all."

Upon their all, their best, they're fondly mad, Though yet their all is naught, their best is bad.

Proud man his can-do's mightily exalts, Yet are his brightest works but splendid faults. A sinner may have shews of good, but still The best he can, even at his best, is ill. Can heav'n or divine favour e'er be win By those that are a mass of hell and sin? The righteous law does num'rous woes denounce Against the wretched soul that fails but once:

What heaps of curses on their heads it tears, That have amassed the guilt of num'rous years!

SECTION IV.

Man's Strict Attachment to Legal Terms, or to the Law as a Condition of Life.

SAY, on what terms then Heav'n appeas'd will be?

Why, sure, perfection is the least degree.

Yea, more, full satisfaction must be giv'n For trespass done against the laws of Heav'n.

These are the terms: what mortal back so broad, But must for ever sink beneath the load? A ransom must be found, or die they must, Sure, even as justice infinite is just.

But, says the legal, proud, self-righteous heart, Which cannot with her ancient consort part, "What! won't the goodness of the God of heav'n "Admit of smalls when greater can't be given?"

"He knows our falls diminish'd all our funds, "Won't he accept of pennies now for pounds?"

"Sincere endeavours for perfection take, "Or terms more possible for mankind make?"

Ah! poor divinity, and jargon loose;

Such hay and straw will never build the house.

Mistake not here, proud mortal; don't mistake;

God changes not, nor other terms will make. Will divine faithfulness itself deny, Which swore solemnly, Man shall do or die? Will God, most true, extend to us, forsooth, His goodness to the damage of his truth? Will spotless holiness be baffled thus? Or awful justice be unjust for us? Shall faithfulness be faithless for our sake, And he his threats, as we his precepts break? Will our great Creditor deny himself? And for full payment take our filthy pelf?

Dispense with justice, to let mercy vent? And stain his royal crown with 'minish'd rent?

Unworthy thought! O let no mortal clod Hold such base notions of a glorious God.

Heaven's holy cov'nant, made for human race, Consists whole of works, or whole of grace.

If works will take the field, then works must be For ever perfect to the last degree: Will God dispense with less? Nay sure, he won't With ragged toll his royal law affront. Can rags, that Sinai flames will soon dispatch, E'er prove the fiery law's adequate match?

Vain man must be divorc'd, and choose to take Another husband, or a burning lake.

We find the divine volume no-where teach New legal terms within our mortal reach.

Some make, though in the sacred page unknown, Sincerity assume perfection's throne: But who will boast this base usurper's sway, Save ministers of darkness, that display, Invented night to stifle scripture-day? The nat'ralists sincerity is naught; That of the gracious is divinely taught; Which teaching keeps their graces, if sincere, Within the limits of the gospel-sphere, Where vaunting, none created graces sing, Nor boast of streams, but of the Lord the spring.

Sincerity's the soul of ev'ry grace, The quality of all the ransom'd race. Of promis'd favour 'tis a fruit, a clause; But no procuring term, no moving cause.

How unadvis'd the legal mind confounds The marks of divine favour with the grounds, And qualities of covenanted friends With the condition of the cov'nant blends?

Thus holding gospel-truths with legal arms, Mistakes new-cov'nant fruits for fed'ral terms. The joyful sound no change of terms allows, But change of persons, or another spouse. The nature same that sinn'd must do and die; No milder terms in gospel-offers lie. For grace no other law-abatement shews, But how law-debtors may restore its dues;

Restore, yea, through a Surety in their place, With double in'trest and a better grace.

Here we no new terms of life are told, But of a husband to fulfill the old; With him alone by faith we're call'd to wed, And let no rival enjoy the marriage-bed.

SECTION V.

Man's Vain Attempt to Seek Life by Christ's Righteousness Joined with Their Own; and Legal Hopes Natural to All. BUT still the bride reluctant disallows The junior suit, and hugs the senior spouse.

Such the old selfish folly of her mind, So bent to lick the dust, and grasp the wind, Alleging works and duties of her own May for her criminal offence atone;

She will her antic dirty robe provide, Which vain she hopes will all pollution hide. The filthy rags that saints away have flung, She holding, wraps and rolls herself in dung.

Thus, maugre all the light that gospel gives, Unto her nat'ral consort fondly cleaves.

Though mercy set the royal match in view, She's loth to bid her ancient mate adieu. When light of scripture, reason, common sense. Can hardly mortify her vain pretence To legal righteousness; yet if at last Her conscience rous'd begins to stand aghast, Press'd with the dread of hell, she'll rashly patch, And halve a bargain with the proferr'd match; In hopes his help, together with her own, Will turn to peaceful smiles the wrathful frown.

Though grace the rising sun delightful sings, With full salvation in his golden wings, And righteousness complete; the faithless soul, Receiving half the light rejects the whole;

Revolves the sacred page, but reads as blind The gospel-message with a legal mind.

Men dream their state, ah! too slightly view'd, Needs only be amended, not renew'd;

Scorn to be wholly debtors unto grace, Hopeful their works may meliorate their case.

They fancy present pray'rs and future pains Will for their former failings make amends: To legal yokes they bow their servile necks, And, least foul slips their false repose perplex, Think Jesus' merits make up all defects.

They patch his glorious robe with filthy rags, And burn but incense to their proper drags, Disdain to use his righteousness alone, But as an aiding stirr'p to mount their own;

Thus in Christ's room his rival self enthrone, And vainly would, dress'd up in legal trim, Divide salvation 'twixt themselves and him. But know, vain man, that to his share must fall The glory of the whole, or none at all. In him all wisdom's hidden treasures lie, And all the fulness of the Deity. This store alone, immense and never spent, Might poor insolvent debtors well content; But to hell-prison justly Heav'n will doom Proud fools that on their petty stock presume. The softest couch that gilded nature knows Can give the waken'd nature no repose. When God arraigns, what mortal pow'r can stand Beneath the terror of his lifted hand? Our safety lies beyond the nat'ral line, Beneath the purple cover all divine.

Yet how is precious Christ the way, despis'd, And high the way of life by doing priz'd? But can its vot'ries all its levy show?

They prize it most, who least its burdens know: Who by the law, in part, would save his soul, Becomes a debtor to fulfill the whole. Its pris'ner he remains, and without bail, 'Till ev'ry mite be paid; and if he fail, (As sure he must, since, by our sinful breach, Perfection far surmounts all mortal reach) Then cursed for ever must his soul remain; And all the folk of God must say, AMEN.

Why, seeking that the law should help afford; In honouring the law, he slights its Lord, Who give his law-fulfilling righteousness To be the naked sinner's perfect dress, In which he might with spotless beauty shine Before the face of majesty divine:

Yet, lo! the sinner works with mighty pains A garment of his own to hide his stains;

Ungrateful, overlooks the gift of God, The robe wrought by his hand, dy'd in his blood. In vain the son of God this web did weave, Could our vile rags sufficient shelter give. In vain he ev'ry thread of it did draw, Could sinners be o'ermantled by the law. Can men's salvation on their works be built, Whose fairest actions nothing are but guilt? Or can the law suppress th' avenging flame, When now its only office is to damn? Did life come by the law, in part or whole, Blest Jesus dy'd in vain to save a soul.

Those then who life by legal means expect, To them is Christ become of no effect;

Because their legal mixtures do, in fact, Wisdom's grand project plainly counteract.

How close proud carnal reasonings combine, To frustrate sov'reign grace's great design?

Man's heart by nature weds the law alone, Nor will another paramour enthrone.

True, many seem by course of life profane, No favour for the law to entertain; But break the bands, and cast the cords away, That would their raging lusts and passions stay:

Yet ev'n this reigning madness may declare, How strictly wedded to the law they are; For now (however rich they seem'd before) Hopeless to pay law-debt, they give it o'er, Like desp'rate debtors mad, still run themselves in more.

Despair of success shews their strong desires, 'Till legal hopes are parch'd in lustful fires.

"Let's give, say they, our lawless will free scope, "And live at random, for there is no hope." The law, that can't 'em help, they stab with hate, Yet scorn to beg, or court another mate.

Here lusts, most opposite their hearts divide, Their beastly passion, and their bankrupt pride. In passion they their native mate deface, In pride disdain to be oblig'd to grace.

Hence plainly, as a rule 'gainst law they live, Yet closely to it as a cov'nant cleave.

Thus legal pride lies hid beneath the patch, And strong aversion to the gospel-match. This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com ÿÿÿ

S. Objections Against Receiving Christ Answered

Objections Against Receiving Christ Answered by Ralph Erskine

1. Objections are drawn from the greatness and multitude of sins. It is true, there are some who have no such objections as this at all; they are as secure, senseless, and dense as a stone of the wall; there is no hope of saying any thing, to move and affect such unless the Lord himself awaken them. But if any here were objecting to this purpose, though it was but one in all this company; "Oh! my guilt is so serious, my sins are so great, and my transgressions are so multiplied, that you would tremble to think of the sins I have been guilty of, and what light I have sinned against, and this makes my heart sink: none know but God and my own conscience, what a sinner I have been; and will Christ ever accept of me." Answer: The greatness of your sins should be a great argument to engage you to come to Christ, and receive him Your sins are not greater than God's mercies; your guilt is not greater than Christ's merits. It is hardly to be supposed, that you are worse than some who yet have obtained mercy; such as Paul a persecutor and blasphemer; Manasseh a murderer and wizard in compact with the devil; Mary Magdalene in whom were seven devils; and many of the Jews that crucified the Lord of glory, yet were washed in that blood of the Lamb which they shed. The merit of Christ's blood is infinite; though your sins were greater than all sins, yet there is virtue in his blood to expiate them; for, it cleanses from all sin. Though the sands be many and large, yet the sea can overflow them all: so, though your sins be numerous and great, the blood of Christ can cover them all. In a word, the question is not about the greatness of your sins, but your present duty: be your sin what it will, the Lord calls you to come to Christ and receive him: and your unbelief in your rejecting Christ is greater than all your other sins; for it is a refusal of the remedy, whereby you may be relieved of all your sin and guilt. Your other sins are but against the law; but this sin, in rejecting Christ, is against the law and the gospel both. Other sins are against God; but this sin, in rejecting Christ, is against God and Christ both. It is a great sin to think any sin little; but it is a greater sin, to think the righteousness of Christ is not above all sin. Our disobedience is the disobedience of man; but Christ's obedience is the obedience of God: therefore, our believing in Christ pleases God better than if we had continued in innocence, and never sinned. The least sin is unpardonable without this obedience and righteousness of Christ; and the greatest is pardonable by it. Therefore, O seek Christ, to be clothed with this righteousness.

2. Objections are drawn from the justice of God. "Oh, God is just, and will not hold the sinner guiltless: therefore, though I should fly to the horns of the altar, there I fear justice would be avenged upon me." Answer: This is also an argument why you should receive Christ. God's justice indeed must be satisfied; and there is no way in the world to give satisfaction to God, but by believing in Christ; for, "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He has endured the wrath of God, and so there is no way to answer justice, but by flying to that satisfaction he has made; and if you do, justice will not demand a double satisfaction; one from you, and another from your Surety. No, he will deliver you from going down to the pit, because he has found a ransom. It is contrary to the nature of justice, to demand a double satisfaction when the satisfaction given by

Christ is infinite.

3. Objection is drawn from the sinner's unworthiness. "Oh! I am utterly unworthy, and have nothing to move God to pity me; will he accept the likes of me?" Answer: What do you think is the strength of that reasoning? It comes just to this: I have no merit; therefore, God will have no mercy: there is no salvation for me by the law; therefore there is no salvation for me by the gospel. If you look at God with the eye of the lawyer, the least sin makes you ineligible for mercy; but if you look at him in Christ, or with an evangelical eye, the greatest sinner may receive mercy; yes, the sense of unworthiness makes a man the more receptive. It is an unworthy objection, and argues lamentable ignorance of the gospel. Come to him as deserving nothing but wrath, and flying to God's free grace, and Christ's full merit, and the covenant's rich promise. It is with faith, as it is with a bird cast into the water; it cannot fly, the element is so gross; it cannot clap its wings there; but cast it into the air, then it will clap its wings and mount: so faith is the wing of the soul; when it looks to the man's self and his own worthiness, this is such a gross element, faith cannot mount: but let it out to the air of God's free grace and promise in Christ, then it will act and fly: yes, grace cannot act but upon an unworthy object, and without any cause from the object. Justice has an eye upon the disposition of the person, in its rewards; but grace and mercy has an eye upon itself. Thus, if a king executes a malefactor, this is an act of justice, and the cause of it is in the offender; but if a king pardons a malefactor, this is an act of grace, and the cause of it is in the king's heart, not in the worthiness of the delinquent: so here, if you were worthy, you were not capable of this free gift. If ever there was a gift freely given, it is Christ; and will you reject him because you are unworthy? Why, if you were worthy, it would not be a free gift. No, your refusing of Christ and standing aback from him for your unworthiness is great pride: you would have a bladder of your own, that you might swim to heaven without being obliged to Christ. If you meet a poor beggar, and see nothing but misery and poverty in his face, and draw your purse and offer him money, would it not be strange to hear him say, "No, I will not have it; I am not worthy; over there is a gentleman in fashionable clothing, give it him for he is worthy." Just as ridiculous is the case here, while you stand back from Christ because of your unworthiness. In a word- Christ is worthy enough of your taking. What if the greatest prince in the world should make suit to the poorest beggar, who has neither beauty nor dowry, though she be unworthy to hear of the proposal, yet the person is worthy who has made it; so it is here, if Christ, the Prince of life, and King of glory, be worth the receiving, then reject not his offer that he makes of himself: and indeed never will you be worthy till you receive him.

4. Objection is drawn from a doubt and suspicion arising in the mind if Christ be willing: "Oh! I fear he is not willing to accept me." Answer: He declares in his word, that he is not willing that any should perish; and he swears that he has no delight in the death of sinners. And O sinner! will you look up to God's face, and say, though he has both said and sworn to that purpose, that he is not willing? His purpose of grace in saving some does not say that he is willing to destroy any; it only says that, as he is not willing that any should perish, so he is resolved that all shall not get leave to destroy themselves; as all would do, if he did not catch hold of some, and pluck them as brands out of the burning fire, and his doing so says that none are destroyed by him, unless they destroy themselves. None are willing to be saved by him, until his willingness precedes their willingness. His not saving all is no more an argument of his desire that any should perish than a king's not pardoning all rebels is an argument of that prince's willingness that any should live in rebellion

against him, and fall under his furious judgement. Although it was possible for an earthly prince, to make them all willing subjects to him, yet it were not inconsistent with a merciful disposition, for him to allow some to take their will that he may show how stubborn their nature is, and how equal and just he is in the administration of his government: for acts of justice towards some are not inconsistent with a will to show mercy upon all. Natural reason and unbelief still suspect the willingness of Christ; especially because of a decree past in heaven, which the word mentions concerning the salvation of some, from which they know not but they may be excluded. This is a powerful temptation of Satan, leading men boldly and arrogantly to speculate about the records of heaven, that are locked up from men and angels, till the decree is fully unveiled. It is an evidence of our cursed hatred against God, that we will not believe his good will in Christ, revealed in the gospel toward sinners by so many commands and promises, calls and invitations. If you would notice instances of Christ's willingness, behold how he wept over Jerusalem, self-destroying Jerusalem, rejecting his offer, Luke 19:41-42. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." What a moving sight was this, to see the Son of God in a flood of tears for lost sinners! Had he been asked, as he did Mary, in another case, "Blessed Lord, what seekest thou? Why weepest thou?" His answer readily would have been, "I seek not myself; I weep not for myself; for I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, though sinners be not gathered; but I weep to see sinners so mad, as to reject their Saviour and salvation, rather than part with their lusts, that have damnation attending them; I weep to see them content, rather to cast themselves headlong into the devil's arms, than throw themselves into my arms of mercy, or receive and embrace me." Oh! how did Christ's heart melt with pity for you, and will not your hearts melt with desire toward him! Surely, all the rivers of tears that flowed from his eyes, and the rivers of blood that flowed from his pierced heart and feet and hands and side, will be standing monuments of his good-will to save sinners. How would you have him to discover his willingness? Why man, woman, he just turns humble supplicant to you; and, as it were, upon his bare knees beseeches you to be reconciled to him; 2 Corinthians 5:20. "We are ambassadors for Christ, though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Tremendous and amazing condescension! Behold, divine mercy, stooping down to a sinner, in the humble posture, entreating him to receive a Saviour, and to receive a free remission through him! Surely the humble entreaties of the great God, should both convince us of his willingness to receive us, and shame us out of our unwillingness to receive Christ, and salvation through him.

5. Objection is drawn from a doubt or suspicion of our being prepared for receiving Christ. Oh says the sinner, that is any way sensible, "I am not humbled enough; Christ comes to bind up the broken hearted; but my heart is not broken; to give the oil of joy for mourning; but I do not have a mourning or humble spirit: therefore I may not believe, or receive Christ." Answer- You will never reckon yourself humbled enough, if you would have humiliation proportioned to your sin, which is an infinite evil. Feelings of guilt, though ever so deep, though your heart should be broken in as many pieces, as the glass does shiver against the wall; and though you were roaring day and night under the disquiet of a guilty conscience, and fearful apprehensions of God's wrath; yet all this will not say that you are now fit for Christ. These humiliations may be merely judicial, and punishments of sin, as were those of Cain and Judas; therefore, you cannot judge yourself by your legal humiliations, but only by the issue and event of them. Think not, then, to bring humiliation in your hand as a price; this will but more unfit you: the best humiliation is to see your lack of humiliation;

the best preparation, to see your lack of preparation, and your lack of all good things about you: and to receive Christ is the only way to true gospel humiliation. The law is like a thunder clap, that terrifies; but the gospel is like a warm sun that dissolves the ice. Nothing melts the soul more than Christ apprehended by faith. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn," Zechariah 12:10. Faith sees the greatest love, the sweetest kindness; and this melts the heart. No doubt, the prodigal was more melted, and broken, by his father's embracing of him so kindly, than by all his former miseries. What! art thou embracing me, a stubborn child, and unworthy spendthrift? So Christ comes in the gospel, saying, "Come, poor sinner, you have done evil as you could; though you have wronged me, and my Spirit, and my Father, and yourself, yet come and I will get you a pardon for all that; fear not, I will be yours to save you; my blood yours, to wash you; my righteousness yours, to justify you; my Spirit yours, to sanctify you." This melts the heart! What! is this for me, guilty me, rebellious me? Yes, it is for you graciously and freely! How the soul now dissolves into tears!

6. Objection is drawn from fear that the day of grace is past. "Alas! I have refused many call invitations, and offers, so much that Christ will not regard me! I have often trifled with the gospel, often trampled on his precious blood; and with what confidence can I now claim it?" Answer- It is to be hoped that while you have this call yet to receive Christ, that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, if your former refusals of Christ have not yet been malicious and deceitful, but rather temerarious and inadvertent, which though a grievous sin, yet not unpardonable: and now, since Christ does not yet exclude you from the gospel offer, why will you exclude yourselves? The more you have refused his offer in times past, the more need you have of forgiveness. You should go to God as David, saying, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." This would indeed be a strange argument with man, "Pardon my crime, for it is great;" but it is a strong argument with God: Lord, it is great and so I have more need of a pardon; it is great, and so you will have great honour in pardoning: even as a physician has in curing a desperate disease. The sinning against Christ's blood, or slighting it, is indeed a heinous sin but the more heinous it is, the more need you have to hasten to this blood as the only fountain that can wash away the guilt of trampling upon it. Nay though you had shed this blood, as the Jews did, yet you are welcome to come to it for mercy: see the commission that Christ gives to his apostles, Luke 24:46-47. "Preaching repentance, and remission, in his name, to all nations, and begin at Jerusalem " O! why at Jerusalem, where he was mocked, pierced, and crucified; Nay, begin there; for they have most need of my blood to wash them. If any thing could alienate Christ's heart from sinners, surely the consideration of their crucifying him, and using him so deceitfully, might have done it. "Yes," says he, "go make offer of my blood and mercy to these my murderers;" and accordingly, it was done by Peter, Acts 2:1-47, and many of them got this blood applied to them. Again,

7. Objection is drawn from the long continuation in sin. "I am an old sinner; my sins are of very long continuance; I have remained in the grave of sin and I am just an old rotten sinner." Answer- I fear there are some old sinners here very near to hell and damnation; the devil has got the prime of their age, and he is likely to get the dregs. Oh! if gospel grace would draw you, I would let down the rope ladder of love, by telling you that, though your sins be old, yet they are not so old as Christ's mercies, which are everlasting mercies. It is not the first old distemper that Christ hath cured; he raised Lazarus with a word though he had been four days in the grave: he stopped a bloody issue with the hem of his garment, that had run twelve years: he loosed a poor woman,

whom Satan had bound eighteen years: he cured an impotent man that had an infirmity thirty-eight years: and, can he not easily cure all the sicknesses in your soul? He received those that came at the eleventh hour: he received some that came at the last hour. Consider the thief on the cross, whom the devil thought he was sure of, having drawn him the length of the mouth of hell just ready to cast him in. Yet, even then, upon his looking to Christ, did the arms of mercy take hold of him. This is encouragement to you to look to him.

8. Objection is drawn from a doubt or jealousy about our right to receive Christ. "Oh!" says one, "though Christ can save me, yet I have no right to receive him: though his blood is sufficient to wash me, yet I have no right to it." Answer- You have a full right and authorisation, from the very call of the gospel, to run to it. See what Christ enjoins ministers to do, Mark 16:15. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: make offer of me and my blood to all, without distinction; whatever be their age, sex, or circumstances, man, woman, and child. Let no children hearing me, think they are too young to be included in this call to come to Christ; nay, the gospel is preached to you as well as to old folk: you may die in your youth; and if you die without Christ, you will perish as well as old Christless persons. ".Preach the gospel to every creature; even to the worst of sinners: every creature, be they ever so wicked; even though they have sinned themselves into the likeness of beasts or devils; yet if they be creatures, offer my blood, my mercy, my merit, my righteousness to them: invite and press them to come to me and receive me; and "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." O sinner, let the gospel offer be accepted: and you shall find, whatever you have been, that there is mercy enough in God's being to pity you; merit enough in Christ's blood to pardon you; and power enough in his intercession to provide and apply it to you. Look to him for a share of this grace offered to you; and receive not the grace of God in vain.

9. Objection is drawn from the power of sin. "Alas! I find sin to be strong in me; how should I believe or receive Christ? none have such a wicked heart; surely the Lord will loath me." Ans. That as a sense of the power of sin, is better than to be senseless and dull under it; so, consider the nature of unbelief, more than the strength of sin; for, it is an evil heart of unbelief, that gives strength to sin. There are two things you must be obliged to Christ for. his merit, to get the guilt of sin pardoned; and his Spirit, to get the power of sin subdued. There is no healing but under the wings of Christ; and therefore you must go to him for it. What do you think of faith? Is it an enemy to holiness? No, by no means; it is the only way to it. And do you find sin opposing you? Why then, know, that this time of opposition, is a time for faith to work. When a man sees death, then it is time for faith to believe life. When he sees the grave, it is time for faith to believe the resurrection; when he sees guilt, it is time for faith to believe pardoning mercy; and when he sees sin, it is time for faith to receive a Saviour; when he sees strong corruption, then it is time for faith to lay hold on Christ's strength, and cast yourself upon his faithful promise, for healing and pardoning of it. You may try other ways, but they will not do; you may wash in other waters, but they will not cleanse you; you may perplex your own thoughts, with a thousand shifts beside this, but they will not avail you: in Christ and the promises of the covenant, are the cures of your sinful nature;, and faith applies the healing medicine. But now, to name no more,

10. Objection is drawn from the weakness of the creature, and of means. "What" say you, "I have no strength to believe; no strength to pray; no heart to duty: or, if I try it at any time, I have no success in it, or benefit by it." Here are two objections, and I shall divide them, in order to give a

more distinct reply.

Well, then, the first part of the objection is, "I have no strength to believe, no power to receive Christ. I don't even have the heart to pray for faith." Answer- It is proper for you to know our own utter inability to believe; they who think they can believe well enough of themselves mistake the faith of God's operation for dreams, and strong imagination of their own brain. But, even though you say you have no strength, see that the disease lies rather in this, that you have no will. If you were made willing, you undoubtedly would find yourselves made able in due time: therefore, cry for one pull more of omnipotent grace, to make you willing in the day of his power. And even though you say you cannot cry and you have no heart to pray; it is perhaps your mercy, to be kept empty-handed, that you may not make a Christ of your duty, or a Saviour of your feelings; for, perhaps, you would rest there. However, know, that unbelief is the great cause of feeling unable to perform duty; for it fills the man with hard thoughts of God. "Oh!" says unbelief, "God is so holy, he will never regard you; God is so just, he will never endure you." Unbelief makes God all full of frowns and anger; and so the man's spirit sinks within him: but faith would bring up the soul; Psalms 22:13. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living."

Faith shows God to be on a throne of grace; and this raises the heart. and faith gives the soul reasons to prevail in prayer; such as, the name of God, the blood of Christ, the promise of the covenant, the intercession of Christ, the faithfulness of God. In the meantime think not either to believe or pray aright, without opposition from Satan, an evil heart of unbelief, the prevalence of sin, and an ensnaring world. You must wrestle, through grace, all the way to glory "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The second part of the objection is, "That, though you attempt, you find no success in duty, no benefit by it; "I am still where I was." Answer-. True seeking comes always to something: it is pride and impatience that says, "It is vain to serve the Lord:" see Malachi 3:14, Malachi 3:18 and Isaiah 40:22-24. "God is faithful who hath promised." It is true, many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss, and do not ask in faith, nothing wavering. What success can we expect, if we tell the true God to his face, that he is a liar, and that he will not make good a word that he says? Therefore, seek the removal of this unbelief.

Besides, remember that there is a twofold answer that God makes; real and tangible. A king may sign a pardon, and yet the criminal not know it, for a time. An answer may be given sometimes when we know not of it; For example: you seek, perhaps, a heart to pray, and a heart to hate sin; well, upon this perhaps you find your heart harder, to your feeling, than it was; and your corruption bursting forth upon you; which makes you lie grovelling, with the greatest urgency, at heaven's gate, and causes the most extreme loathing of your depraved nature. Why, here you get the very thing you was seeking, yet you are not aware that these things are answers; because the answer comes in a way different from your expectation. The heart may have such thirstiness after grace, such an abomination of sin, that these present answers from heaven may seem to be nothing, yet there is something more the man would have. Present grants are not a satisfying of his desire; however something is got by every faithful seeking. The man gets either more addition to some grace, or more aversion to some sin; or more grace to seek, or more strength to wait. But though you get not so much as you desire, surely you get more than you deserve. Although it is not so

much as to satisfy, yet it is as much as to help for the present. Suppose you be not answered at all, it is your sin to murmur, and your duty to wait: and remember, that God never gives his people so large an alms here, but that they need to become beggars, the next hour at the throne of grace again: and know that God loves to be urged, but he does not love to be hastened. If God promises, it is your duty to believe: if he delays, it is your duty to wait. God postpones that he may be gracious; and, "Blessed are all they that wait for him." In a word, the Lord may keep his door bolted, that you may be provoked to knock the harder. The woman of Canaan struggled with the intent of Christ's refusing to answer her; therefore she becomes unrelenting; and so gets all her will. Therefore, whatever discouragement you meet with, resolve never to quit the throne of grace, but always to lay yourselves in Christ's way, and never to go to another for help. Indeed, purpose that you will die waiting on him. Remember the Psalmist's experience, Psalms 40:1. "I waited patiently on the Lord, and at length he inclined his ear, and heard my cry." You may meet with discouragement and temptation, and be put to very hard thoughts; but you must be resolute in looking to Christ for help; reasoning with yourselves like the four lepers at the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings 7:4. If I live at a distance from Christ I will certainly perish, there is no hope for me: if Christ pity me not, when I am waiting on him, I will certainly die; but yet there is hope, he will have pity at length. Therefore, if I perish, I will perish at Christ's feet; still looking up to him, where never one yet perished and I hope he will not let me be the first.

Thus I have attempted to answer some objections: but after all there may be thousands of objections that remain; and it is the Lord only that can effectively and powerfully answer them, or any of those already mentioned. but whatever be your objections against receiving Christ, pray to Christ himself to answer them: he is content that you receive him for this purpose, to answer all your objections, as well as to pardon all your sins and conquer all your corruptions.

Notwithstanding all that has been said, perhaps some are ready to think, my objection has not been mentioned, my case has not been touched; for, it is a singular case. I am no more moved with all that has been said than a stone in the wall. Well it might give some foundation for faith, if you consider that Christ can, out of these stones, raise up children to Abraham; and that he has promised to take away the heart of stone. O beloved, will you put him to his word? Nay, say you, my heart is raging in hatred against him, like a devil. Well, say not, for all that, there is no hope; for Christ can cast out devils; and it is his work and business to put evil spirits out, and to put his own Spirit within you: only allow him to work; for it is one of the ways of receiving him, even to exercise him to receive you and to destroy the works of the devil within you. If Christ should not find any work here among all this company, woe is us, that you should all give such a vile slight to a precious Christ, as that you prefer your lowly lusts to him, and will not so much as desire him to put the sacrificing knife to the throat of your lusts; and though he stand knocking at your door, yet you will not so much as desire him to come in; nor invite him to close the door. If anyone knocks at your door, you will readily desire them to open, and come forward. Shall not glorious Christ get as much reception as that from you? Oh invite him, at least, to put in his hand by the knob of the door, and then your inner being will move for him, Song of Solomon 5:4. May the Lord persuade you to receive Christ, and answer all your objections against him.

S. Purgatory Needful for Christians

Purgatory Needful for Christians by Ralph Erskine

It was the Father's mind that Christ should come and shew his disciples the proper and needful purgatory he designed to bring them through; not the anti-christian purgatory, after this life; for there is no word of this in the sacred oracles; but the Christian purgatory is three-fold; the first is, the bloody purgatory of the blood of Christ, that cleanseth from all sin. The second is, the fiery purgatory of the Spirit of Christ, and his operations, compared to fire. The third is, the crying and pruning purgatory of the cross. All these, but especially the last, seem to be spoke of by our Lord here, John 15:2, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." There are two things in this world that he makes use of for trying, purging, and purifying his disciples; and it is part of his Father's mind to tell them of this; there is, 1. The world's hatred, John 15:18-19, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." 2. The world's rage, John 16:2, They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doth God service, &c. It was his mind to tell them the worst as well as the best.

S. Smoking Spiritualized

Smoking Spiritualized

in Two Parts

A Poem by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed. What follows is the introduction to this work as it appears in The Practical Works of Ralph Erskine, Vol. 10, 1778.

The following poem, the second Part of which was written by Mr. Erskine, is here insterted, to fill up this Page, as a proper Subject of Meditation to Smokers of Tobacco.

Smoking Spiritualized.

In Two Parts. The first Part being an old Meditation upon Smoking Tobacco;
the second, a new Addition to it, or Improvement of it.

Part One: The Law * THIS Indian weed now wither'd quite,

Tho' green at noon, cut down at night,

Shows thy decay;

All flesh is hay.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco. The pipe, so lily-like and weak,

Does thus thy mortal state bespeak

Thou art ev'n such,

Gone with a touch.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco. And when the smoke ascends on high, Then thou behold'st the
vanity Of worldly stuff, Gone with a puff.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco. And when the pipe grows foul within, Think on thy soul defil'd with
sin; For then the fire, It does require.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco. And seest the ashes cast away;

Then to thyself thou mayest say, That to the dust Return thou must.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

Part Two: The Gospel WAS this small plant for thee cut down! So was the Plant of great renown;
Which mercy sends For nobler ends.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

Doth juice medicinal proceed From such a naughty foreign weed?

Then what's the power Of Jesse's flower?

Thus think, and smoke tobacco. The promise, like the pipe, inlays, And by the mouth of faith conveys What virtue flows From Sharon's rose.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco. In vain th' unlighted pipe you blow; Your pains in outward means are so, Till heav'nly fire The heart inspire.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco. The smoke, like burning incense, tow'rs; So should a praying heart of yours, With ardent cries, Surmount the skies.

Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

*The first part, according to the advertisement, is of unknown origin, and not a work of Erskine.

S. The Believer's Faith and Hope Encouraged, Even in the Darkest Nights of Desertion and Distress

The Believer's Faith and Hope Encouraged, Even in the Darkest Nights of Desertion and Distress

By Ralph Erskine "Thy Maker is thy Husband."—Isaiah 54:5 The cunning serpent may accuse,

But never shall succeed ;

The God of peace will Satan bruise,

Thy husband broke his head.

Hell-furies threaten to devour,

Like lions robb'd of whelps:

But lo! in ev'ry perilous hour,

Thy husband always helps. That feeble faith may never fail,

Thine advocate has pray'd ;

Though winnowing tempests may assail,

Thy husband's near to aid.

Though greivous trials grow apace,

And put thee to a stand ;

Thou may'st rejoice in ev'ry case,

Thy husband's help at hand.

Trust, though, when in desertion dark,

No twinkling star by night,

No ray appear, no glimm'ring spark;

Thy husband is thy light. His beams anon the clouds can rent,

And through the vapours run

For of the brightest firmament

Thy husband is the sun.

Without the sun [the] mourning go,

And scarce the way can find,

He brings, through paths they do not know;
Thy husband leads the blind.
Though fire and water he with skill
Brings to a wealthy land;
Rude flames and roaring waves be still,
Thy husband can command. When sin's disorders heavy brings,
That press thy soul with weight;
Then mind how many crooked things
Thy husband has made straight.
Still look to him with longing eyes,
Though both thine eyes should fail;
Cry, and at length, though not thy cries,
Thy husband shall prevail.
Still hope for favour at his hand,
Though favour don't appear:
When help seems most aloof to stand
Thy husband's then most near. In cases hopeless-like, faint hopes
May fail and fears annoy;
But most when stript of earthly props,
Thy husband thou'lt enjoy.
If providence the promise thwart,
And yet thy humbled mind
'Gainst hope believes in hope,'
thou art Thy husband's dearest friend.
Art thou a weakling, poor and faint,
In jeopardy each hour?
Let not thy weakness move thy plaint,
Thy husband has the pow'r.
Dread not thy foes that foil'd thee long,

Will ruin thee at length:

When thou art weak then art thou strong,

Thy husband is thy strength. When foes are mighty, many too,

Don't fear, nor quit the field;

'Tis not with thee they have to do,

Thy husband is thy shield.

'Tis hard to strive against an host,

Or strive against the stream:

But, lo! when all seems to be lost,

Thy husband will redeem

S. The Believer's Principles Concerning The Law & the Gospel

The Believer's Principles Concerning The Law & the Gospel by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

The following selection is taken from Erskine's Gospel Sonnets as found in "The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine" (Glasgow: W. Smith and J. Bryce Booksellers, 1778) vol. 10, pp. 257-283. The original title appears above as it was originally printed. The electronic edition of this text has been newly type set and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. In numerous cases antiquated characters have been replaced and the spelling has been modernized. In some instances sections have been edited for clarity. This particular version therefore is not in the public domain. It may be copied and distributed only for personal or educational use.

SECTION I.

The Mystery of Law & Gospel Though law-commands and gospel-grace Agree in mutual joint embrace;

Yet law and gospel in a flock Can never draw an equal yoke. The law of works, the law of grace, Can't stand together in one place; The brighter scene destroys the dark, As Dagon fell before the ark.

They harmonize like marry'd pairs, Yet are at odds, and keep not squares: As mercy stands from merit far, The letter and the Spirit jar. The law does gospel-comforts harm, The gospel breaks the legal arm;

Yet both exalt each other's horn, And garlands bring their head t' adorn.

I through the law am dead to it, To legal works and self-conceit;

Yet, lo! through gospel-grace I live, And to the law due honour give. The law great room for boasting makes, But grace my pride an boasting breaks;

Yet all my boasts the law does kill And grace makes room to boast my fill. The gospel makes me keep the law;

Yet from its painful service draw:

It does all law-demands fulfill, Yet makes them wholly void and null. The gospel gives me no command, Yet by obeying it I stand. To strict obedience though it call, Does bind to none, but promise all. The law does strict commandment give, That I the gospel-news believe; But yet it teaches no such thing, Nor e'er could gospel-tidings bring.

If I the law as a cov'nant obey I am not in the gospel-way, Which does to sweet obedience draw:

Yet is the gospel no new law. The gospel give the law, I see, Sufficient strength to justify;

Yet I may say in truth it is The law that gives the gospel this. For as the law no sinner clears, But who the gospel-garment wears; So none are justify'd by grace, Unless the law-demand have place.

Again the law, which yet seems worse, Gives gospel-news condemning force;

Yet they are news that never can, Nor ever will condemn a man.

Dread threat'nings to the law pertain, Not to the gospel's golden chain:

Yet all law-threats and Sinai's ire To gospel-grace are wall of fire. The righteous law sets free none Of Adam's guilty race, save one; Who being charged, for this cause By God's just law condem-ned was.

Yet free of guilt it did him see;

Hence fully clear'd, and set him free:

Yet, had not guilt his soul involv'd, By law he could not been absolv'd. But he withal condemn'd and spoil'd The law of works, which him assail'd And now the law is (in these views) The marrow of the gospel-news. The law can justify no man That is a sinner; yet it can Thus favour sinful men, and free The chief of sinners, guilty me. The gospel too acquitteth none That have not put perfection on; And yet it clearth none (I grant) But those who all perfection want.

Those that with gospel-clearance meet, Must by the law be found complete;

Yet never could (again I grant) The gospel justify a saint.

All perfect persons it controls, And justifies ungodly souls;

Yet still no man its grace partakes, But whom it truly godly makes. The law withstands the gospel path, Which yet its approbation hath: The gospel thwarts the legal way, Yet will approve the law for ay.

Hence though the gospel's comely frame Doth openly the law condemn;

Yet they are blind, who never saw The gospel justify the law.

Thus gospel-grace, and law-commands, Both bind and loose each other's hands:

They can't agree on any terms, Yet hug each other in their arms.

Those that divide them, cannot be The friends of truth and verity;

Yet those that dare confound the two, Destroy them both, and gender woe. This paradox non can decipher, That plow not with the gospel-heifer.

SECTION II.

The Difference Betwixt the Law and the Gospel. The law supposing I have all, Does ever for perfection call; The gospel suits my total want, And all the law can seek does grant. The law could promise life to me, If my obedience perfect be; But grace does promise life upon My Lord's obedience alone. The law says, Do, and life you'll win; But grace says, Live, for all is done; The

former cannot ease my grief, The latter yields me full relief. By law convinc'd of sinful breach;

By gospel-grace I comfort reach:

The one my condemnation bears; The other justifies and clears. The law shews my errors are great; The gospel freely pays my debt: The first does me the bankrupt curse; The last does bless and fill my purse. The law will not abate a mite, The gospel all the sum will quite;

There God in threat'nings is array'd But here in promises display'd. The law and gospel disagree, Like Hagar, Sarah, bond and free: The former's Hagar's servitude; The latter Sarah's happy brood. To Sinai black, and Zion fair, The word does law and grace compare. Their cursing and their blessing vye With Ebal and Gerizzim high. The law excludes not boasting vain, But rather feeds it to my bane; But gospel grace allows no boasts, Save in the King, the Lord of Hosts. The law still irritates my sin, And hardens my proud heart therein; By grace's melting pow'r renews, And my corruption strong subdues. The law with thunder, Sinai-like, Does always dread and terror speak: The gospel makes a joyful noise, And charms me with a still, calm voice. The legal trumpet war proclaims, In wrathful threats, and fire, and flames: The gospel-pipe, a peaceful sound, Which spreads a kindly breath around. The law is weak through sinful flesh; The gospel brings recruits afresh: The first a killing letter wears; The last a quick'ning spirit bears. The law that seeks perfection's height, Yet gives no strength, nor offers might; But precious gospel-tidings glad Declare where all is to be had. From me alone the law does crave, What grace affirms in Christ I have: When therefore law-pursuits enthral, I send the law to grace for all. The law brings terror to molest, The gospel gives the weary rest; The one does flags of death display, The other shows the living way. The law by Moses was expressed; The glorious gospel came by Christ: The first dim nature's light may trace; The last is only known by grace. The law may rouse me from my sloth, To faith and to repentance both: And though the law commandeth each, Yet neither of them can it teach. Nor will accept for current coin The duties which it does enjoin:

It seeks all, but accepts no less Than constant, perfect righteousness. The gospel on the other hand, Although it issue no command, But strictly view'd, does whole consist In promises and offers blessed;

Yet does it many duties teach, Which legal light could never reach:

Thus faith, repentance, and the like, Are fire that gospel-engines strike.

They have acceptance here through grace, The law affords them no such place:

Yet still they come through both their hands, Through gospel-teachings, law-commands. The law's a house of bondage sore, The gospel opens the prison-door: The first me hamper'd in its net; The last at freedom kindly set. The precept craves, the gospel gives;

While that me presses, this relieves; And or affords the strength I lack, Or takes the burden off my back. The law requires on pain of death; The gospel courts with loving breath:

While that conveys a deadly wound; This makes me perfect, whole, and found.

There viewing how diseas'd I am, I here perceive the healing balm:

Afflicted there with sense of need, But here refresh'd with meet remede. The law's a charge for what I owe; The gospel my discharge to show: The one a scene of fears doth ope; The other is the door of hope. An angry God the law reveal'd The gospel shows him reconcil'd: By that I know he was displeas'd; By this I see his wrath appeas'd. The law thus shews the divine ire, And nothing but consuming fire. The gospel brings the olive branch, And blood the burning fire to quench. The law still shows a fiery face, The gospel shows a throne of grace;

There justice rides alone in state, But here she takes the mercy-seat. In Sum:

Lo! in the law JEHOVAH dwells, But Jesus is conceal'd;

Whereas the gospel's nothing else But Jesus Christ reveal'd.

SECTION III.

The Harmony Betwixt the Law and the Gospel. The law's a tutor much in vogue, To gospel-grace a pedagogue; The gospel to the law no less Than its full end for righteousness. When once the fiery law of God Has chas'd me to the gospel-road;

Then back unto the holy law Most kindly gospel-grace will draw. When I the gospel-news believe, Obedience to the law I give: And that both in its fed'ral dress, And as a rule of holiness.

Lo! in my Head I render all For which the fiery law can call: His blood unto its fire was fuel, His Spirit shapes me to its rule. When law and gospel kindly meet, To serve each other both unite:

Sweet promises, and stern commands, Do work to one another's hands. The divine law demands no less Than human perfect righteousness: The gospel gives it this and more.

Ev'n divine righteousness in store.

Whate'er the righteous law require, The gospel grants its whole desire. Are law-commands exceeding broad? So is the righteousness of God.

How great soe'er the legal charge, The gospel-payment's equal large: No less by man the law can bray, When grace provides a God to pay. The law makes gospel-banquets sweet; The gospel makes the law complete:

Law-fruits to grace's storehouse draw;

Grace decks and magnifies the law.

Both law and gospel cloths combine, To make each other's lustre shine: The gospel all law-breakers shames; The law all gospel-slighters damns. The law is holy, just, and good;

All this the gospel seals with blood, And clears the royal law's just dues With dearly purchas'd revenues. The law commands me to believe; The gospel saving faith does give: The law enjoins me to repent; The gospel give my tears a vent.

What in the gospel-mint is coin'd, The same is in the law injoin'd:

Whatever gospel-tidings teach, The law's authority doth reach.

Here join the law and gospel hands, What this me teaches that commands:

What virtuous forms the gospel please
The same the law doth authorize. And thus the
law-commandment seals Whatever gospel-grace reveals:
The gospel also for my good Seals all
the law-demands with blood. The law most perfect still remains,
And ev'ry duty full contains: The
gospel its perfection speaks, And therefore gives whate'er it seeks.

Next, what by law I'm bound unto,
The same the gospel makes me do:

What preceptively that can crave,
This effectively can ingrave.

All that by precepts Heav'n expects,
Free grace by promises effects: To what the law by fear may
move, To that the gospel leads by love. The righteous law condemns each man
That dare reject the gospel-plan: The holy gospel none will save,
On whom it won't the law ingrave. When Christ the tree of life did climb,
I see both law and grace in him: In him the law its end does gain;
In him the promise is Amen. The law make grace's pasture sweet,
Grace makes the law my sav'ry meat;

Yea, sweeter than the honey-comb,
When grace and mercy brings it home. The precepts of the
law me show What fruits of gratitude I owe; But gospel-grace begets the brood,
And moves me to the gratitude.

Law-terrors parch the putrid sore; And gospel-grace applies the cure:
The one plows up the fallow-ground; The other sows the seed around.
A rigid matter was the law, Demanding brick,
denying straw; But when with gospel-tongue it sings, It bids me fly,
and gives me wings. In Sum, Both law and gospel close unite,
Are seen with more solace, Where truth and mercy kindly meet,
In fair Immanuel's face. This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK
(www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal:
Rosenthal2000@aol.com ÿÿÿ

S. The Best Match; Or, the Incomparable Marriage Between the Creator and the Creature

The Best Match; Or, the Incomparable Marriage Between the Creator and the Creature by Ralph Erskine

[This was delivered, in two discourses, at Culross: but the precise time and occasion cannot be ascertained; only we see the first edition was printed Anno 1722.] "Thy Maker is thy Husband." — Isaiah 54:5 The prophet Isaiah having largely discoursed of the sufferings of Christ, and the blessed fruits and effects of them; among which one is, that he should have a numerous seed to believe on him; and that, when the Jews reject him, the Gentiles should gladly receive him: and thus foreseeing, by the spirit of prophecy, the glorious state of the Gentile church, he breaks forth into a song of triumph in the beginning of this chapter; where the prophet directs his speech to the church and spouse of God in these words, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing; and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." Where we have a magnificent promise of the fertility and the felicity of the Gentile church; and this is enlarged to the fifth verse, which contains the words of our text; where we have the reason of her happiness and fruitfulness who was formerly a barren widow, for "Thy Maker is thy Husband:" he who made thee out of nothing, and therefore can easily fulfil all these promises, how unlikely soever they seem to be; he who made thee a people, yea, which is more, who made thee his people, he will take possession of thee as his spouse, and act the part of an husband to thee.

I shall defer my further introduction and exposition, and also whatever might be said concerning the external relation betwixt Christ and the visible church, my chief design being at this time, only to speak a little to that internal spiritual marriage-relation betwixt Christ and the invisible church, or Christ and the believer, as it is represented under the picture of a marriage: and what I would offer upon this subject I lay before you in this doctrinal proposition. That there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers, wherein he supplies the place of a husband unto them, and they the place of a bride and spouse to him. In prosecuting whereof, I would essay these three things.

I. Prove, that there is such a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers.

II. Speak to the nature of this marriage.

III. Give the reasons, why Christ comes under such a relation to his people.

IV. Make some application of the subject.

I. To confirm the doctrine, that there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers. This will appear from these two considerations.

1. From the compellations given to Christ with relation to believers. How frequently doth the spouse call him her husband in the book of the Song? "As the apple-tree among the trees of the

wood, so is my beloved among the sons. My beloved is mine, and I am his," Song of Solomon 2:3, Song of Solomon 2:16. And, says the apostle, 2 Corinthians 11:2 — "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ."

2. The marriage relation betwixt Christ and believers appears from the designation given to believers in scripture with respect to Christ. How frequently calls he her his love, his spouse, in the book of the Song of Songs? "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my SPOUSE. How fair is thy love, my sister, my SPOUSE!" Song of Solomon 4:9-10. In Revelation 19:7, there the church, (or believers in the collective capacity) is called the bride, the Lamb's wife: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready." We need not stand to prove that which is so evident, we need say no more to confirm it, than to repeat the text, "thy maker is thy husband." Therefore I come,

II. To speak of the nature of this marriage: and here we would briefly consider, 1. The parties married. 2. The terms of the marriage. 3. The properties of the marriage. 4. The effects of it. 5. How the match is carried on. 6. How it is concluded.

(1.) I say, let us consider the parties married; who is the Bridegroom, and who is the Bride.

1. Then, the bridegroom is the wisdom of God; and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in him: he knows all the needs of the bride, and is ready to supply them.—On the other hand, the bride, before her matching with him, is the most notorious fool out of hell: her folly is shown by continuing to refuse to match with him; to refuse to give her consent to this heavenly bridegroom.

2. The bridegroom is the eternal Son of God; the King's only Son: "The King made a marriage for his Son:" He is the blood-royal of heaven.—On the other hand, What is the bride's pedigree? She needs not boast of her descent; "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," Ezekiel 16:3. There is a vast difference here.

3. The bridegroom is the heir of all things: he hath all riches,"the unsearchable riches of Christ."—But what is the bride worth before he match with her? She is worse than nothing, poverty itself; and not only a beggar, but in debt, and Christ is willing to pay her debt.

4. The bridegroom is comely and glorious. All the seraphims and cherubims above, all the sons of men in the world, all the crowned heads on earth, in all the circumstances of glory, are but like black pieces of earth compared with this glorious bridegroom.—On the other hand, What is the bride before he match with her. Even as black as the devil can make her. Not only a leopard, spotted here and there, but wholly black and ugly. When she is cast forth in the open field to the loathing of her person, she is a spectacle of horror and misery; yet then it is a marriage-day and a time of love.

(2.) What are the terms of the marriage: the articles of it on his part and her part? The terms on her part, though the whole belong to Christ, yet, to speak of terms in an improper sense, he requires of her what he worketh in her; namely,

1. That she be divorced from all other husbands, and give up with all other lovers and idols; particularly, that she be divorced from the law, that she may be married unto Christ: she must not obey the law from a principle of her own strength; nor as a covenant of works, that, by obedience,

she may purchase a title to heaven; nor to gratify a natural conscience; nor merely to escape hell, and make a righteousness of her obedience. She must be divorced from that husband.

2. Upon her part it was required, that she be satisfied with this husband alone as the great portion of the soul, that he may have no rival, no competitor in her affections, none to sit on the throne with him: she must keep the chief room for the son of God. Again, on his part, he contracts,

1. That he will make over himself to her; all he is, all he hath, all he hath purchased, all he hath promised; he will make over to her all the blessings of the everlasting covenant. O this is a sweet article! And a large charter indeed!

2. He contracts to perform all the glorious offices of a husband to her; to provide for her, protect her, direct her, pity her, clothe her, to encourage and comfort her; and to do all for her she needs; this is the sum of the contract; for, to speak properly, Christ is all, and does all in this matter; and our part is done by him in us, Hosea 2:19-20. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." Christ signs the contract for him and her both. "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness;" I will fulfill the law, and satisfy God's justice. "I will betroth thee unto me in loving-kindness:" though there be nothing in thee to invite my love, but much to challenge my aversion, yet I will overcome all my imperfections, and set my love upon thee. "I will betroth thee unto me in mercies;" in pardoning mercy, sanctifying mercy, supporting mercy, comforting mercy. But lest the bride think, that whenever she sins there may be a divorce, she may break up and go away, therefore it follows, "I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness." He pledges his veracity for fulfilling the articles on her part and his both. But then, (3.) What are the properties of this marriage?

1. It is a very mysterious marriage, that the Creator should take the work out of his hands for a bride; not only when in its original and virgin integrity, as it dropt out of his creating hands, but when polluted with the poison of the devil, the venom of the serpent, that he should take her for his bride; "Thy maker is thy husband." This is an astonishing union. If a glorious angel should be matched with a creeping worm, and a king with a beggar, it would not be such a wonder; but the maker to join himself to the work of his hands; there cannot be a greater distance conceived betwixt any thing, than betwixt a Creator, and that which is brought out from the barren womb of nothing, a creature; and yet they are in a marriage-relation; "Thy maker is thy husband."

2. This marriage is very difficult and hard. It is true, there is nothing too hard for Omnipotence; yet the human nature of Christ had much to do with it; though he was supported by the divine nature, yet he behoved to swim through the river of his own blood, before he could get his bride. He satisfied the justice of God, established a new covenant. All this must be done in order to this marriage.

3. This marriage is an indissoluble marriage; death dissolves other relations, but it increases this intimate union: Nothing shall separate Christ and the believer: "I am persuaded, saith Paul, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Romans 8:38-39.

(4.) What are the effects of this marriage?

1. The first and immediate effect is a most close union betwixt Christ and the believer. This union, though less than a personal union, although it be in some respect, yet it is more than a political union, more than a moral union; it is a very close union. The bridegroom, Christ, he gives his bride his own spirit; communicates vital influences, from the glorious head, to her: and she cleaves, by faith and love, close to him; and God promises that he will make the house of Israel cleave close to him, as a girdle to the loins of a man, Jeremiah 13:11. He makes his spouse in spite of all her folly, in spite of all her enmity, in spite of all her enemies and temptations, to cleave close to him.

2. Another effect of this union, is sweet communion, mutual fellowship: he feasts with them and they with him: he blows upon her garden, quickens and animates her graces; and then he comes and eats his pleasant fruits.

3. Another effect is, familiarity, which is coincident with the former: he treats them not as strangers, but as friends; and not as friends only, but as his own spouse: he communicates to her, and speaks comfortably and kindly to her. It is a wonder what condescension God will make sometimes: and the believer again can be more familiar with God, than with the whole world; and can tell to God what he can tell to none else.—Thus you see some of the effects of this marriage.

(5.) How was the match carried on?

I answer in a word. On his part it was carried on thus:

1. He gave the Father his hand, and engaged to him in the covenant of redemption, from eternity, that he would do all things necessary for accomplishing the marriage.

2. Because there must be an union of natures betwixt the bridegroom and the bride; (it was not possible that we could be matched with the divine nature;) therefore he becomes a man, and takes on our nature, that there might be an union of natures.

3. Because the bride is a slave, he pays her ransom, substitutes himself in her room, takes on her debt, and pays all that she owed to justice, and then takes on with her. But, on our part, just nothing at all; we had no hand in the covenant of redemption; no hand in the contrivance of salvation; we knew nothing about the business; we had no thoughts of a Redeemer; deserved nothing but pure wrath; we were lying, with full contentment, in the devil's territories when Christ was carrying on the match.

(6.) How is the marriage concluded upon his part?

1. He sends forth his ambassadors to court for him, as Abraham did his servant for Isaac: and there is a great work, indeed, to make her give her consent. Let angels in heaven unite their powers of persuasion, they could not prevail with one soul, if a converting day were not come: but they must always speak fair to her. How rhetorical was Abraham's servant for his master? He hath but one child, and that child hath great riches; he seeks no portion with Rebecca, only her consent. Thus he rhetorizes and flourishes exceedingly, and persuades with the greatest motives. But yet the ambassadors of Christ have a larger commission, if our eyes were opened to see it; they are sent forth to make love to the bride, and in his name to commend Christ.

2. He concludes the marriage thus. The bride being wretchedly ignorant of her true happiness, therefore his father distresses her with the debt which she owes to him; and the wretched person

is forced, for some time, to mount Sinai; and there God descends in all the circumstances of terrible majesty; he thunders against her, curses; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Galatians 3:10. God exacts all the debt, conscience roars, and the devils are let loose; she fears hell and wrath; and God declares, in the gospel, that the wretched bankrupt shall go to prison, and lie eternally in hell, if she do not take on with his son, marry him, and believe on him. Thus the bride is forced to an extremity: some have more, some have less of this law-work; but all are humbled and broken in some measure, who are married to Christ: he sends forth his spirit and convinces the world of sin. But this would not do either; and therefore,

3. The bridegroom sees that nothing but condescension will do it; and so he appear in all his glory: when the bride is full of fears, perplexities, and anxieties; when the terrors of God are surrounding her, and the arrows of the Almighty drinking up her spirits, and when she is crying out, What shall I do? Whether shall I go? Then the bridegroom appears in all his excellency and glory, and says, "Behold me, behold me;" and she gets a view of him that ravishes her heart, and enlarges her soul; then it is that the spirit is sent to determine her to consent. The manifestation of his glory does enlighten her mind and spirit; and immediately grace, upon the will, draws out the whole heart after him: so that if the bride could be grieved and pained upon the marriage day, it would be for her folly in refusing him so long. —But what is done upon the bride's part, for concluding the match; Nothing at all; but the whole soul is enabled to acquiesce in a redeemer: and the believer is ready, at such a time, to say, he is my Lord, my God, my strength, my all, and shall be for ever. Thus you have a brief scheme of the nature and way of this marriage.

Having spoken but very briefly to the former heads I shall here, before I proceed to the reasons of the doctrine, offer a few remarks upon the time of this marriage-union betwixt Christ and believers. We told you how this marriage was concluded and completed by Christ, and now we say, there is a stated day and time for the concluding thereof: and upon this head we may remark,

1st, That there is a two-fold day we are to consider in this marriage, namely, the day of espousals on earth, and the day of consummation in heaven; and we may compare these two together in a few words.

1. The day of espousals here is ushered in with a very dark morning or rather an evening, upon the bride's part, with the wrath of God, and the law: as it was said, "The evening and the morning was the day:" so, in this contract, the evening of legal terrors, at least some humiliation, ushers in the morning: But as to the consummation, there is a great deal of glory before its the soul being taken to heaven already, and the body sleeping sweetly in the grave, a bed where the bridegroom lay three days before her.

2. In the day of espousals, when the person gets a victory, over corruption, and finds little stirring of it, no sensible working of it, yet there is a party within, at the same time, that opposes the match, and which will afterwards get out its head, and will be still assaulting the believer, while he is on earth: but in the day of consummation, there is no such thing; no enemy, no sin, no corruption; but the whole soul goes out wholly upon the bridegroom.

3. The espousals are carried on secretly; it may be the person is sitting at your side, and you do not see, nor know when Christ is making up the match; or, perhaps, on his knees at home, there is

a secret transaction: But the consummation will be before millions of angels, millions of saints, and millions of spectators. Here is a great difference: after the day of espousals is over, the bride may give many squint looks to her old lovers, looking back to Egypt, departing from her husband, doubting of his love, distrusting his word, fearing his dispensations: But after the consummation, no shadow of sin, no shadow of jealousy, no shadow of mistakes, or fears, can overtake her for ever; no cloud can intervene, for the sun of righteousness shall never be eclipsed any more. But then,

2. A second remark is, that the precise time of the espousals is condescended on by the Bridegroom and his Father, from all eternity; the very moment when the bride shall be made to sign the contract, and flee to Christ, and pour out her whole soul upon him; that precise moment is agreed upon betwixt the Father and the Son, in the covenant of redemption, from eternity.

3. We remark, that the Bridegroom waits patiently for that moment that is agreed upon betwixt the Father and the Son: he longs for it, he desires it. The believer many times is ready to think, O, Christ is not willing! I have set days apart, I have gone to my knees, I have sought him in and about this and the other ordinance, and yet I could not close with him: I have been almost dipt in hell with affliction, yet my heart was never melted; surely Christ is not willing. O let us flee the borders of blasphemy! The Lord Jesus is willing; but the fulness of the time is not yet come; there is a set moment for his coming to his people, and for this they are to wait: yea, for this he waits himself, according to that scripture, which I shall read to them that cannot get that in duties and ordinances which they have been long looking for; Isaiah 30:18,— "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for, the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him." He will wait upon the very moment of time, for the day of salvation; he knows the proper season. The crane, the swallow, and the stork know their seasons, by the natural instinct God hath given them; and will he not know his own season? Yea, he waits to be gracious.

4th Remark, That when the time comes, then there is a sweet coming together of all circumstances to conclude the work; all things work pleasantly together to complete the match; conscience goes right to work, the word is made lively, the Spirit acts powerfully and sweetly in the soul: there is an auspicious conjunction of all favourable circumstances, for determining the bride, and drawing out her heart.

5th Remark, That there are several signs and characters of this day, by which it may be known. What are the signs of it? you shall say. I shall not insist on this, only it is a day of light; great light breaks in upon the mind; it is a day of love; much love is let in upon the heart; it is a day of power, wherein the bride is persuaded and overcome; difficulties are surmounted enemies conquered, and the bride's will is moulded into a compliance; it is a day of amazement. O what an ecstasy of wonder is raised in the person's heart! I was blind, now I see; I was dead, now I live; I was weak, now I am strong; this morning, perhaps, I was under affliction, and under the terrors of God, and now he hath ravished me with the consolations of his Spirit: I was afraid of hell, now I have the hope of heaven and eternal life. O what a day of wonder is it! Lastly, it is a day of vows; the soul will be ready to break forth in such a day crying, What shall I speak for him? What shall I suffer for him? A sixth and last remark on this head is, that in this stated day of espousals, the bridegroom manifests his glory to the bride; when he intimates to the soul "thy Maker is thy Husband" he

shews his glory; his absolute glory, his comparative glory, his relative glory; they are all one upon the matter, yet there is a formal different consideration of them.

1. His absolute glory is manifested. What does the soul see, that is matched and married to Christ? Alas! Some see nothing but dreams and fantasies; but when the believer is matched with Christ, so he deals with him as with Moses, he makes all his glory to pass before him; the person gets a view of the glorious attributes of the Son of God.

2. He manifests his comparative glory; "Thou art more excellent than hills of prey: fairer than the sons of men;" the bride, the believer sees him as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, every way incomparable. Whatever he be compared to he excels it; if he be a lily, he is the lily of the valley; if he be a rose, he is the rose of Sharon; if he be a plant, he is the plant of renown; if he be a physician, he is the physician of value; if an advocate, he is an advocate with the Father; he is represented without any parallel.

3. His relative glory is manifested: he is discovered as a glorious priest, a glorious prophet, a glorious king, a glorious husband, a glorious redeemer and Saviour! And there will be a sight of his glorious fulness in all these relations, and the glorious fitness of that sufficiency and fulness, all suited for the soul: and thus revealing himself, he removes all jealousies and mistakes from the bride, supplies all her needs, heals all her diseases, and out-bids all her rivals, who can offer nothing to allure the soul, while he can, and doth say, I am all-sufficient to help thee.

III. I come now to the third thing proposed; namely, To offer some reasons of the doctrine, why Christ comes under a married-relation to believers. I answer,

1. His own sovereign will is the best reason why he comes under a marriage-relation in this case; "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight," Matthew 11:28. His actions are not to be examined at the bar of our reason: "He hath mercy because he will have mercy."

2. His love to them makes him come under such a relation to them; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with everlasting kindness have I drawn thee." Love is the motive that engages him; love brought him out of heaven for them; love nailed him to the cross for them; love laid him in a grave for them; and love engages him to a marriage-relation with them.

3. He does it for the glory of his own free grace, mercy, and love. As love and mercy was his motive, so it was his purpose, that he might display and reveal it to the utmost. This attribute is at its utmost degree. Infinite wisdom could have contrived a thousand worlds, and infinite power could have made them, but the love of God hath gone to its utmost height; it is not possible for Christ to give a greater, demonstration of his love than he hath done, in giving his life for the bride, and entering into a marriage-relation with her.

4. He does it, that he may furnish work for the blessed company in the higher house; for on the earth the contract is only drawn up: this is only the day of espousals; heaven will be the day of the consummation of the marriage: this is only a courting and wooing time; but the day will come when the nuptial solemnity shall be celebrated, and that shall continue while the day of eternity lasts,—This shall suffice for the reasons of the doctrine.

IV. The fourth thing was, To make some application; and it may be, 1. For Information. 2. Lamentation. 3. Examination. 4. Exhortation. Now of these in their order.

(1.) For Information. Is it so, that there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers?

1. This informs us of the infinite love of God towards lost sinners, in giving his own Son to be a husband and redeemer unto them: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. God so loved the world, as neither angels nor men can tell.

2. This informs us of the infinite love of Christ, in condescending to be a husband to such a bride. It could never have entered into the heart of the wisest angel in heaven, that Christ the eternal Son of God, should become man; and far less that he should take such a filthy and deformed creature and bride by the hand, as sinners are: if he had given us our deserving, he would have made his justice to ride in triumph over us, and hell to resound with eternal shouts of praise to incensed justice; but, to the quite contrary, he hath so ordered, that heaven shall resound with eternal hallelujahs of praise to his gracious mercy and free grace, in choosing those that were enemies, and admitting them to his blessed bosom.

3. This doctrine informs us of the believer's safety. Having Christ for her husband, who can hurt her? It is the duty of a husband, you know, to protect and defend his spouse; and to be sure Christ will not be lacking in this to his bride: "He will hide them in the secret of his presence from the pride of men: he will keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues," Psalms 31:20. "About all the glory he makes a defence," Isaiah 4:5. He covers them with the mantle of his Spirit; sure then, the bride of Christ is in absolute safety: he hath retiring chambers for her, to hide her in till the day of indignation be overpast.

4. This doctrine lets us see that believers are no such lowly and wretched persons as the world generally takes them to be; they are Christ's bride, and he is their husband: and, O what an honour is it to be married to the Son of God! Having him for an husband, they come to be related to all Christ's relations; God is their Father, because he is his Father; angels are their servants, because they are his servants; saints are their fellow-brethren, because they are his members; heaven is their inheritance, because it is the kingdom of their husband. In a word, whatever is his, is theirs; "And all things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Corinthians 3:22-23.

(2.) For Lamentation. Is it so, that there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers? This calls for deep lamentation in these two particulars.

1. It calls us to lament that Christ should have so few brides among us, though he be wooing and courting us, by the gospel, crying, "Behold me, behold me," Isaiah 65:1. Yet where is the man or woman that is prevailed with to enter a match with this glorious bridegroom? Though he be fairer than the sons of men, and condescends to offer marriage with sinners, who are as black and ugly as hell itself, yet they set him at nought, and give him just ground for that melancholy complaint, "My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would have none of me," Psalms 81:11. And may he not appeal to the very immaterial creation, to judge of our folly as he did of old to Israel? Jeremiah 2:12-13,— "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; yea, be astonished and horribly afraid, for my people have committed two great evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

2. This doctrine may afford us matter of lamentation also, That believers, who are espoused to him, should walk so unworthily of such a husband. You know a wife should conduct herself

conform to the character of her husband; and where her carriage is base and shameful, it reflects a dishonour on him. O how unsuitable is it to see Christ's bride blackened with the filth of hell! To see those who, have stricken hands with Christ, in a marriage-covenant, joining hands with lusts and idols, and defiling themselves with them!

(3) For Examination. Let us try if we be thus married and related to Christ; whether he be our husband, and we his bride and spouse.

I shall offer a few marks whereby we may know whether or not we be married unto this glorious Husband; and they may be drawn from the consideration of the antecedents, the constituents, and the consequents of this marriage.

1st. Try by the antecedents to the marriage-contract. Before ever Christ did contract with thee, didst thou observe him courting thy soul before this contract? Here is a courting. Now, how did Christ court you.

1. Did he court you by the austerity of the law, as with fire and sword? Did he court you by such a word as that, Thou art a cursed wretch: for, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them?" Galatians 2:16. Did he court you by such a word as that, Cursed is every one that doth the work of the Lord negligently? Did he court you thus, by the spirit of bondage, with the terrors of God, as clothed with vengeance, telling thee thou art an heir of hell and wrath, a child of the devil? Did he court thee so as thou wast surrounded with fear and trouble?

2. Did he court thee as by the austerity of the law; so by the sweetness of the gospel, when he saw thee cast down, when he saw thee a poor heavy laden sinner, like to be crushed under thy weights? Did he then court you with such a word as that, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28; or with such a word as that, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; he that hath no money, come; buy wine and milk, without money and without price," Isaiah 55:1. "Flee to your strongholds, ye prisoners of hope." Did he thus court you with the gospel-offer?

3. Did he court you by his love-letters? This is another antecedent of the contract. Got you ever a love-letter sent from Christ out of heaven? But you will say, What is the love-letter? Even the Bible: "Search the Scriptures, these are they that testify of men" John 5:39. Here there are the declarations of the love of Christ to thy soul: here there are love-promises in these letters, that shall be yours. There is a love-covenant in these letters. Have you read and pondered them? And can you say that Christ spake them into your heart? If it be a text that was preached upon, or if it be a single word, O Christ drop that into my heart! And I think it will go with me to my death-bed, it came with such life and power. In a word, Got you any gifts before the marriage-contract, such as the, gift of true conviction, such as the gift of heart-contrition, the gift of real humiliation, the gift of self-denial, the gift of faith? These are given, some before, some at the contract?

2dly. Try by the constituents of the marriage.

1. If this marriage be made up betwixt Christ and thee, then thou hast put away all lovers besides Christ; the right hand will be cut off, the right eye put out; you will be divorced from all other husbands, particularly from the law; ye must be dead to the law, that ye may be married to another

husband, even to Christ. But you will say, What is it to be dead to the law? I answer, It is not to lay it aside as the rule of obedience; for the law shall still be the rule and standard of the believer's obedience, life, and conversation but to be dead to the law, is to be sensible that the law cannot save us as a covenant of works. It is to disclaim all hopes of being justified by the law, or by our works or obedience to it. I see Christ, the glorious husband, hath brought in an everlasting righteousness, answering the law fully: this is the garment I must put on, and cast off my filthy rags.

2. Hast thou given a cordial consent upon the contract-day? Can you say you was enabled to take him, as the Psalmist, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord;" and thou art my God, my head, my husband? Have you given a rational consent to it? Yea, a super-rational and supernatural consent? A deliberate, chaste, stayed, solemn, unconditional consent? Did you say it with faith, and with an heir of heaven, that he was yours, and shall be so forever? It is true, persons may be matched to Christ who cannot condescend on the precise time: the Spirit may work many times some way that we cannot know; yet it is his ordinary way with his bride, after many tossings, to break in with ravishing, conquering sweetness, to draw forth her soul to a solemn remarkable closing with him, and consenting to him. Have you then been engaged to make over yourself to the bridegroom, by an unreserved resignation of yourself to him, that you will not only take him wholly, and for ever, for holiness and happiness, for light and life, for grace and glory, but also make over yourself to him, soul and body, whatever you are, whatever you have been? Have you been thus made to yield yourselves unto the Lord? Are you one with him? Have you one spirit with him? Are you of one faith with him, of one way with him, endeavouring to walk as he walked? "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," 1 Corinthians 4:17.

3. Can you say, that upon the marriage-day, you got a marriage-gift from the bridegroom? Among the Jews, the bridegroom was to give a marriage-gift to his bride: Now, what gift did you receive on this marriage-day? Can you say, indeed I got the wedding garment; he clothed me with his righteousness, which he span out of his own bowels, weaved with his own hands, and, dyed with his own blood; and thus all my guilt is covered, the curse is done away? This is indeed what few get; yet some have been, and are able to say, I am delivered from the wrath to come; and there is no condemnation to me; and on such a time I got also an ornament of the graces with the spirit, which I wear as jewels, that is to say, faith, love, obedience, patience, humility;, and I got the promise of an hundred-fold here, and I am expecting more gifts yet, before the marriage be consummated I am expecting mare assurance, I live in the hope of glory; I expect a sealed pardon of all my sins, and I look to get the earnest of the spirit, and more every day.

4. Another constituent of this marriage-contract is, the bride, on that day, puts off one veil, and puts on another. This was the Jewish custom, the brides put off the veil of bashfulness, and puts on the veil of subjection. Christ's bride, before the marriage, cannot look the bridegroom in the face, is ashamed to look upon him; but she is made to put off this veil in the presence of her former lovers, and to take Christ by the hand, and then she puts on the veil of subjection, whereby she promises in his strength, to subject herself to her husband's will. Have we thus promised to be obedient to his commands, in his own strength, whatever he enjoins us to do or suffer?

3dly, Try by the consequents of this marriage. Would you know if there has been a contract between Christ and you? Try then by the immediate consequents.

1. Did you see the king in his beauty, and such a glory and excellency in him as could not be paralleled by all the glory of ten thousand worlds?

2. What was your converse with him on the contract-day? Can you say, he embraced me in his arms, and I embraced him in my heart, and there was sweet communion and fellowship betwixt him and me?

3. Wast thou crowned in the marriage-day, so as thou wast known by others, as it were, to be the bride of Christ? The Jews, they not only crowned the bridegroom, but the bride also. You see what the crown is that Christ's bride should have, Revelation 12:1. "There appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The bride of Christ is crowned with the doctrine of the twelve apostles.

4. The bride of Christ keeps at home, and delights in the bride-chamber. This is her delight all the days of her life, to dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple, Ordinances will be sweet, being the galleries wherein the King is held.

II. Try by the qualities and duties of the bride, which are also the consequents to this marriage.

1. If you be Christ's bride, then you will love the bridegroom. Love is what every wife owes to her husband; much more doth the believer owe it to Christ who hath expressed far more love to this bride than ever a husband did to a wife; he loved her, and gave himself for her. He shed, the hottest blood of his heart to save and redeem her. You will love him with a love of desire; "With my soul have I desired thee in the night;" with a love of delight; "My meditation of him shall be sweet;" with a love of benevolence, wishing well to his interest; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not thee to my chiefest joy," Psalms 127:5-6. They that habitually love husband, wife, children, riches, or any thing more than Christ, have no reason to think that they are matched with him.

2. If we be married to Christ, we will trust in and depend on our husband? In whom can a wife trust, if not in her husband? The believer rests on Christ for grace and glory; and commits all to him, ventures all on him, and expects all from him. The soul that is espoused to Christ, looks on the infinite virtue of his blood, the infinite efficacy of his spirit, the infinite fulness of his, grace, the infinite dimensions of his love, the infinite faithfulness Of his promise: in all this he sees an infinite ground of hope, and thereupon he ventures, and rolls all on him. Here, he says, I will stay and rest, here I will build, here I am resolved to stay, here I am resolved to live and die.

3. If we be married to Christ, we will have a zeal for his glory. Some sacrifice Christ's interest to their own honour: but the believer says, Let my master increase. Though my name should never be heard of in the word, let Christ be exalted. O, says Christ's bride, I would have all the world coming and adoring him! I would have all the world to love him! I would have all the world to praise him! Especially when she is under any lively influence, O then, says she, if the greatest enemies knew what were in our Lord, they would come and join with him, as I have done!

4. The bride of Christ cannot live without him. An honest wife will be hard put to it, to live many years without her husband. O it is sometimes like a hell to her to miss Christ in ordinances! O, the sore moans and heavy groans of the deserted soul, that has had the experience of the sweetness of Christ! "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" Job 23:3. "O

that it were with me as in months past!"

5. If you be Christ's bride you will be longing sometimes for his second coming; less or more you will desire the day of judgment, and long for his appearance. The epilogue of all the spouse's sweet discourses is, "Make haste, my beloved, be thou like a roe, or a young hart, on the mountains of Bether, till the day break and the shadows fly away." And the conclusion of the whole Bible is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Revelation 22:20. Can you say you have longed for his coming? I see the devil reigns here, corruption reigns here, and never will things be right till he come again in the clouds and set heaven and earth in a flame, when these nuptial solemnities shall begin to be celebrated, and the marriage solemnized while eternity lasts.

6. If there has been a marriage betwixt Christ and your souls, then readily you have some of the love-tokens to present; I mean, some expressions of his covenant love: you can tell, that, some time or other, he brought you to the banqueting-house, and displayed a banner of love over you. Sometime he hath enlarged your soul with ardent and longing desires after him, and satisfied you with the fatness of his house. The soul that is really espoused to Christ, will readily have some experiences of his love to tell of.

7. The spouse of Christ is a chaste spouse. Idols never get her heart as before; though now and then she may give a squint look, yet idols never have that force and room in her affections once they had; she is afraid of doing any thing that may be displeasing and dishonouring to him: hence we will find the spouse of Christ breathing out earnest desires and requests to God, to be kept and led in the way of righteousness; "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," Psalms 119:5. Hence she groans up her case, "O wretched one that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death!" Romans 7:24.

8. If we be Christ's bride, we will be a fruitful bride. Let us try; have we never a child of good works, or of grace? "Thy belly," says Christ to the spouse, "is as an heap of wheat," Song of Solomon 7:2. You know wheat is very fruitful: the barren soul that never loved, never mortified, never repented, never gave alms, never appeared for God; that barren soul is not the spouse of Christ; for the spouse of Christ is fruitful. This much by way of trial.

4thly, For exhortation. Is there a spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and believers? O then! Shall we not be persuaded to come and close with Christ for our husband, and take our Maker for our husband, our God for our husband? If we be ambitious, here is the top of our ambition, Jesus Christ; if we be covetous, here is the true riches; whatever we are, whatever we have been, if we come to him, he will in no ways cast us out: it is true, we cannot come of ourselves, but let us cry, Lord, if I die, I shall be buried under the mercy-seat, praying, weeping, looking, as I can, and go to hell with Christ in my heart as much as I can. Come to him, and he will overcome your whole impotency; lay your case before him, saying, Lord, I am a wretched one in the highest degree: Lord, here is a great offer made, I have no heart to it; O, and give a discovery of a lost state, and of thy excellent glory. O, draw out my heart, and let me die upon the spot, rather than reject Christ for ever.

Many motives might be adduced; consider only,

1. The loveliness and beauty of Christ. His beauty is universal; he is lovely in his person, lovely in his nature, lovely in his offices, lovely in his estates of humiliation and exaltation, lovely in all his

relations; his beauty is transforming, it will make the bride comely also; it is communicative, the bride is made comely through his comeliness. When we speak of the comeliness of Christ, we should let angels and saints above, that have the more immediate intuition of the radiant splendour of this blessed object, go forth to declare his glory. Everything in him is lovely, and nothing is lovely without him, nothing is lovely but what proceeds from him and goes to him; he is so lovely, that he cannot possibly be otherwise: he is the primary, original, and necessary loveliness.

2. Consider, as he is lovely so he is loving; his love is infinite, eternal, free, distinguishing, effectual; never man loved like him. O how many foldings are in this love, as can never be unfolded?

3. Consider, if we close with Christ we will give him a glad heart; his heart is glad in that day, when he takes a poor sinner by the hand; the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart. How many times have we, grieved him by our hypocrisy, and formality, and backwardness? And would we now give him a glad heart, for all the grieved hearts, we have given him? Then let us embrace him as offered in the gospel, and then he will be glad. Why? Then he will see the fruit of election, the fruit of redemption, the fruit of his death, the fruit of his resurrection, the fruit of his ascension, the fruit of his intercession: then he gets back the temple of the Holy Ghost; the lost sheep is found again: then he gets back the member of his own body.

I might give something by way of direction. You may say, What shall I do then, that I may be married unto Christ? In one word, if you would have Christ for your husband, O then, entertain his suit, and hearken to his wooing, and courting motions! Is he darting light into your hearts, and letting you see the evil of some sin that formerly ye delighted in? O do not resist his suit, by continuing in sin after this! Is he strengthening that light so as to set conscience on fire with the sense of sin, and apprehension of wrath? O quench not this fire till you get water out of the wells of salvation! Otherwise ye reject his suit. —Is he carrying his suit farther, and stirring up your affections to desire after Christ! O quench not this motion! But cry to him to fasten the nail sure, and carry on the work, till the marriage be completed.

Now, I might give a word of exhortation also to them that are married and espoused to Christ.

All I shall say is this; O let Christ's bride live on him, and take all from him! As a poor woman married to a rich man, she lives upon his riches. Many are ready to say, that if Christ would call us his bride, we would live on ourselves; we would pray, repent, believe, &c.; but the bride of Christ must get all these things in him, and take all from him, and live wholly on him, and freely on him. When Joseph's brethren did not know him, they were buying and selling with him, they would have nothing from him without money; but when they knew that he was a brother, for all the offences that they had done him, they were content to come down every man of them, and take all from him for nothing; this is the way you must do with Christ, when matched to him; we must not, with the legalist, have repentance and duties of our own, we must take all from him, who is the repository of all divine fulness, whereof the believer's part is, out of that fulness to receive grace for grace. <http://www.puritansermons.com/>

S. The Difference Between Legal and Gospel Mortification

The Difference Between Legal and Gospel Mortification by Ralph Erskine

1. Gospel and legal mortification differ in their principles from which they proceed. Gospel mortification is from gospel principles, viz. the Spirit of God [Romans 8:13], 'If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live'; Faith in Christ [Acts 15:9], 'Purifying their hearts by faith'; The love of Christ constraining [2 Corinthians 5:14], 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' But legal mortification is from legal principles such as, from the applause and praise of men, as in the Pharisees; from pride of self-righteousness, as in Paul before his conversion; from the fear of hell; from a natural conscience; from the example of others; from some common motions of the Spirit; and many times from the power of sin itself, while one sin is set up to wrestle with another, as when sensuality and self-righteousness wrestle with one another. The man, perhaps, will not drink and swear. Why? Because he is setting up and establishing a righteousness of his own, whereby to obtain the favour of God here is but one sin wrestling with another.

2. They differ in their weapons with which they fight against sin. The gospel believer fights with grace's weapons, namely, the blood of Christ, the word of God, the promises of the covenant, and the virtue of Christ's death and cross [Galatians 6:14] 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [or, as it may be read, 'whereby,' viz. by the cross of Christ,] the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.' But now the man under the law fights against sin by the promises and threatenings of the law; by its promises, saying, I will obtain life; and win to heaven, I hope, if I do so and so; by its threatenings, saying, I will go to hell and be damned, if I do not so and so. Sometimes he fights with the weapons of his own vows and resolutions, which are his strong tower, to which he runs and thinks himself safe.

3. They differ in the object of their mortification. They both, indeed, seek to mortify sin, but the legalist's quarrel is more especially with the sins of his conversation, whereas the true believer should desire to fight as the Syrians got orders, that is, neither against great nor small, so much as against the King himself, even against original corruption. A body of sin and death troubles him more than any other sin in the world; 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' [Romans 7:24]. His great exercise is to have the seed of the woman to bruise this head of the serpent.

4. They differ in the reasons of the contest. The believer, whom grace teaches to deny all ungodliness, he fights against sin because it dishonours God, opposes Christ, grieves the Spirit, and separates between his Lord and him; but the legalist fights against sin, because it breaks his peace, and troubles his conscience, and hurts him, by bringing wrath and judgment on him. As children will not play in the dust, not because it sullies their clothes, but flies into their eyes, and hurts them, so the legalist will not meddle with sin, not because it sullies the perfections of God, and defiles their souls, but only because it hurts them. I deny not, but there is too much of this legal temper even amongst the godly.

5. They differ in their motives and ends. The believer will not serve sin, because he is alive to God, and dead to sin [Romans 6:6]. The legalist forsakes sin, not because he is alive, but that he may live. The believer mortifies sin, because God loves him; but the legalist, that God may love him. The believer mortifies, because God is pacified towards him; the legalist mortifies, that he may pacify God by his mortification. He may go a great length, but it is still that he may have whereof to glory, making his own doing all the foundation of his hope and comfort.

6. They differ in the nature of their mortification. The legalist does not oppose sin violently, seeking the utter destruction of it. If he can get sin put down, he does not seek it to be thrust out; but the believer, having a nature and principle contrary to sin, he seeks not only to have it weakened, but extirpated. The quarrel is irreconcilable; no terms of accommodation or agreement; no league with sin is allowed, as it is with hypocrites.

7. They differ in the extent of the warfare, not only objectively, the believer hating every false way; but also subjectively, all the faculties of the believer's soul, the whole regenerate part being against sin. It is not so with the hypocrite or legalist; for as he spares some sin or other, so his opposition to sin is only seated in his conscience; his light and conscience oppose such a thing, while his heart approves of it. There is an extent also as to time; the legalist's opposition to sin is of a short duration, but in the believer it is to the end; grace and corruption still opposing one another.

8. They differ in the success. There is no believer, but as he fights against sin, so first or last he prevails, though not always to his discerning; and though he lose many battles, yet he gains the war. But the legalist, for all the work he makes, yet he never truly comes speed; though he cut off some actual sin, yet the corrupt nature is never changed; he never gets a new heart; the iron sinew in his neck, which opposes God, is never broken; and when he gets one sin mortified, sometimes another and more dangerous sin lifts up the head. Hence all the sins and pollutions that ever the Pharisees forsook, and all the good duties that ever they performed, made them but more proud, and strengthened their unbelieving prejudices against Christ, which was the greater and more dangerous sin.

Thus you may see the difference between legal and gospel mortification, and try yourselves thereby.

S. The Free Gospel-Call

The Free Gospel-Call

by Ralph Erskine

from Isaiah 55:1-3

"Ho, every thirsty soul, and all That poor and needy are, Here's water of salvation's well For you to come and share.

Here's freedom from sin and woe, And blessings all divine, Here streams of love and mercy flow, Like floods of milk and wine.

Approach the fountain head of bliss, That's open like the sea, The buyers that are moneyless, To poorest beggars free.

Why spend you all your wealth and pains, For that which is not bread, And for unsatisfying gains, On which no soul can feed ?

While vain ye seek with earthly toys, To fill an empty mind, You lose immortal solid joys, And feed upon the wind.

Incline your ear, and come to me;

Hear and your soul shall live: For mercies sure as well as free, I bind myself to give."

S. The Joyful Sound of the Gospel

The Joyful Sound of the Gospel by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) The following selection from "The Beaties of Erskine," appears as it was originally printed with the exception of the title. The original title of this chapter heading is as it appears below. The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed. The Gospel the more immediate means of gathering the people to Shiloh: The gospel is the great gathering engine of infinite wisdom; for faith comes by hearing the joyful sound of the gospel trumpet. There is the joyful sound of gospel revelations and good news that Christ came to save sinners. O when the sound of this trumpet reaches not only the ear but the heart of the sinner, that by the law hath got the knowledge and conviction of sin and misery, what a joyful sound is it, that now he hears the remedy for him; that justice is satisfied, life is purchased, death is destroyed, wrath is appeased, and the law is magnified, and God is reconciled in Christ. Many a gathering sound comes through this gospel trumpet. There is a sound of gathering calls, saying, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved: this is the command of God, that ye believe in his Son Jesus Christ. A sound of gathering invitations, saying, Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden. A sound of gathering proclamations, saying, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come; and he that hath no money let him come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. A sound of gathering expostulations, saying, Why will ye die?, joined with complaints, ye will not come to me that ye might have life. A sound of gathering counsels, saying, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou, mayest be clothed, and that the shame. Of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that, thou mayest see. A sound of gathering entreaties, saying, We beseech you in God's name, and pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. And finally, a sound of gathering music and charming melody. And O what music so sweet as the sound of the gospel promises of pardon to the guilty, purity to the filthy, and pity to the miserable soul. The gospel trumpet hath a sound of peace, a sound of grace, a sound of mercy, a sound of glory to God in the highest, and of good-will towards men.

They ought, who royal grace's heralds be, To trumpet loud salvation full and free; Nor safely can, to humour mortal pride, In silence evangelic myst'ries hide. The revelation of the gospel flower, Is still the organ framed of saving power:

Most justly then are legal Minds condemn'd, That of the glorious gospel are asham'd; For this the divine arm, and only this, The power of God unto salvation is. For therein is reveal'd to screen from wrath, The righteousness of God from faith to faith, The happy change-in guilty sinners' case They owe to free displays of sovereign grace: Whose joyful tidings of amazing love, The ministration of the Spirit prove: The glorious vent the gospel news express, Of God's free grace, through Christ's full righteousness, Is Heaven's gay chariot where the Spirit bides, And in his conquering power triumphant rides. This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com ☺☺

S. The Right Rule of Our Love to Christ

The Right Rule of Our Love to Christ by Ralph Erskine

See here the right rule of our love to Christ, namely to love him as the Father loves him. Wherein should our love to Christ resemble the Father's love? Why, the Father's love to the Son was evidenced in choosing him to be our Saviour and Surety: so should our love to Christ be manifested in making choice of him to be our Saviour and Surety; insomuch, that as God hath laid all our help upon him, so we should lay all our help where God hath laid it. Again, the Father's love to the Son was evidenced in giving all things into his hand: thus should our love to Christ be evidenced in putting all things in his hand as the Father doth; and particularly, you may put your hearts in his hand, that he may keep them; put your souls in his hand, that he may save them; put your plagues in his hand, that he may heal them; put your corruptions in his hand, that he may weaken and subdue them. Put your wants in his hand, that he may supply them; put your work in his hand, that he may work all your works in you, and for you; put your burdens in his hand, that he may bear them: put all things in his hand, and thus evidence your love to him, by putting honour upon him as a Prophet, to teach you; as a Priest, to pardon; and as a King, to conquer you by his grace, and crown you with his glory.

S. The Spiritual Feelings of Believers and Hypocrites Compared

The Spiritual Feelings of Believers and Hypocrites Compared by Ralph Erskine The Difference between the Pleasant Spiritual Impressions peculiar to true Believers, and those which Hypocrites may have in the Ways of Religion.

1. True and saving impressions are sociable; they accompany one another and go hand in hand together: for example holy fear does not cast out love nor love cast out fear: holy triumph in the Lord does not take away trembling at his presence; nor holy trembling take away triumph: joy does not destroy godly sorrow for sin; nor godly sorrow remove spiritual joy: faith does not destroy repentance; nor repentance destroy faith: the man's humility does not destroy his boldness before God; nor his boldness of access destroy humility. His low thoughts of himself does not destroy his high thoughts of Christ; nor his high thoughts of Christ destroy his low thoughts of himself: his self-diffidence does not destroy his holy confidence; nor his holy confidence destroy self-diffidence. Nay, instead of destroying one another, they advance and harmoniously help and forward one another.—Whereas the hypocrite's joy destroys his sorrow; his faith and false confidence destroys and excludes his repentance; his fear destroys his love; and his pretended love to God destroys his fear of him: one good impression he has, destroys another; they cannot keep company together. Whereas spiritual impressions in believers excite and quicken one another.

2. True and saving impressions are unlimited and unstinted; the good frames of hypocrites stinted and limited; insomuch that they rest satisfied without their attainments: so far they go, and reckon they need go no farther, if they think they have so much as will keep them out of hell, or bring them to heaven. But true believers have restrained measures of grace: whatever holy impressions are made upon them, they still desire more, and more, and more; pressing after consummate perfection: "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Php 3:13-14. True and saving impressions are habitual impressions; they are like the believer's daily bread: though a man be not always eating or drinking, yet the taking of food for the nourishment of the body, is a man's daily habitual activity: so though the believer be not always under a divine impression, or in a spiritual frame of mind, but has his variations, yet he is habitually in this activity; and if any days pass wherein he is destitute of these meals, they are to him as days of famine, and spiritual scarcity; his soul pines and languishes, and is uneasy for the lack of what it would be according to his desires. Whereas hypocrites can be quite easy in the lack of these things, without ever giving a longing look towards the Lord for his returning to them. But the believer dies when he experiences penury and deprivation: these are his melancholy days, his sighing days, till he recover all again, by the Spirit of the Lord returning, and reviving his heart, and restoring his soul. It is true, the established believer learns, in the absence of perceptible enjoyments, to live by faith on the Son of God—indeed, but still that faith gives many a long look for the Lord's returning to its sweet and sensible embraces.

4. These impressions, in believers, are not only habitual, but natural. If the hypocrite can have any such impressions, they are not natural to him, they are not his element; he has no new nature corresponding thereto: and therefore he cannot endure to be long under any good and spiritual impressions because his carnal unrenewed recoils against it. His carnal mind, being enmity against God, and he is content that the impressions be gone. But to a child of God, these impressions are natural: they are his new nature, his element; they are like the very breath of his new nature; natural to his sanctified part, as breath is to his body: yea, so natural to him, that they are like a part of his life, and the removal of them is like death to him: and hence, when under these sweet and heavenly impressions, he is disposed to give, as it were, a charge to all the world, to beware of disturbing him, and bereaving him of his joy: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my Love till he please," Song of Solomon 2:7. In a word, the hypocrite and the godly differ as clock in their motions and affections, as the motion of a clock differs from the sun; the one moves by art, the other by nature: the hypocrite's motions and impressions are like artificial clockwork, under the influence of the common operations of the Spirit, working upon him by some outward means and providences: but the impressions of believers are natural, under the influence of the Spirit dwelling in them: and whatever secondary purposes outward providences and ordinances may have for advancing them, yet they are the fruits of the special operation of the Spirit that is in him, "as a well of water springing up to eternal life." So that their impressions differ as much as a land flood, that quickly dries up, being only maintained with rain from the clouds, differs from a living spring, which is never altogether dried, even when the flood is abated.

S. The Word of Salvation Sent to Sinners

The Word of Salvation Sent to Sinners

Ralph Erskine

(1686-1752) “to you is the word of this salvation sent”

—Acts 13:26

PAUL is here preaching Christ Jesus in this chapter: and in this verse he makes application of his sermon to his hearers, and that very close. More particularly in the words you may observe, 1. The nature of the gospel described, it is “the word of salvation.”

2. The endorsement or direction, showing to whom it is directed or sent, “To you”; you men and brethren, you Jews or Gentiles, to whom it is preached. The doctrinal proposition, natively arising from these words, is the following.

OBSERVATION. “That the gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner that hears it.”

Before I proceed to speak of this doctrine, I would obviate an objection that may be made against it.

OBJECTION. Is not the gospel-call here limited to them that fear God in the text?

ANSWER. If by these that fear God is to be understood religious people, into whose hearts God hath put his fear; these are the persons that will most of all welcome the word of salvation; because they see most of their need of it: but the gospel-message is not here limited to them, and others excluded; no: the apostle here speaks to all his auditory, both gracious and graceless, as appears not only in this text, “Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, to you is the word of this salvation,” but also in the application of his sermon to the graceless as well as to the gracious, Acts 13:40-41, compared with the two preceding verses.

3. There is a fear of God that is the fruit of conviction, and a fear of God that is the fruit of conversion; the former is by the law, the latter is by the gospel: it is like that the former is especially intended here: for at this time the word was with power; it struck an awe and dread upon the apostle’s auditory. And though no sinner, no, not the most stupid that hears the gospel, is excluded from the call thereof, so as it can be said, the word of salvation is not sent to him; no, no; it is sent to every one; yet none but such as fear God, so far as to be filled with an awe and dread of God speaking to them in the word, and with a conviction of sin, and of their need of this salvation; none but such will receive and welcome the word of this salvation: for, if they have no fear of God, and of his wrath, no sense of sin, and of their deserving damnation, they will not value, but slight and despise the word of salvation. This text, therefore, doth not limit the word of salvation, as sent only to them who fear God, but only points out the manner and method wherein this word of salvation comes to be received and entertained, and how it will not be received by these who have nothing of the fear and dread of God upon them.

4. These who are awakened to any sense of sin, and fear and dread of God, are the persons that are most ready themselves, as if the word of salvation were not sent to them; therefore, these, in a particular manner, are mentioned and encouraged to take it to themselves, because they are afraid to apply the word. Others that are called will not come. And they that have this fear upon them have a will, but want courage; and therefore the Lord says to them, as it were, Fear not to come, for, "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

5. That the word of salvation is sent to all, even to them who, through the want of the fear of God, reject it, is plain both from this text and context, compared with other Scriptures. See the commission, Mark 16:15. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Isaiah 46:12. Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. Revelation 3:20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." Any man, be what he will. In short, the word of salvation, importing all salvation necessary, looks to all sinners that need this salvation. The gospel would not be glad news to all people, if any sinner were excluded. Hence the call is to all the ends of the earth, "Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth": hence the call also is, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." And again, "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c. The method we would observe, for the farther illustration of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to grant assistance, shall be the following:

I. We shall speak a little of this salvation.

II. Of the word of salvation.

III. Of the sending of this word.

IV. Make application of the whole.

I. We shall speak a little of this salvation, and consider what it supposes, and what it implies.

1. What this salvation supposes, namely, misery. Our miserable state by nature is a state of alienation and estrangement from God. We are without God, and are alienated from the life of God; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. It is a state of enmity; for, "The carnal mind is at enmity against God"; we are in actual rebellion against him. It is a state of darkness and ignorance; we are destroyed for lack of knowledge. A state of bondage to sin, Satan, and the world, and divers lusts; we are fettered and imprisoned, led captive. It is a state of impotence: we are, by nature, without strength; we cannot so much as ask deliverance: "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." It is a destitute state, a pit wherein there is no water; a comfortless state, a bewildered state, a cursed and condemned state; for "He that believeth not, is condemned already": he that believeth not the gospel, is condemned already by the law, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It is a state of death: spiritual death, and legal death.

2. What doth salvation imply? It implies the whole redemption purchased by Christ, and the whole of the application of it by the Spirit. It is salvation from a state of estrangement, to a state of acquaintance with God; from enmity, to peace and reconciliation; from darkness to light; from bondage to liberty. It includes pardon and justification, adoption and filiation, sanctification of

nature, heart, and way, communion with God; afterward a glorious resurrection of the body, and eternal life and glory, in being for ever with the Lord.

II. The second head proposed was: To speak of the word of salvation, which I may do by answering these four questions.

QUESTION 1. What is the word of salvation?

ANSWER. Not the law, but the gospel; this is that which is the power of God to salvation, Romans 1:16. Whatever discovers Christ, and salvation through him, is the gospel.

QUESTION 2. Why is it called the word of salvation?

ANSWER. Because it discovers salvation; it describes salvation; it conveys salvation, as a charter does an estate, or as a testament does a legacy; it offers salvation; it establishes a connection betwixt faith and salvation to all sinners of mankind, for, "He that believeth shall be saved"; and because it is the organ or instrument by which the Spirit applies salvation.

QUESTION 3. How does the word operate in the hand of the Spirit, when believed unto salvation?

ANSWER. It operates as seed cast into the ground: it operates as rain and dew; "My doctrine shall drop as the dew, and distil as the rain": as light, "They that sat in darkness saw a great light"; it is light shining in a dark place. As fire; "Is not my word like a fire?" As water, as wind, as a seal imprinting the divine nature: as a glass, through which we see God's glory: as balm for healing, "He sent his word, and healed them."

QUESTION 4. What are the qualities of this word of salvation?

ANSWER 1. It is a divine word; the word of God. God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the Author of it. Hence the gospel is called, "The gospel of God," Romans 1:1; Romans 15:16.

2. It is a word of God in Christ, Hebrews 1:1-2; Hebrews 2:3. It is secured in the hands of a Mediator; Yea, and Amen in him. It is given to us by Christ, and sealed in his blood; "This is the New Testament in my blood."

3. It is a gracious word of God in Christ: it is free; it does not move upon our goodness or badness; our goodness does not further, nor our badness hinder it. It is a word that comes from pure grace, and springs from his free mercy, who is the God of all grace. It is such a gracious word, that it contains all grace. Hence,

4. It is a complete word, containing all our salvation; for it contains God in it, Christ in it, the Spirit in it. It contains a righteousness in it, founding a legal title to life eternal, vis., the obedience of Christ; and a legal security from eternal death, vis., the satisfaction and death of the Surety. It contains all the parts of life, and may well be called the word of life: life in the beginning of it, in regeneration, "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." The life of justification: we are justified in believing and receiving of Christ, our righteousness, as offered in the word. The life of sanctification, the life of consolation, and the life of glory hereafter.

5. It is a sure word: "The sure mercies of David": Sure, and more sure than a voice from heaven, such as even that which the disciples heard on the mount, "We have a more sure word of

prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed," 2 Peter 1:19.

6. It is a gracious, complete, sure word of God in Christ to sinners, as well as saints: it is to sinners of Adam's family; for it presents a remedy for their malady. This leads,

III. To the third general head proposed, viz., To speak of the sending of this word. Here it may be enquired, from whom, by whom, to whom it is sent; and for what purpose?

1. From whom is it sent? Why, it is a word of salvation sent from the God of salvation, to whom belong the issues from death; and it carries the impress of himself upon it. As the word is God's word, so it is of God's sending, "He sent his word and healed them," Psalms 107:20.

2. By whom is it sent? It is not sent by angels, but by men; "We are ambassadors for Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:20. It is true, God sent his word first by Christ, "He so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. Then Christ sends it by men, that we may not be afraid at his appearance, as Israel were of old; "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Corinthians 4:7. 3. To whom is it that he sent the word of salvation? He sent it to all sinners that hear it. Whosoever will look to the word of salvation, will find it looking to them. What was the gospel preached to Abraham? "In thee, or in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Genesis 12:3. Is not this a word of salvation to us also? It includes all; so as every sinner may take hold of it. See John 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:15. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. See Proverbs 1:20; Isaiah 46:12. It is a word that suits the case of sinners: and therefore, if it be enquired,

4. For what purpose is it sent to sinners? Why, for the very same purpose that a healing remedy is sent to a deadly malady; for Christ comes in the word, and is presented there for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: see 1 Corinthians 1:30; Revelation 3:17-18. More particularly, it is sent as a word of pardon to the condemned sinner; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own name's sake." Hence may every condemned sinner take hold of it, saying, This word is sent to me. It is sent as a word of peace to the rebellious sinner, saying, Christ hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious. Oh! I am a rebel, may the sinner say; yet here is a word for me. It is sent as a word of life to the dead; "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." It is a word of liberty to the captives; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," Isaiah 61:1. It is sent as a word of healing for the diseased; for the word says, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." It is a word of cleansing, or a cleansing word to the polluted; "I will sprinkle you with clean water; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." It is sent as a word of direction to the bewildered; "I will lead the blind by a way they know not, and in paths which they have not trod." It is a refreshing word to the weary; "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary." It is sent as a comforting word to the disconsolate; it brings the good news of the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; and of Christ, the consolation of Israel. It is sent as a drawing word, and a strengthening word to the soul destitute of strength, saying, "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me." It is sent in short, as a word of salvation, and all sort of salvation and redemption to the lost soul, saying, "Christ came to seek and save that which was lost"; and that we are not

redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

IV. The last general head proposed was: To make application of the subject. Is it so, that the gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner that hears it? Then,

1. Hence see the kindness of God in Christ to sinners of mankind. Why hath he made such a difference between sinning men and sinning angels? There was never a word of salvation sent to angels that sinned; no not one word; "They are reserved in chains, to the judgment of the great day"; but it was sent unto mankind; "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men"; "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

2. See what a valuable book the Bible is, which contains this word of salvation. O Sirs, how ought we to search the Scriptures: for, in them we think, and think aright when we do so, that we have eternal life and salvation conveyed to us? Why, they testify of Christ: and we ought especially to search out the words of eternal life; the words of salvation that lie there.

3. Hence see what a valuable blessing the gospel is, and the dispensation thereof; and how welcome a gospel-ministry should be unto us, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace!" Romans 10:15, that publish the word of salvation? How sad is it when gospel-ministers have not beautiful feet, when they defile their feet by stepping unto the puddle of defection and corruption, and so make poor souls to nauseate the very gospel preached by them! And how dismal is it, when these who profess the gospel of peace, have their feet defiled with the puddle of error! How desirable is it, when they have both the gospel of peace in their mouth, and beautiful shoes upon their feet, and are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and with a gospel conversation, declining to walk with others in a course of defection?

4. Hence see the inexcusableness of unbelief, in rejecting the gospel, since it is sent to every one that hears it. Men have no cloak for their unbelief; no ground to say, This word of salvation is not sent to me: yea, it is sent to thee, whosoever thou art: it is a rope cast down for thy drowning soul to lay hold upon.

5. Hence see how culpable they are who straiten the door, and hamper the call of the gospel, saying, in effect, If you have not such and such qualifications, this word of salvation is not to you: if you have not such and such marks and evidences, it is not to you: it is only upon such and such terms that it is to you: this is to make the gospel no gospel. It is as if Christ came to save saints, but not to save sinners. They contradict the very design of the gospel, which is a word of salvation to sinners of all sorts and sizes. "To you is the word of salvation sent": to you, O sinner, is the door of salvation opened. Whatever straitens this door; whatever doctrines you hear, that hamper or limit the gospel-offer, and tend to make you suppose, that there is no room for you, no access for you, you may suspect that to be either no gospel-doctrine, or that has such a legal mixture accompanying it, as you ought to shun like the devil; because it would keep you at a distance from Christ and salvation.

6. Hence see the ground of God's controversy at this day, together with an antidote against the errors and evils of the day. The great ground of God's controversy, at this day, with the generality we live amongst, is, their rejecting the word of salvation. Wherefore is he now speaking in wrath and war,* but because we will not hearken to his speaking in mercy? Scotland hath been long deaf to the word of God, and to the warnings of God. Judicatories have been deaf to the word of God,

to the word of salvation, calling them to reform and return to the Lord; deaf to any testimony lifted up for reformation. And the whole land hath been deaf to the voice of God in the gospel. And, what, if God now thunder and roar out of Zion, and say: You shall hear at the deafest side of the head? If you will not hear the voice of the word, you shall hear the voice of the sword. Oh! what is his quarrel? Why, God says, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him": No; but we refuse to hear him. General Assemblies have refused to hear him; they gave ear to a patron, or a great man, and give more obedience to him than to the voice of Christ. He said, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs": No say they; let them be devoured and torn to pieces with the wolves, rather than displease men of rank and power. How justly may God say to such, "Go to the gods whom ye have served," and see if they can deliver you in the day of death, or in the day of wrath?

See here also an antidote against many errors of the day. Here is an antidote against enthusiastic delusions, viz., If we take the word of God for the rule and the warrant of faith, and of every particular duty. Some will say, "We must wait for the Spirit being poured out; and till the Spirit come, there is no doing: therefore we may sit still and do nothing, either in the matter of our salvation-work or generation-work; either in personal or public work." Why, here is a delusion, here is enthusiasm, to make the Spirit the rule of faith and duty, and not the word of God. When God spake to Moses at the Red Sea, saying, "Speak to the people, that they go forward." What! go forward, might unbelief say, into the sea, and be all drowned? Nay, stay till we see the water divided. No, says God, "Speak to the people that they go forward"; and in going forward at the word and call of God, making his call and word the rule of faith and duty, in this way they were to find the sea divided before them. To wait upon God's working, either outwardly or inwardly, without answering the call of his word, and going forward in the way of duty is to wait without a warrant; it is a delusion, a tempting of God. You are to aim at believing the word of salvation sent to you. The people we call Quakers say, They ought not to pray till the Spirit move them: making the inward motions of the Spirit, and not the word of God the rule of duty. Thus it is no wonder that they be led by a delusive spirit; for the word of God is the word of the Spirit; and though we cannot fight without the Spirit, yet the Spirit will not fight for these, or with these that will not take his sword in their hand: though we can do nothing without the Spirit, yet the Spirit will do nothing without the word. But if once we take the sword of the Spirit in our hand; I mean, take the word for our rule, and essay duty, and the work of believing, which is the work of God, according to the direction of the word of God; then, and not till then, are you to expect God will work powerfully; for, out of his own road he will not, namely, if you turn away your ear from hearing his word; or, if he do, he will bring you to this road before he do any thing more.

Here also see an antidote against all, or most of all the errors of the age wherein we live. Here is an antidote against all practical error; against all profanity, looseness and luxury, whoredom and debauchery, that have been running down, like a mighty stream, through all ranks of persons, from the throne to the dunghill, in every corner of the land. What would remedy these evils? Even the receiving of this salvation that is sent in the gospel to us. Unbelief in rejecting this salvation, which is a salvation from all sin as well as misery; this unbelief in slighting the Saviour and salvation, is the root of all the looseness and profanity in the age. Men do not see this root that lies hid under ground. Here is an antidote against the Deism of the age. Why do men undervalue the scriptures, and deny the necessity of divine supernatural revelation? Even because they reject the word of salvation; they do not see that the gospel only is the word of salvation; and that there is no

salvation but in the faith of it: but the faith of this word would cure the Deism of the age.

Here is an antidote against Arminianism; for salvation comes not of the free-will of man, but of the free grace of God in a word of salvation sent to us. Here is an antidote against Arianism. Would any soul deny the supreme Deity of Christ, and his proper Divinity, if they believed that with him are the words of eternal life; and that a word from his mouth is a word of salvation? "Look to me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isaiah 45:22. Here is an antidote against Antinomianism; for, by this salvation we are not saved to sin, and to work wickedness, and break the law of God, but saved from sin and wickedness. The gospel being a word of complete salvation, the grace of God therein appears to all men, teaching effectively what the law does perceptively, namely, "To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world."

Here is an antidote against Legalism, or Neo-nomianism, as some call it, which turns the gospel to a new law, and the covenant of grace, as it were, to a covenant of works. This text and doctrine shews that we are not saved by a work, but by a word; not by any work of ours, but by a word sent from God to us, even a word of salvation: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," Titus 3:5. See 2 Timothy 1:9.

Here also is an antidote against ignorant preachers of the gospel, that confound the marks of faith with the ground of faith, or the evidences of faith with the warrant of faith, or the condition of the covenant with the qualities of the covenanted, as if the gospel call were only to saints, or to sinners so and so qualified; and so leading men in to themselves for a ground of faith, instead of leading them out of themselves to Christ, exhibited to them in a word of salvation sent to them. The Gospel-method of salvation is the reverse of all the legal schemes in the world. The legal strain supposes some good quality about the sinner, before he be allowed to meddle with the word of salvation; and so shuts the door of the gospel, which it pretends to open. But the gospel-strain brings the word of salvation freely to every sinner's door, and supposes him to be destitute of all good qualities whatsoever, and leaves no room for any sinner to say, I am not allowed to come in.

7. Hence see how much it concerns all and everyone to try and examine what entertainment they have given the word of salvation that is sent to them. Have you received it or not in a saving way?

(1.) Have you received it as the word of God? the word by way of eminency? the word of God in Christ? 1 Thessalonians 2:13, and received it not as the word of man, of this or that man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God?

(2.) Have you received it as a word of salvation, or as a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, both as a truth and as a good? This reception of it supposes a view you have of your being a lost sinner welcoming a Saviour.

(3.) Have you received it, as the word of this salvation, a present salvation, a particular salvation? This particular salvation from sin and wrath, that you need; this near salvation; "I bring near my righteousness to the stout-hearted and far from righteousness; my salvation shall not tarry," Isaiah 46:12-13; this great salvation, this purchased salvation, this promised salvation, this offered salvation, presently offered. Faith fixes upon something present. You need not say, Romans 10:6-8, "Who will ascend to heaven, to bring Christ down? or, descend into the deep, to bring Christ up? The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth." Again,

(4.) Have you received it as a sent salvation; as God's send, as God's gift, sent by the hand of Christ, sent by the hand of his ambassadors, sent freely and sovereignly, without your seeking after it, sent out of the store-house of divine grace?

(5.) Have you received it as sent to sinners, to sinners in general? For here is glad tidings of great joy to all people: "Upon this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," Isaiah 25:6. (6.) Have you received it as sent unto you in particular? To you, sinners, says the general dispensation; to thee, sinner, in particular, says the particular offer: "Whosoever will, let him come." Hast thou then received it, as sent to thee, though a guilty sinner; to thee, though a vile sinner? Hast thou entertained it with a me, me, of particular application, saying, Here is an offer to me, a gift to me, a promise from heaven to me? Hast thou found thyself called by name, and said, I am warranted to take hold of Christ, and the salvation he brings with him, in this word of salvation, and even so I take him at his word; "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief"? Have you hereupon found the virtue of this word, as a word of salvation, saving you from your doubts and fears, saving you from your bonds and fetters, saving you from your helpless and hopeless condition, and making you to hope for complete salvation from sin and misery? Have you found salvation begun in the faith or the word of salvation, and been begotten to a lively hope thereby? And does this hope begin to purify your heart, and this faith begin to work by love to God and hatred of sin, and of yourself for sin? And is your continual recourse to this word of salvation, or to the promise of God in Christ, for all your salvation?

8. Hence see what matter of joy and praise believers have, who have been determined thus to entertain the word of salvation; for, when the word of salvation is received through grace, then the work of salvation is begun; and you need be in no uneasiness now, though you be called to work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling; because it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do. "He that hath begun the good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of the Lord." The word of salvation may be to thee, O believer, the word of consolation all the days of your life: for, it is a word of salvation, not only from the sinful state, and miserable state you were in, but is a word of salvation also, bringing the good news of salvation in every case; salvation from the devil, the world, and the flesh; salvation and deliverance from the hands of all your enemies; salvation from the sting of death; salvation from the terror of judgment; salvation from the curse of the law, and from the guilt of all your sins; salvation not only from all evil, but salvation to eternal life; for the word of salvation, which you have received and entertained through grace, contains all the words of eternal life. The word of salvation is the word of life for you, when under deadness, and the word of liberty for you, when under bondage; a word of rest for you, when under weariness; a word of relief for you, when under distress of whatsoever sort. It is a word of salvation confirmed with the oath of God, "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them."

9. Hence see matter of terror to those who neglect this great salvation that is sent to them by this word: "How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation," and so near to them? O sinner, it is a salvation sent to your house, and will you reject it? A word of salvation sent to your soul; a word of salvation sent to your hand to receive it, and will you reject it? A word of salvation sent to your ear, saying, "But hear, and your soul shall live." A word of salvation sent to your heart, and by it God is knocking at the door of your heart. O Sirs, will you refuse him that speaketh from heaven?

“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven,” Hebrews 12:25. If you will not hear God’s word of grace in the gospel, saying, “To you is the word of this salvation sent,” you must lay your account to hear his word of wrath in the law, saying, yea, swearing in his wrath, “That you shall not enter into his rest.” If you have no fear of God, as it is in the verse where my text lies; if you shall never be persuaded to fear the Lord and his goodness, manifested in the word of salvation sent to you, you must lay your account to fear the Lord and his wrath, manifested in the word of condemnation, which the law pronounces against them who believe not the gospel: “He that believeth not, is condemned already,” John 3:18. And there is no escaping this sentence of condemnation, but by receiving the word of salvation.

10. Hence see how much it is the interest of every one to receive, and entertain, and welcome this word of salvation. O Sirs, “Hear, that your souls may live.” Hear the joyful sound of salvation, O lost, perishing sinner, before the door of mercy be shut, and the day of grace be over. To persuade you hereunto, we shall lay before you the four following considerations.

(1.) Consider what sort of a salvation is offered to you. It is a spiritual salvation; the salvation of the immortal soul: “What shall a man profit, though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?” If you would not lose and ruin your souls, O receive the word of salvation. It is a costly salvation; it comes running in the channel of the blood of Christ. It is brought to your hand, and free to you, however dear bought by the Redeemer. You have nothing to pay for it; the price of it is paid already; the condition of it is fulfilled. It is a complete salvation; salvation from every thing you need to be saved from: salvation from unbelief, enmity, atheism, heart-hardness, heart-deadness, and every thing that you make an objection against receiving of this salvation. You say you cannot believe, you cannot repent; but would you be saved from your unbelief and impenitence? This and all the other branches of salvation is sent to you, when the word of salvation is sent. Will you welcome a Saviour to save you from all, to be wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and all to you? It is an everlasting salvation. Would you be happy after death, and have an eternity of happiness? “Life and immortality is brought to light by this word of salvation.” O poor dying sinner, consider what an everlasting salvation this is.

(2.) Consider what need thou hast of this salvation. Thou hast a dark mind; and needest salvation from that darkness and ignorance. Thou hast a guilty conscience, and needest salvation from that guilt. Thou hast a hard heart; and needest salvation from that hardness. Thou hast powerful and strong corruption; and needest salvation from that. Thou hast a corrupt nature; and needest salvation from that. Thou hast many heart-plagues; and needest salvation from these plagues, and healing. Behold, all this salvation, and infinitely more, comes with the word of salvation; no salvation thou needest is excepted. Thy need is great, death is at hand, judgment at hand: “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” There will be no word in the day of judgment to sinners, but a word of condemnation: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”: but now, in the day of salvation, is sent to you this word of salvation; now, now is the day; and, perhaps, now or never.

(3.) Consider what a firm ground this word of salvation is for faith to build upon. It is the word of God; the God that cannot lie. It is ratified by the oath of God. It is a word confirmed by the blood of the Son of God. It is a word attested by the Three that bear record in heaven. It is a word spoken

by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. The Spirit and the bride say, Come"; come and hear this word of salvation; come and believe; come and apply to thyself what is offered to thee.

(4.) Consider the good warrant you have to intermeddle with this word of salvation. It is sent to you on purpose that you may believe it with application to yourself; and that every one of you, thou man, thou woman, may take it home to thy own heart; for, "To thee is the word of salvation sent." To thee is this love-letter sent from heaven. Read the indorsement, and see if it be not to thee. It is to thee, O guilty sinner, saying, "Christ came to save sinners." It is to thee, O inhabitant of the earth, that art not yet in hell; "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." It is to thee, O scorner, that hast hitherto been a mocker of God and godliness, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets: How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you," Proverbs 1:20, Proverbs 1:22-23. It is to thee, O rebellious sinner. If thou wert excepted, all mankind would be so: behold, "Christ hath ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them." It is for thee, O black and bloody sinner; "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," Isaiah 1:18. It is to thee, O sinners that are thirsting after other things than Christ, Isaiah 55:1-2, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come. Wherefore spend you your money for that which is not bread? &c. Wherefore do ye thirst and pant after other things that cannot give you satisfaction?" Yea, it is for thee, O unhumiliated, unconvinced sinner. Say not that it cannot concern thee because thou art not convinced of thy sin: Oh! the word of salvation comes even to thee also, Revelation 3:18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; eye-salve, that thou mayest see; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." Even to thee that, as in the preceding verse, art saying, that thou art rich and increased with goods, and standest in need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Unconcerned sinner, to thee, even thee, is the word of this salvation sent. Is this love-letter for thee? O then know, that though you have no will, you have a warrant to receive it, and Christ in it. If you reject this word of salvation, it is either because you will not, or dare not, or cannot receive it.

If you say, you will not take it to you, then remember you are subscribing your own doom. And I take instruments against you, that you will not have salvation; you will not come to Christ that you may have life; you are preferring some base lust to the Lord of glory, and so preferring, of consequence, damnation to salvation, death to life.

If it be not a will of obstinacy, but of impotency, saying, Oh! if my will were subdued; behold, the word of salvation comes with salvation from that plague of unwillingness, saying, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power": and, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," that you welcome it; and so far as you welcome it, so far are you willing.

If you say you dare not take the word to yourself, as the word of salvation to you: why dare you not do what God enjoins you? Why dare you not take what God offers you? How durst you sin against God, when he forbade you? And now you dare not take his word for your salvation, when he requires you! How durst you venture on his fury against his command? And now you dare not

venture on his favour, through Christ, at his call and command? Was it not enough to offend his justice? And will you now venture to slight his mercy? This is worse than all your former sins, to refuse salvation that he freely offers from the guilt of all.

If you say you cannot, because of utter impotency, that shall be no stop. You cannot believe, you cannot come to Christ; but, as the word of salvation is sent to you, so salvation is come to you, because you cannot come to it. The Saviour is come to you, because you cannot come to him: are you for him? The word of salvation is a word of power, and drawing power is in it, to draw you that cannot come: "When I am lifted up I will draw all men after me." Are you willing to be drawn? Then the word of salvation hath so far taken effect upon you, as to remove your unwillingness and to make you willing. Look for another pull of omnipotence, for the word of salvation is a word of omnipotence. It is the almighty word of the almighty God. Saving power, drawing power is in it. Welcome it as such; and, in due time, you shall be able as well as willing. Your faith is not to be acted in the sense of self-ability and sufficiency, but in the sense of self-inability and insufficiency. "Our sufficiency is of God"; salvation is of God; saving faith is of God; "All things are of God, who hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," 2 Corinthians 5:18, and given to you this word of salvation: and it contains all your salvation. And if any part of it were left to you, it would not contain all your salvation. What you cannot do, this salvation can; therefore receive it, and bless God for it, that "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

S. True Lovers of God Highly Privileged

True Lovers of God Highly Privileged: or, The Great Comfort of Believers in the Co-Operation of All Things for Their Good. by Ralph Erskine

[This Sermon was preached at Glasgow, on Monday, October 4th, 1747, being a thanksgiving day, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there.]

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." —Romans 8:28. This chapter is like a string of pearls, every one of them more precious than another; if we might loose the string, and single out this one from among the rest, to take a particular view thereof, we may find an immense worth and preciousness in it. The whole of this chapter is consolatory; and holds forth some special grounds of consolation for supporting justified and sanctified ones against all evil whatsoever. We may take up the substance of the chapter in four heads.

1. We have comfort against the condemning sentence of the law, in the beginning of the chapter, to the fifth verse. Such as have union with Christ, have no reason to fear the dreadful sentence of the threatening part of the law.
2. We have comfort against indwelling sin that adheres even to them that are justified and sanctified; for, it shall never hinder the indwelling of the Spirit here, nor the glorious resurrection of the body at the last day, nor the eternal happiness of both soul and body; from the fifth to the seventeenth verse.
3. There is comfort against all afflictions, crosses, and tribulations in this world; from verse seventeenth to the thirty-third.
4. Not only comfort against all adversity, but against all adversaries whatsoever, and against all charges and challenges, insomuch that believers are brought in triumphing in the God that justifies, so as none can lay anything to their charge. The chapter begins with no condemnation to the believer; and it ends with no separation from Christ; and, to be sure, the top stone has a solid foundation, for nothing can be more certain than this. That there is no condemnation to them, as to whom there is no separation from Christ. This text is one of the pearls of the third part of this chapter; and it contains a sum of the believer's comforts. There are two things especially that hinder the comfort and consolation of a Christian; the one is sin, the head of the serpent; and the other is affliction, the tail of the serpent: against which the apostle brings a sovereign remedy, taken from the providence of God, which is the daily executor of his purpose, "Working all things according to the counsel of his will," and making them the means to help forward the happy end; nothing shall hinder, but rather everything shall promote their spiritual good and eternal happiness, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." The words contain two general parts. We have, 1. A divine consolation, encouragement, and privilege; "We know that all things work together for good." 2. A due limitation or restriction, specifying the objects to whom this comfort pertains; it is to them that love God and

are the called according to his purpose.

1. We have a divine consolation, or great privilege asserted: wherein you may observe four things most comfortable and remarkable. (1.) A blessed end proposed, namely, Good; spiritual and eternal good. (2.) The plentiful means for accomplishing this end, namely, all things. Here is a general including all particulars. (3.) The harmonious influence that these means have for reaching this end, they work; and they work together in a wonderful harmony. (4.) The certain evidence hereof, "We know it," says the apostle, both by faith and experience, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." The operation of the Spirit, in helping the infirmities of the saints, of which the apostle was just now speaking, is not more certain than this wonderful dispensation of providence; for it is emphatically asserted, in connection with that and the other great truths here delivered; and "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

2. We have a due limitation, or restriction; or, if you will, a specification of the objects to whom this comfort pertains, to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. And here also four things may be observed. (1.) The cardinal grace by which the believing child of God is described, namely love. (2) The glorious object on whom this love is directed, namely God. Every believer is a lover; and the principal object of his love, is a God in Christ. (3.) The immediate root and spring of this love, and that is calling; they are called, and indeed effectually, and so have Christ formed in them, and are new creatures. (4.) The eternal foundation of this call, and that is the divine purpose; they are called according to his purpose, and this purpose of God, as the foundation of effectual calling, is more clearly explained in the following verses, 29,30. "Whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." There is, therefore, here a remarkable chain in answering this question, Who they are to whom all things shall work together for good? Why, it is the elect. But how shall we know who are elect? Why, they are effectually called in time. But how shall we know who are effectually called? Why, even by their love to God; we may know eternal election by their being called; and effectual calling by our internal affection toward God in Christ.

Observe in general, "That God's free love and gracious purpose is fertile and productive of many precious fruits." Why, on this root grows the blessing of effectual calling, wherein the seed of all grace is sown, whence love particularly springs; insomuch, that our love to God, if it be true and genuine, is the fruit of God's everlasting love to us. On this root also grows the co-operation of all things for our good; insomuch, that it may well be said of believers in Christ, and lovers of God, ALL things are yours. The God that made all things had no other design in doing so, but his own glory, and the good of his friends and lovers. O! how fruitful is his free love and gracious purpose? I might here relate to you some of the special fruits of his love; but I proceed to the doctrine I mainly intend.

OBSERVE. That it is the consoling privilege of all God's loving children, that "All things shall work together for their good." The method we propose for handling this important subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, is the following:—

I. To inquire what we are to understand by this note of universality, ALL THINGS?

II. What is this GOOD that all things shall work? That God's lovers may know what they are to look for?

III. What is the meaning of their working, and working together for good.

IV. Inquire a little into the character of these who are thus privileged, namely, as they are lovers of God, being called according to his purpose.

V. Show whence it is, that all things shall thus work together for good to them; and so point out the evidences the apostle hath for saying, We know that it shall be so; and here also observe the suitableness and connexion between this character of loving God, and this privilege of all things working together for good.

VI. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

1. We are first to open up this note of universality, ALL THINGS. This we shall endeavour both negatively and positively.

1st, View it negatively. And, in general, we are not to understand it simply or absolutely, but relatively or respectively: that is to say, we are not so to view it, as if all things indefinitely, even these that the believer has no concern in, or notice of; such as all things that fall out in China or Japan were to work for his good who lives here: but we are to understand it relatively, of all things that relate to him, and wherein he is immediately concerned, and whereby he is troubled, such as all afflictive things, whereof the apostle had been speaking. Therefore,

2dly, Let us view it positively, and more particularly; all things that he hath to do with, whether good or bad. I shall offer a short catalogue of good things and evil things that shall work for the believer's good and advantage: here is a little word ALL, but it is great in signification: and all that can be said of all things must be but a few things; for all things is a subject that would never be exhausted.

[I] I offer a catalogue of good things, that shall work for their advantage.

1. To begin with the best, GOD himself, who is the chief good, he works for their good. He that made all things, and orders all things, and governs all things, and to whom all things are nothing, and by whom all things subsist and move; if he work for their good, all things must do so, according as he orders them: but so it is, that God, and all things in God work for their good.

All the attributes of God work for their good; his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, faithfulness: his infinity, eternity, unchangeableness. I might particularly instance in every one of them, but I only consider them altogether working for their good Genesis 17:1-2, "I am God all sufficient; walk before me, and be thou perfect. I will make my covenant between me and thee;" intimating, his all sufficiency was to be forthcoming by way of free covenant promise; "My grace shall be sufficient for thee;" my wisdom shall be sufficient for thy direction: my power, for thy protection; my holiness, for thy sanctification; my justification, upon the footing of a justice-satisfying sacrifice; my mercy, for thy commiseration; my truth and faithfulness, for thy consolation; my unchangeableness, for thy security and confirmation; and my eternal being for thy eternal blessedness.

Again, as all the attributes of God, so all the works of God that ever he made, work for his people's good: his great end in making the world, was for the glory of his name and the good of his elect. Wherefore made he heaven and earth? Why, he made the heaven for their habitation, in the end; and earth, for their accommodation by the way; and hence not only are they heirs of heaven but of the earth also; "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth," Matthew 5:3.

Again, not only all his works, but all his words work for their good; both law and gospel: the law is their schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, by shewing them their sin and misery; the gospel is the glass wherein they see the glory of Christ, and of God in him to their transformation, 2 Corinthians 3:18. In short, all the threatenings of the word, are for their motivation; all the promises, for their consolation; all the precepts, for their direction; all the doctrines of it for their information; and all the parts of it, even every thing in it, for their edification.

Again, not only all the words and actions of God, but all the thoughts and purposes of God work for their good; "I know the thoughts which I think towards you, thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give you an expected end," Jeremiah 29:11. As they are called according to his purpose: so they are justified, sanctified, and saved according to his purpose, and will be glorified to eternity, according to his purpose.

2. CHRIST, and all that pertains to him, work for their good; for, "He is made of God to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Corinthians 1:30. All that Christ did in the flesh; all that he suffered; all that he has done from eternity, and in time; all that he is doing in heaven; and all that he will do at the great day, work for their good. All his appearances are for their good he lived for their sakes, and died for their sins, and rose for their justification. See how the apostle triumphs in the good that comes by Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession in the context here, ver. 33,34. All his offices work for their good: as a Prophet, he is the wisdom of God, for their illumination; as a Priest, the righteousness of God, for their justification; and as a King, the power of God, for their sanctification. O! what matter is here, were we to speak of all things that belong to his person and his redemption; his authority and ability to save; his fulness to supply; his fitness to redeem; his sweetness to endear, and his brightness to display all the glorious perfections of God! See Colossians 2:9; John 1:14, John 1:16.

3. The SPIRIT, and all his fulness, work for their good; and his operations and influences, John 16:8; all his fruits and graces spoken of, Galatians 5:22: all his various motions; whether as water, for cleansing them: as wind, for refreshing them; as fire, for warming their hearts: or as oil, for anointing the wheels of their souls all the sanctifying operations of the Spirit: all his comforting operations; all his enlightening, quickening, strengthening, enlarging, and sealing operations: I must here but mention the fields that I might go through. The Spirit works for their good as he is a Spirit of faith, a Spirit of repentance, a Spirit of love, and power, and of a sound mind; as he is a Spirit of prayer, grace, and supplication: helping our infirmities, and teaching us to pray with groanings which cannot be uttered, as you see in the verses immediately preceding the text.

4. The everlasting Covenant, and all the blessings of it, work for their good; yea, This is their salvation, and all their pleasure, 2 Samuel 23:5. This covenant of promise is a bundle or heap of good things laid up for them. The fulness of the covenant brings good news of supply to them, however poor and empty they are. The freeness of the covenant brings good news of salvation to them, however guilty and unworthy they are in themselves. The stability of the covenant brings

good news of perseverance to them, however fickle, and changeable, and unstable they are in themselves. The blood of the covenant, which is the condition thereof, the everlasting righteousness of Christ, brings the good news of all spiritual blessings bought with his blood, "In whom all the promises are Yea and Amen."

5. All divine providences work for their good; "His eyes run to and fro, throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in their behalf, 2 Chronicles 16:9. All the special acts of providence; all that befell Adam before the fall, in the fall, and after the fall. He was in a state of innocency; yet he sinned: and what need have I to be watchful, may the believer say, though I be in a state of grace? Thus his innocency works for good. In Adam's fall he sees how sin was brought into the world, and that he hath sinned. What happened to Adam after the fall, gives a view both of the misery of a natural state, and of the remedy that God hath provided in Christ, the promised seed. All that befell the good angels, is a part of merciful providence that works for their good: they received their confirmation in their happy state by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ; and how much more may believers expect to be confirmed in a state of grace by the Lord Jesus, who took not on him the nature of angels, to be their Redeemer, but the seed of Abraham? All the great deliverances wrought for the church and people of God, in all ages, work for their good. What he did for Israel in Egypt at the Red Sea, in the wilderness; what he did for them at Jordan; what he did for them in Canaan; how he drove out the heathen, and rebuked kings for their sakes: what he has done for his church in general, and his children in particular, all work for the good of his people, to encourage their faith, and forward their confidence in the Lord.

6. All divine Ordinances work for their good; such as a gospel-ministry, and all the ministerial gifts; they are designed for perfecting the saints, and edifying of the body of Christ, Ephesians 4:12. Gospel sacraments, that is to say, baptism and the Lord's supper; the one a seal of their incorporation into Christ, and the other a seal of their confirmation. If the sacramental solemnity work any saving good to you, it is a fruit of this promise. All the gifts and graces, not only of ministers, but of private Christians, work for their good, as well as their own gifts and graces; for, not only Paul and Apollos, and Cephas, is theirs, but the communion of saints contributes for their good, Hebrews 10:24-25. All the prayers of the saints work for their good; as their prayers, their fervent prayers avail much; so it is a great comfort to have a stock, or numerous conjunction of prayers going up for them, when they themselves are in distress, or out of tune, or unfit for this exercise. All divine ordinances, word and sacraments, thus work for good. The word is the savour of life to them; and the sacraments, the medicine of life; and no wonder; for, in the word, there is the breath of God; and in the sacraments, the blood of God.

7. In a word, all the mercies of God, temporal and spiritual, work for their good; for, the goodness of God leads them to repentance: and all the works of the godly work for the good of believers, their good works, and good example, serving for their motivation and imitation. I might, [2.] Offer a catalogue of evil things that work for their good.

1. To begin with the worst; Sin itself, the evil of all evils, though, in its own nature, it works death and damnation; yet, if we look to it as over-ruled by infinite wisdom, and tempered by Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, it works for good; even as a skilful physician tempers poison, and makes it medicinal and operative for good. Thus the sin of the first Adam made way for the righteousness of the second Adam; in this respect, the greatest evil wrought for the

greatest good. It is part of the wisdom of God in a mystery, that he can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and life out of death. Indeed, sin, of itself, works no spiritual good, it works shame and sorrow, terror, and torment; and they that can encourage themselves in sin by this argument, "Sin as we will, it will work for our good," they never shared of the good promised in this text; for the principal good that all things work for them that love God, is to make them hate sin and to do evil that good may come, is to make our damnation just, Romans 3:8. It is only corrupt nature that can abuse this doctrine thus; for, wherever true grace is, it will make the sweetest use, to the encouragement of holiness, and the discouragement of sin? Because when God so wisely orders that his people get good occasionally of their sins and falls, as when thereby sin becomes more bitter to them, and Christ more precious, and themselves more humble and watchful, nothing in the world puts a sharper edge upon their hatred and opposition to sin than this doth. In this respect we may say, better is the sin that makes us humble and watchful, than the duty that makes us proud and secure: but, to go on in sin, because God can bring good out of it, is as wicked and atheistical, as if one should go to the devil, because God can bring good out of his temptations.

Sin itself will work for good to them that love God: observe what I say; I would not for all the world say, that sin would work for good to them that love sin, and live in sin; but I can say, before all the world, that it will work for good to them that love God, and hate sin. It will work for good to them that hate it, and hate themselves because of it: it will work for good to them that love God, and loath themselves for sin; it will work for good to them that are humbled for it, and to them that fly to Christ to be saved from it, and that dare not, for a world, allow themselves in the least sin; it will work for good to them that fight against it, and pray against it, and who, though they must own, with David, That iniquities prevail against them, yet they are in arms against it; and, because they know their own weakness, therefore they set the word of God, the sword of the Spirit against it; they set the blood of Christ against it, and the power of God against it; they call in the help of Heaven against it. Why, they love God, and hate sin; and therefore, "All things shall work together for their good." "He that hath ears to hear let him hear:" if a wicked, reprobate world will stumble, there is no help for it. It is matter of comfort that his elect ones shall obtain; and the text speaks of these: "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the CALLED according to his purpose."

2. Satan, and all his temptations and suggestions, work together for good to God's children; for, "God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Peter 2:9. God would never have let the serpent bite their heel, if he had not designed to break his head, and to bruise him under their feet. All that the devil and his instruments can do, will work for their good. They may plot, contrive, reproach, persecute, imprison, banish, yea, and take away our lives, and yet all shall work for good; because "The Son of God is manifested to destroy the works of the devil;" both his inward works of deceit, and his outward works of violence.

3. All their lacks and weaknesses work for their good, 2 Corinthians 12:9. From their lacks, he takes occasion to magnify his sufficiency; and from their weakness to magnify his power; "My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness. Most gladly therefore, says the apostle, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

4. All their inward trials work for their good, even those that result from the Lord's hiding and withdrawing himself; whether in point of grace, withholding the influence of his Spirit: or in point of comfort denying the light of his countenance, Isaiah 54:7-8. He frowns a little that his after-smiles may do them the more good when they get them. He orders their momentary, short-lasting desertion, for heightening the price of his everlasting comforts: his design of leaving Zion to say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me," is that he may take occasion to hug and caress them the more kindly in his bosom, as a mother doth her child; "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," Isaiah 49:15. Again,

5. All their outward trials and afflictions work for their good; whether those that are punitive for correcting their faults; or those that are probative, for trying their graces; in the issue they will still have occasion to say with David, Psalms 119:71, "It is good for 'me that I have been afflicted." Why, physic is sometimes as good as food; ,yea, and more necessary many times, however uneasy it may be: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." It is as good for a child of God to be punished, as it is for a young tree to be pruned, John 15:2; yea, the pressure of affliction may press out the fragrant smell of their graces.

6. All their sufferings, for the cause of Christ, work for good, Php 1:12, Php 1:19. This turns to the furtherance of the gospel, and to their salvation. They need not grudge any reproach or persecution they meet with for the truths of the gospel, and for their love to Christ; nor any loss they sustain, of name, credit, or profit, in this cause, for it is to be repaid; even here a hundred fold, and hereafter a thousand thousand-fold. This is the particular the apostle seems especially to point at in the context, Romans 8:17-18. "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together." And, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." However, this particular is so included, as that nothing else is excluded; for "All things shall work together for their good." All things in the world, good or bad, shall work for their good; all things past, present, or to come; the past decrees of God, the present dispensations of God, and the future accomplishment of the purposes of God. All things in heaven, earth, and hell; all the mercies of heaven, all the malignities of earth, and all the malice of hell, shall work for their good. Let Joseph's brethren, moved with envy, cast him into a pit, or sell him into Egypt; let Potiphar thrust him into a filthy prison; yet the wisdom of God comes into the game, and turns all about to a glorious and beautiful result, to the exaltation of Joseph, and the preservation of thousands alive in famine. What though Mordecai suffer, and Haman reign and insult for a while? Infinite Wisdom holds the balance of providence in her hand, and will soon turn the scale. Thus I have hinted at a few of these A11 things that shall work together for good. But now the question is,

II. What is that Good that all things shall work for? That they who love God may know what they are to look for. Here, as on the preceding head, we shall take both a negative and positive view of the matter.

1st, Let us view it negatively. They are not to expect that all things that befall them, shall work for their temporal good and prosperity in the world. Sometimes, indeed, this good takes place, as Joseph said to his brethren, Genesis 50:20, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." And as it was with the Israelites, Exodus 1:12, "The more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Of this good the text. may be understood; but it is not always to be

expected; because, external prosperity is not always good for the people of God. Neither are they to expect that all things should work to this good of absolute exemption from the inbeing of sin, while they are here. God sees it good and fit that they live by faith, in the daily improvement of Christ, for purging away their sin. Nor are they to expect that all things shall work for their absolute freedom from losses and crosses in the world; because it is not good for us to be without them, and they are part of these things that work for their good. Nor are, they to expect that every thing should work for the good that they have in view; but for the good that God hath in view, whose thoughts are infinitely higher than our thoughts. But then;

2dly, Let us consider the point positively. They may expect that all things shall work together for their spiritual good and eternal welfare. We would incline to branch this out in a few particulars. I. All things shall work together for furthering their knowledge of, and acquaintance with God in Christ: and surely this is a notable good! "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ; whom thou hast sent," John 17:3. Now, all things shall contribute to make the saints know more and more of the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory, 1 Corinthians 2:7. And to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God," Ephesians 3:9-10. That, with the apostle, Romans 11:33, they may stand at the side of this ocean, and cry out, "O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And that, by all things, they may come to know more of the power, holiness, justice, truth, goodness, and glory of God in Christ. We often say, "Experience teaches fools." Surely there is not an experienced saint, but will find, that by all the good things and bad things he hath met with, by all the various vicissitudes and changes of providence, he hath come to see more of God than he saw before.

2. All things shall work together for their participation of the image of God, in a greater degree; and surely this is good; and it is brought about by the promises of God, 2 Peter 1:4. By those we are said to be partakers of the divine nature: and also, by the providences of God, particularly trying ones; "He chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness," Hebrews 12:10.

3. All things shall work for their further purification: they shall purge out some particular lust and corruption; "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin;" Isaiah 27:9. This is a desirable good, whatever be the dispensation that contributes to that end.

4. All things shall work together for furthering their communion and fellowship with him; whatever they have heard, or seen, or felt of the word of God, or of the rod of God, contributes to this good end—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus," 1 John 1:3. We can go to God boldly by the blood of Jesus; and communicate the very secret of our souls to him, and find him communicating the secrets of his covenant to us.

5. All things work together for their further humiliation; and this is good indeed; "He led thee through the great and terrible wilderness, wherein there were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; wherein there was no water;" there is a sum of the evil things that befell them; but it

follows, "He brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; he fed you in the wilderness with manna, that your fathers knew not:" there is a sum of the good things that befell them; well, but what was the end and design of all these things? Why, it follows, "That he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good in thy latter end," Deuteronomy 8:15-16. It is good to be humbled and have low thoughts of ourselves; we are apt to say in prosperity, Our mountain stands strong, and we shall never be moved; we think, with Peter, that we are able to suffer with Christ, and to do great things for him: or with Zebedee's children, that we are able to reign with Christ: but we need to be humbled and proved, that we may know what we are.

6. All things work together for their further consolation; and this is a desirable good; God doth, with all that befalls them, convey some joys and comforts of his Spirit, whether he bring them to the mountain or to the wilderness: this good end shall be reached in the Lord's time. When he brings them to his holy mountain, then he makes them joyful in his house of prayer, Isaiah 56:7. When he brings them to the wilderness, then he speaks comfortably to them, Hosea 2:4. Yea, he even gives them the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and makes them sing there; and as their sufferings abound, makes their consolation abound, 2 Corinthians 1:4-5.

All things work together for their good, even for furthering their life of faith, that they may know more what it is to live by faith on the Son of God, Galatians 2:20. If sensible enjoyment were always allowed to believers here, in their present circumstances, they would be ready to surfeit on their provision; therefore, with, their sweet meals, the Lord orders some sour sauce for helping their digestion, in order that they may live, not by sense, but by faith; in prosperity we talk of living by faith, and darken counsel many times with words without knowledge; but in adversity, we come to have the practical knowledge of what it is to live by faith. And indeed that is a happy and blessed dispensation that tends to the rooting of a soul further in a crucified Christ, and to a living upon a promise, when there is no visible prop in all the world to lean to; this is clearly believing.

8. All things work together for furthering their submission to the will of God, and holy contentment in every case, that they may, learn with Paul, Php 4:11-12, in every state to be content; and know how to be abased, and how to abound; and to say, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." I can welcome reproach, as well as honour and esteem; a prison as well as a palace; a hard stone for my bolster-piece, as well as a soft pillow; though I praise, as well as others, and bless the Lord for comfortable accommodations and favourable dispensations, when God allows them; yet, if he deny them, I am content: "Shall we receive good things at the hand of the Lord, and not receive evil?" O sirs, how good is it to get this disposition wrought?

9. All things work together for furthering their spirituality, for weaning their hearts from the world, and elevating their affections heavenwards, so as they may have less of the spirit of the world, and more of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in their hearts: 1 Peter 4:14, "Think not strange concerning the fiery trial, which shall try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Even the glorious Spirit of God, comforting and supporting you with the hope of the glory to be revealed. O! what a good thing is this to have the good Spirit of God, the glorious Spirit of God? Though a spirit of reproach be without you; yet the Spirit of glory and triumph within will make amends. And, O what a good work is it, when all things work for putting out a base, carnal, worldly spirit, and for bringing in more of a glorious and heavenly Spirit?

10. All things work together for furthering their preparation for heaven; nothing shall hinder, but rather further their course towards heaven. As all trying dispensations of providence work for their having more of the Spirit, of which our apostle speaks in the preceding context; so, they work for hastening their progress towards heaven, and can be no hinderance but a furtherance to it; as appears from the apostle's triumphant language in the following context, towards the close of the chapter, Romans 8:35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angel, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Man's frowns may occasion God's smiles; losses of worldly goods may make up your heavenly treasures; "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Corinthians 4:17. In a word, as there would be no end of speaking of all things that work together for good to them; so, there is no end of speaking of all the good which all things work in their behalf. The God that hath all things at his command sets all things a-working for them; and makes even the worst things contribute to the best advantage. Herod and Pilate, Jews and Gentiles, combined to crucify Christ, "The Lord of glory," Acts 2:23. Here is the worst thing that ever was done; but, behold the act of free grace and deep wisdom in God! That made this work to be the greatest good that ever was. We have a sample of all other things working for good to God's people, even the rage and fury of men and devils, contrary to their designs, working for their happiness; and death itself, contrary to its nature, working for their eternal life.

III. The third thing proposed in the general method, was, To shew what we are to understand by their working and working together for good. This points out the harmonious influence that all things have upon the production of this good. How can all things, even the worst of things work for good? "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

1st, In general, all things are in GOD'S hand, who is the powerful agent, who works by these means; they cannot work of themselves without God. They seem rather to work the ruin of God's people than their happiness and good; but God's infinite and omnipotent arm can bring light out of darkness, life out of death, and good out of evil. Even as the word and ordinances themselves do not save by any intrinsic virtue, or power of their own; but yet there is a passive fitness in them to serve the hand of Omnipotence for accomplishing saving ends; a fitness of instrumentality, as there is an axe, or hammer for a workman's hand. As a sword cannot cut, or a pen cannot write, but in a hand ready for it; so neither could all things work for good to God's children, but as these are in the hand of God. It is God that by these doth advance the spiritual and eternal good of his people. Therefore,

2dly, Their working together may have a fourfold reference. 1. To the God of providence. 2. To the particular acts of providence. 3. To the whole series of providence. 4. To the manner of their co-operation, wherein they are subservient for this good.

1. Their working together may have a respect to GOD, and his co-operation with providence, seeing, as I was just now saying, not one of these things of itself can do any good: but they work

together with God, and in his hand. Though such a thing of itself be really a great evil, a crushing dispensation; yet, let God alone, and wait upon him; he can bring the greatest good out of that thing to thee. Though there be no natural or physical tendency in such an act of providence towards thy good, but rather towards thy hurt yet there shall be such hyper-physical or supernatural virtue and efficacy attending them, as to make them work for good: for, they work with God, whose counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

2. Their working together may have a respect to the particular acts of providence themselves; not separately but conjunctly viewed. If we take one providence with another, we may find them working for good; but if we take them separately, we cannot see their co-operation. Perhaps one act of providence smiles upon you, another act of providence frowns upon you, and speaks ruin to you: well, if you put them together, you may see them working together for good, but if you separate them, and take them asunder, then you cannot see either the beauty or good, nor yet advantage of the frowning providence. One providence seems white and pleasant; another seems ruddy and bloody, coloured and terrible; but let the red and white together, and then the beautiful complexion of providence appears: they work together for good.

3. Their working together may have a respect to the whole series and greater sphere of providence, from the beginning to the end. A hard beginning cannot still be discerned to be a good beginning, till we compare the beginning and end together. The dark side of the cloud of providence may contribute to illustrate and set forth the splendour of the bright side of it; and, when we view both the one side and the other, there will appear a harmony in all the acts of providence. The godly man may be plagued all day long, and chastened every morning, Psalms 73:14; here is a dark side: but go to the other side and see the fair end of providence: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the latter end of that man is peace," whereas, the end of the wicked shall be cut off, though he flourish and prosper for a while.

4. Their working together way have a respect to the manner of their subserviency in working for good. All things work together; and so work not only harmoniously, but efficaciously. When God, and all things with him, work together for the good of a creature, then there is nothing to hinder its being made effectual. When all things work, what is there behind to let or impede the work? Again, when all things work together, it says they work marvellously and wonderfully. Good things and bad things have, in themselves, a quite contrary nature and tendency; but as the wheels of a clock, or watch, move, some of them forward, some of them back-ward; yet all these contrary motions tend to the regular motion of the hand that points at the hour: so, the wheels of providence, some with a direct, and others with a retrograde motion: yet all contribute to work for good to God's children. This is owing to him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, to make these things that work against each other, yet to work together for this end.

IV. The fourth thing in the text is, To enquire into the character of those who are thus privileged, and to whom all things work together for good.

Why it is to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose. In this character there are purposes that would fill many volumes; and therefore none will suppose that I can here treat them at any length. I shall therefore take a short view of this character given to God's privileged people, namely that they are lovers of him, and that by considering these four things concerning this love that the text carries. 1. The object of it, namely, God. 2. The act of it, namely, love to this

God. 3. The immediate branch on which it grows, namely, effectual calling. 4. The head and original root from whence it springs, namely, the divine purpose, being called according to his purpose.

1st, The object of their love to whom all things work together for good, is God, who is to be loved above all things, and loved exclusively for himself; he will suffer no companion, or competitor, Matt. 10:37. Now, this love of God necessarily includes the love of Christ, or of God in Christ; for, as in Christ only he is well pleased and reconciled with sinners; so, out of Christ we cannot love him as a friend, but fear him as a foe, God is in Christ, and all his fulness dwells in Christ, Colossians 1:19; and where God's fulness dwells, there doth the true believer love to dwell. This love to God includes in it also a regular love to ourselves. It is manifest, when it is said in God's law, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves, that it is presupposed we ought to love ourselves: this is so much included in the love of God, that, as he that loves not himself, cannot love God; so, he that loves not God, cannot love himself. As a madman, in his fury, wounds his own body, and is pitied of all but not of himself: so wicked men, or natural men, destroy themselves, and are pitied of God, angels, and good men; but have no pity on themselves, no true love to themselves. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not, Matthew 23:37. Again, this love to God includes love to our neighbour for love to God and man is the fulfilling of the law of God: and, "He that loves not his brother, whom he hath seen, cannot truly love God, whom he hath not seen," 1 John 4:20. And this love to our neighbour implies a rejoicing at, and desiring his good; and a grieving at, and relieving his misery. The unworthiness of no person whatsoever, must quench our love; but it should burn when the water of men's injuries would quench the same. See Matthew 5:44-45, where we are called to love our enemies; to bless them that curse us; to do good to them that hate us; and to pray for them that despitefully use us; that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven; for, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." True love to God carries in it benevolence towards all, and especially delight in the godly, Psalms 16:3. And even with respect to those that are overtaken in a fault, we are to express our love to them by restoring them in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, Galatians 6:1. In a word, this love to God, with reference to the object of it; includes a love to every thing that God loves, and that bears the stamp of his image and authority; such as this gospel, and ordinances thereof, wherein his love shines. But,

2dly, Consider the act .that terminates on this object, love. What is it to love God? and, how do his people love him? As this act supposes the knowledge of God in Christ, without which we cannot love him, no more than we can worship an unknown God; and faith in him, and his love and mercy through Christ; for this faith works by love: so it implies the powerful work of the Spirit of God in subduing the natural enmity against God, and drawing out the affections towards him. The Spirit of all grace having first come into the soul, and brought love with him among the rest, he blows upon this fire that he hath kindled, and the flame of it ascends towards God, in heavenly desires and spiritual delights. As to the manner how the believer loves God, we cannot describe it better, than by considering the rule that shows how he should love him. Love to ourselves and our neighbour must be limited; but there is no measure set to our love to God. See the rule, Luke 10:27, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."

1. With all the heart; that is, cordially and affectionately with the heart, and with all the heart. If the world have our heart, God cannot have it: "Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John 2:15. As one nail drives out another, so the love of Christ will force out the love of the world.

2. With all the soul; that is, intensely and most entirely: as all the heart takes in all the affections of it; so, I think, all the soul takes in all the faculties of it; and to love God with heart and soul, imports a loving him most intensely and most entirely, so as to allow no faculty of the soul to swerve from this object, but to fix and terminate wholly upon him. It seems to be like that, Isaiah 26:8-9, "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my whole soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

3. With all the strength; that is, universally and zealously; employing whatever gifts, parts, powers, and talents God hath bestowed upon us in his service, and returning them all to his glory; yielding ourselves to the Lord, and our members instruments of righteousness unto God, Romans 6:13.

4. With all the mind; that is, wisely and judiciously: people may love Christ with a hearty affection, and yet not with knowledge and understanding; for it was so with the apostles themselves, John 14:28, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father;" but they did not rejoice in this, nor knew the import of it; and, therefore, though they loved him with the heart and soul, yet not with all the mind and judgment, or with knowledge and understanding. Now this is the manner wherein all God's children love him, or at least aim at loving him, whatever enmity and corruption remain. Thus of the act of love.

3dly, Consider the immediate branch on which this love grows, namely, effectual calling; they are CALLED. I speak of this as visible; in regard that it is the first evident effect of God's everlasting love breaks up above ground, which before this did run hidden under ground from all eternity; and because, though effectual calling be indeed internal and invisible to the world, yet it is a sensible turn of affairs within, making a visible change upon him without. Now, none love God but those that are called effectually, Romans 9:11. All men are haters of God naturally; and love to him grows not in the garden of nature, but of grace; and the first working of grace in the soul is an effectual calling. And if you ask what that is, you cannot have a better description of it than that in our Shorter Catechism? "It is the work of God's free Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel." Where you see, that as the outward means of it is the gospel, and the dispensation thereof; and the inward means and powerful efficient is the free Spirit of God, accompanying the preached word; so, the parts of it are four, relating to the several faculties of the soul.

1. Effectual conviction of sin and misery, whereby the conscience is touched and awakened, and made to cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" Acts 2:37.

2. Effectual illumination; whereby the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, Acts 26:18. It is an opening of the eye of the soul, and turning it from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Corinthians 4:6.

3. Effectual renovation, whereby the will is renewed, according to that word, Psalms 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The new heart and the new Spirit promised, Ezekiel 36:26, is given.

4. The effectual out-drawing of the soul towards Christ, persuading and enabling the heart to embrace Christ Jesus, as he is offered and exhibited in the gospel promise, John 6:44-45, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. It is written in the prophet, They shall be all taught of God; every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." And thus the Spirit comes, with internal power, to make the soul, by the external call working in it, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, Php 2:13; and so he is called internally and efficaciously, and united to Christ. This is the immediate branch that love grows on.

4thly, Consider the origin and hidden root from which it springs, and that is the purpose of God; "called according to his PURPOSE." This is both the root of effectual calling, and the root of that love to God that issues from it; "We love him, because he first loved us." True love to God issues from his everlasting love to us. But this divine purpose relates here to effectual calling. I shall view it in relation thereto; and it seems to point out four things with reference to this call.

1. It points out the particular nature of this call, not only that it is a special, internal call, limited by the special purpose of God, in contradistinction from the external, that many have, who yet come short of conversion; but it is a call particular to the elect, such as is mentioned, 2 Peter 1:10, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." It is such a calling as is joined with election; insomuch, that they that are thus called, may be as sure of election from eternity, as they are sure of their vocation in time. O sirs, let us admire the sovereignty of grace in dispensing this internal call to some, and not to others. Surely they that are thus inwardly and effectually called can never enough love and praise that God that has granted this special mercy to, them. And let those who are yet only outwardly called, as all to whom the gospel comes are, let them hearken diligently to that external call, and be restless till they get grace to answer it, by coming to Christ; for, this outward call is the means of the effectual one, and let them not meddle with the purpose of God till once they are brought to answer the gospel call; for this is the rule you are to follow; whereas the divine purpose is a hidden secret, not to be revealed till you have followed the outward rule. The gospel offer is to all; "Whosoever will, let him come;" and, if you do not exclude yourselves by your unbelief from this open call and invitation, you shall never find yourselves excluded from any secret decree; for, whenever your heart opens to Christ, then the decree opens in your favours. Therefore, be diligent in the use of gospel means that tend to the opening of the heart to Christ. Why, say you, but if God did not decree my salvation, my heart will never open to Christ; and, therefore, what need I use the means? Why, indeed, the antecedent is true; but the consequent absurd. You may as well say, if God decree that I should live no longer, then I will die; and, therefore, what need I take any more meat or drink, or use the means of life? I imagine you will not argue so foolishly about the life of your body; and why will you suffer the devil to cheat you into such a trifling about the life of your souls to all eternity?

2. To be called according to his purpose, points out the freeness of the call, that it flows out from more grace; for, if it be a call, according to his purpose, it is not a call according to our works, 2 Timothy 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world

began." It must be free; for the worst of sinners and the chief of sinners have been and are called effectually. Let the greatest of sinners be persuaded to look out after this sovereign grace of God, and plead that he would glorify his free grace in saving them.

3. It points out the efficacy and energy of the call; for, God's purpose is a standing purpose, "His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." Hence his call is irresistible, and yet without force and violence. It is irresistibly sweet, and sweetly irresistible; here there is no compulsion, but that of love, sweet cords of love.

4. It points out the perpetuity of the call, because it is the fruit of an unalterable purpose; his purpose is irrevocable, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," Romans 11:29. Thus you see this love in the object, the act, the immediate spring, and the original root of it. Here then is the character of those to whom "All things shall work together for good,; they are lovers of God by virtue of his call and purpose."

V. The next thing proposed in the general method is, to shew whence it is that all things shall work together for good to such lovers of God; and so to point out the evidence the apostle had for saying, we know that it shall be so; and here also observe the suitableness and connection between the character of being lovers of God, and this privilege, of all things working together for good.

If you ask then, Why all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose?

There is a general answer in the bosom of the text, and that is drawn from the divine purpose, the determination of God. There is a stated law in heaven from eternity for it; they are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will, Ephesians 1:11. There is not anything that falls out in this world but was resolved upon and decreed from eternity, that things should be so and so. Men and devils may as well go up to the court rolls of heaven, and there cross and cancel the eternal statutes and decrees of God, as hinder our good, who love God, and are the called according to his purpose. "The foundation of God standeth sure." More particularly,

1. The first reason and argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose, is drawn from the nature of God; why, he is the Lord of hosts, the God of armies, who hath all the hosts of men, and angels, and creatures, in his hand; and all the legions of devils at his back. He can command the stars in their courses to fight for his people, and against their enemies. He can create an army of frogs, and lice, and locusts; they require only a commission from him, and so they execute his purpose.

Again, he is a God of infinite wisdom, who knows what will work best for his people's good. Let God be doing with thee, O believer; whatever thy condition be, he knows when to send affliction, and when prosperity; he knows what afflictions to send; and by what hands and means, and how long to continue them. He knows also how to deliver the godly out of temptation and trouble. Prescribe not to infinite wisdom.

Again, he is a God of infinite power; he can do what he will; nothing is too hard for him to do. As he knows all things, so he can do all things, and make all things do what he pleases, and work what

he has a mind. And he has made over himself to you, believer; and, with himself, his infinite power, to make all things work for thy good.

Again, he is a God of infinite love and compassion to them that love him; "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them;" and his everlasting love makes him carry on his loving design by all means whatsoever.

Again, as this is the nature of God, so this is the way of God to act for his people, in a suitableness to his nature; his usual way is even by contrary means to bring about great things for his people, as you see in God's way with David, Daniel, Joseph, Mordecai, and others. In a word, his providential government of the world is extended to all creatures, and more especially to his people. It extends to the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and the hairs of the head; and much more to them, Matthew 6:28-34. Whatever men and devils design all shall come to nothing, and go no farther than God gives leave. Ezekiel's vision was a wheel within a wheel: though in a watch the wheels seem to go cross, yet the wise builder knows what they mean. But,

2. Another reason and argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them who love God, is drawn from the Mediator, Christ Jesus. Why, he is entrusted with them by the Father, from whom he had a special charge of them given him from all eternity: "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John 17:6. Now, Christ will be faithful to his trust; yea, he hath received all fulness of the Spirit, and that not for himself, but for them, that he may improve it for their souls, Colossians 1:19; yea, as Mediator, he hath the whole world given him; and, "All power in heaven and earth," Matthew 28:18. And, as he upholds all things by the word of his power," Hebrews 1:2; so, all things are put under his feet; and "He is given to be head over all things, to the church," Ephesians 1:22, that he may rule and over-rule kingdoms and nations as he will; and make use of all the creatures to promote the good design the Father sent him upon.

Again, by virtue of this great power and commission, he is pleased to give a special commission and charge to millions of excellent spirits in heaven to look to his people; "He has given his angels charge over them; and, are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14. And so they are compassed about with this invisible guard— "The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him." Yea, the Lord JEHOVAH himself is their life guard: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round them. The place of their defence is the munition of rocks."

Again, by virtue of the power of Christ, he has qualified several men with gifts and graces, and has given them a charge of his people, saying, as to Peter, Feed my lambs. When Christ ascended up on high, he received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men; what to do? It was for the perfecting of the saints. Christ going out of the world, to be crowned with glory and honour at the Father's right hand, he leaves coronation gifts behind him; and he is distributing some of these amongst you at this occasion.

Again, Christ has removed all things out of the way, that might obstruct the good of his people: that sin might not do it, he has condemned sin in the flesh, by giving himself a sacrifice for sin; that the devil might not do it, he has destroyed the works of the devil, and conquered principalities and powers, so as the gates of hell cannot prevail; that men in the world might not do it, he has

overcome the world; and, that death may not do it, he has removed the sting of death. Why, then, what remains to obstruct their good, and hinder their eternal salvation?

Again, as he has removed all things that might obstruct their good, so he has purchased all things that can contribute to their good: "All spiritual blessings, in heavenly places," Ephesians 1:3. The men of the world may deprive them of their riches, honour, liberty, and good name, and outward peace; but they cannot hinder them from peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost; nor deprive them of their right and title to glory. Christ hath purchased all these things, Luke 1:74-75. Men cannot lay a restraint upon our spirit, nor hinder us to go to God. In a word, Christ, by his Spirit, is always with them; he has promised that "He will never leave them, nor forsake them;" there-fore, whatever way the wind blows, all weathers will contribute to their prosperous voyage heavenward. And, as Christ's own sufferings did work for his glory; so shall the sufferings of the saints in Christ. If physic be good for the head, it is good for the members of the body; but his love is mixed with the bitterest physic that he orders, and his love makes it work for their good; and nothing in the world can turn the tide of his love from them. And therefore, all things shall work together for good to them.

3. A third reason or argument, upon which we know that all things shall work together for good to them, is drawn from the covenant of grace and promise; there is a solemn vow and oath, on God's part, that he will' do so and so for his people. All the believing children of Abraham have the same security with him: "God swears by himself, because he could swear by no greater, that in blessing he would bless them," Hebrews 6:14. And why does he confirm his promise by his oath; but to show more abundantly the immutability of his counsel? "That by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for him to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." As "All the promises are Yea and Amen, in Christ," so the grand comprehensive promise is, "I will be thy God:" and, "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord!" This everlasting God, is the everlasting good of his people: he is the God that was, and is to come; and he is a good in the past, present, and future tense; therefore, all things past, present, and to come, must work for their good, to whom he is a God by covenant and promise.

4. The fourth reason or argument, whereby we know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, is drawn from the people themselves, to whom the promise is made; why, they are his relations and his lovers.

(1.) They are his relations: they are the birth of his everlasting purpose; being, in time, called according to his purpose; and so brought under a special relation to him. He is their everlasting Father; before they were children, he was their Father. He is their Husband: and what will he not do for his spouse, the bride, the Lamb's wife. He is their Head; and what will he not do for his members? He is their Physician, and what will he not take care of his patients? "I am the Lord that healeth thee:" yea, he will heal and help them in wonderful ways, by making all things work together for their good.

(2.) They are his lovers; and this leads me to another branch of this head that I proposed, namely, To observe the suitableness and connection between this character of being lovers of God, and this privilege, That all things work together for their good. This love to God has a subserviency for making all things work together for good to such lovers; for,

1. Love to God in Christ makes them count all things loss and dung for the excellency of this glorious One, whom they love. Why, says God, do you count all things loss for me? Then I will make all things gain to you. You shall lose nothing; all things shall work together for good to you.

2. Love to God makes them suffer the loss of all things, and deny themselves of all things for his sake; why then, says God, I will make all things contribute to repair your loss; so that, if you lose all things one way, you shall gain all things another; you shall be co-heirs with him who is the heir of all things, Revelation 21:7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

3. Love to God inclines them to rely upon him, and to depend upon him for all things they need, and to put all things in his hand; they put their wants and weaknesses in his hand, in order to be supplied and helped; they put their diseases in his hand, in order to be healed; they put their sin and guilt in his hand, in order that he may pardon them; they put their enemies in his hand, that he may rebuke them; they put their strong corruptions in his hand, that he may subdue them; they put their burdens in his hand, that he may bear them; they put their heart and soul in his hand, that he may keep them. What! Dost thou put all things in my hand, and that by warrant from my own call! "Cast thy burden on the Lord!" All things shall work together for good to thee.

4. Love makes them desire to do all they do for the glory of God; he hath created them for himself, to show forth his praise; and as he has given them a disposition to do all that they do, to his glory; so he has a mind to make all that he doth and orders, contribute for their good. As the desire, whether they eat or drink; or whatsoever they do to do all to the glory of God; so I will not be behind with them: as they would have all things contributing to his glory, so he will make all things contribute for their good.

5. Love to God keeps in the soul good thoughts of God, do what he will; knowing that he is most wise, holy, gracious, and loving; and therefore doth nothing but what is best, and knows best what is good for his people. The apostle says, "Love (or charity) thinketh no evil," and surely true love to God can think no evil of him, and bode no evil at his hand: such a soul cannot be disappointed; all things must work together for good. Indeed, unbelief works by enmity, and expects no good at God's hand; but "Faith works by love," and expects no evil at his hand, and shall find none; because, whatever heavy trials such a loving soul meets with, love makes it take all patiently and pleasantly out of the hand of God; for, as love thinks no evil, so it suffers long, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, but beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, 1 Corinthians 13:7. Therefore, all things work together for good to the lovers of God.

6. Love to God takes the heart off from the world, and all things in it, and especially such things as would hurt it, namely, all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; the more perfect love is, the more it casts out fear, and casts off harm, as Paul did the viper off his hand into the fire. All things must work for good to the loving soul that overcomes all things that would work for evil.

7. Love draws the heart to God, the chief good. Trials and afflictions set the soul in motion; and love draws it near to God and what is the consequence of this; "It is good for me to draw near unto God," Psalms 73:28. Therefore, all things must work for good to the lovers of God.

8. As love draws the soul to God, so it makes the soul to abide with God, when brought unto him; for "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John 4:14. And he that thus dwells on high, no evil can reach him "He dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty," Psalms 91:1, Psalms 91:10. Nothing can work for hurt to him, but all must work for good. And whatever seems to hurt him; yet this love is such a healing thing, and such a strengthening thing, love being stronger than death, and a powerful restorative, that by its healing energy it quickly makes all well again. Hence the more that the believer is in the exercise of love to God, kindled by a view of God's everlasting love to him, the more will he have of the sensible and comfortable relish of this privilege, and see all things working together for good to him; whereas the less love to God, by the faith of God's love to him; the less will he see and feel this truth to his advantage; but rather fear the contrary, with Jacob, saying, "All these things are against me."

Thus you see the influence and subserviency of this love unto this privilege; or the connection between the character of being lovers of God, and the privilege of all things working together for good; and so upon what solid reason and good evidence the apostle did, and all believers may assert and say, "We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and that are the called according to his purpose."

VI. The sixth thing proposed was, To make application of the subject.

Here is a foundation laid for a very large application; but I must confine myself within as narrow bounds as possible. The first use I make of this doctrine is, of information. Is it so, That all things work together for good to them that love God?

1. Hence see and admire the infinite wisdom of God, and the depth of divine providence, even when he suffers all things seemingly to work for hurt to his church and people, that even then he is making all things work together for good to them. O believer! Do not believe sense; it is a fool and a knave, when it speaks contrary to God: whatever appearance things have, and be as they will, all things shall work for good to the lovers of God. It shall be so toward every lover of God in particular, and much more will it be so towards the whole community of lovers, and of Christ's friends.

Perhaps there was never greater evils of one sort and another taking place in the world, and even in the midst of the visible church, than now-a-days; yet I dare assert, that out of all the evils of our day, God shall bring forth much good to his friends and lovers. But if you cannot see to the bottom of his ways, which are unsearchable, believe upon trust, saying, as it is, Isaiah 8:17. "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." (See Micah 7:6-9.) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall know thy name; hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it." What! Will a flood of errors, heresies, and scandals, ruining the church work for good? Yea, "There must be heresies, that they that are approved may be made manifest," 1 Corinthians 11:19. Storms shall manifest who are built upon the rock. Will

blasphemies vented against the glorious Godhead of Christ, work for any good? Yea, his glory shall shine the more brightly, through the dark cloud; his friends shall be the more stirred up to put the crown upon his head, when enemies would trample on it. O the wisdom of God! that can make divisions, discords, and confusions in a church, to work for the good of a hidden remnant; even as he made the treason of Judas, the rage of the Jews and Gentiles, and the malice of the devil, to work for the redemption of the world, and salvation of sinners.

2. See the cause why God many times denies the outward blessing of peace to these on whom he has conferred the inward blessing of grace; and why he orders adversity instead of prosperity; why he designs their good. And it is upon necessity, in some cases, that they must be given up to the hand of their enemies, because, when he gives them rest, they do evil again before him, Nehemiah 11:28. He designs to convince the wicked that God's children do not serve him for outward things, as the devil reproached Job, when he said, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" He designs his servants should not bear a mercenary mind, in making gain of his service, and turning Christian patience into carnal covetousness, making gain of godliness. He designs his people should see need of more faith, and more wisdom; for, in fair weather, little skill in the mariner is required; but when storms arise, and the sea swells and grows troublesome, then he is put to it. He designs to convince them that this is their inn, and not their home; the wilderness, and not Canaan, a place of refining; whereof yet he says, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," Isaiah 48:10. They are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Corinthians 11:31. Outward and bodily prosperity is not always attended with inward soul-prosperity; no, no; many have fat bodies and lean souls.

3. See hence the misery of the wicked, who are enemies and haters of God, and live and die in that enmity. Ah! Dreadful case; all things work together for evil unto such. To the godly, evil things work for good; but to the wicked, good things work for evil "Their prosperity destroys them; their table is a snare to them." The ministry of the word, which is a savour of life to some, is a savour of death to them. O sirs, what is this, that the same word, the same breath, the same wind that blows some to heaven doth blow them to hell! The sacramental supper, which is an ordinance that works for the believer's consolation, works for the unbeliever's damnation; "He eats and drinks damnation to himself!" Yea, Christ himself, the greatest good that ever was sent to the world, works for their hurt; for he is to them a stumbling block, and rock of offence, Romans 9:33. 1 Peter 2:7. Oh! May not this make a wicked soul to tremble! O mocker of God and godliness! Is it nothing to you to understand that God is angry at you, as he is angry with the wicked every day; and every day you are treasuring up wrath to yourself against the day of wrath! O man, woman, if you put not in to be among those that love God, and are the called according to his purpose; and if the gospel call never work in you an effectual purpose of turning from sin to God, through Christ by faith; if it never work in you an effectual purpose to come out of yourself, and in to Christ; to die unto sin, and live unto God: then, O tremble at it; it is a sign that God hath a purpose to destroy you. Alas? "Will you not tremble at the presence of God?" Jeremiah 5:22. The half of this dreadful news hath made some of God's children to be distracted with the terrors of God, Psalms 88:15. If your stout conscience doth not tremble now, yet the day of wrath and trembling is a coming.

4. Hence, on the other hand, see the happiness of God's friends and lovers; and what comfort this carries to them, that all things, the worst as well as the best, will work together for their good, whatever be their suffering lot, or afflicted condition: even when you seem to be lost, yet you are in

your Father's eye: when in the dark night of affliction, temptation, desertion, you can see nothing, yet, if you look up to heaven, you will see thousands of stars looking on you; so is God's eye ever on you. The child may lose the Father, but the Father will not lose the child; you are in the hand of Christ, and none can pluck you out of God's hand: and you are in that very hand that works for you, and makes all things work for your good. What though the policy of hell be against you, when the wisdom of heaven is working for you; "The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought; he makes the devices of the people of none effect; but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations, Psalms 33:10-11. Blessed then is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people, whom he hath chosen for his inheritance." What are multitudes of oppositions from men and devils? Millions of hosts of men are millions of hosts of vanities and nothings to this infinite wisdom; "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted unto him less than nothing and vanity, Isaiah 40:17. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man that shall die? and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass?" Isaiah 51:12. You have a wonder-working friend who cannot die, and that will never fail you: riches and worldly honours deal not plainly with us; we know not when we have them, and when we lack them; but, amidst all changes, God is your unchangeable friend, in whom you are to rejoice. A certain prince, when he heard of the death of many friends in war; yet comforted himself with this, *Vivit imperator, sat habeo*; "It is enough to me that the emperor lives." O believer! Should it not be enough to you that the Lord lives? "As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted, Psalms 18:44, Psalms 18:46. "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee," Psalms 102:25-28. What though your trials be very long, God's delays are the seed of greater mercies. The goldsmith holds his metal in the fire till it be melted and refined; "But the needy shall not always be forgotten; nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever," Psalms 9:18. God's time is better than ours; and he knows when you are ripe for deliverance; he will let the fire burn till the dross come away from the metal; "The vision is for an appointed time." O believer, bless God for this pillar of hope and consolation, that all things shall work together for your good. And whatever state you are brought into, in providence, be content, be cheerful; all things are working together to bring you to that state, wherein you shall be no more tossed and troubled; wherein you will be above these regions that make changes of weather, and have no more any thick foggy days. Many times all your felicity here is to know that your misery shall end, and sin, the root of all misery, be plucked up. If he make all things work together for good to his people, then we may well say, "Truly, God is good to Israel;" whatever befalls them, YET he is good, as the word may be read.

OBJECTION. "If it was only trouble and affliction that I was trusted with, perhaps I might take the comfort of this doctrine, that all things shall work together for good; but, alas! sin lies at the door; corruption prevails over me; and my spiritual enemies tread me under foot; and this makes me think all will work for my RUIN."

ANSWER. This may be the case, and yet the dominion is on the children of God's side; because victory is not measured by one blow, but by the issue of the battle; "A bruised reed shall he not

break, a smoking flax will he not quench, till he bring forth judgment unto victory," Matthew 12:20. You may, with Paul, be led captive by the law of sin, Romans 7:23; and yet the gospel at length be victorious in the heart. Consider that the Spirit keeps the field, even in that same soul wherein the flesh hath a great power; "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary," Galatians 3:17. In a carnal man the Spirit is not on the field at all, and therefore he is a servant to sin, and not a captive; but when God's children sin, they are captives to it, and not servants; and when they sin, it is but with half of the will, and so the flesh hath but half a vote; and there is a protestation made on the contrary, by that supernatural instinct of the Spirit, that is given them. Again, the falls and foils of God's children are the seed of humility; and watchfulness, the seed of hunger and thirst after a fuller measure of grace, and of a more strict and circumspect walk; and thus sin, by the grace of God, helps to mortify itself. We read of David, 2 Samuel 23:15-17, that he longed for a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that was in the midst of the Philistine's host; and when three valiant men brought it to him at the peril of their lives, he would not drink it, saying, "Is not this the blood of these men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" Hence we may learn, he that before shed innocent blood, is now troubled in conscience for hazarding the blood of these men in this rash enterprise; and he that before defiled another man's wife, does now repent for desiring to drink of the water of another man's well. But, passing other Inferences, go on to an Use of Examination.

Try, therefore, O man, woman, whether you be the subjects to whom this privilege belongs, of having all things working for your good. Try it, for it is no trivial affair, no matter of moonshine; it is no trifle that you have no concern with, and need not trouble your head about; no, it is a matter of the highest moment, and most important concern; an affair wherein your everlasting welfare is concerned. Whether all things shall work together for your good Because, if they do not so, they will all work for your hurt and perdition; for, the affirmative of the text strongly imports and includes a negative. Well, but say you, "I am persuaded this is one of the most glorious privileges that can be; How shall I know t, that all things shall work together for good to me?" You may try it two ways. 1. By the marks the text offers you. 2. By the begun experience of the thing itself.

1st, Try it by the marks the text gives of those to whom all things shall work together for good; namely, that they are such as love God, and are the called according to his purpose. These are the persons to whom all things shall work for good. And here four things are offered to you for trial. If you would reach to the bottom of this question, whether you be a true lover, you are to try it. 1. By the object of your love, if it be GOD himself that you love, the true God. 2. By the qualities of the act, if it be true love to this God. 3. By the immediate spring of this love, if it be such as hath issued from effectual calling. 4. By the original root of it, if it be a love that results from the everlasting love of God to you, and his purpose of grace concerning you. I would therefore endeavour to help you a little into this search, wherein you and I both need to be sure what we are saying and doing; for, there is much false pretended love to God in the world.

[.] Then examine your love by the object of it, if it be GOD, and him indeed that you love. See that it be not a God of your own imagination, and not the true God. But here, perhaps, it may be enquired, How shall I know if it is God himself that is the object of my love? For answering this, I would ask you two questions.

1. What conviction have you ever got of your natural Atheism, and of your being without God, or Atheists, as all by nature are? Ephesians 2:12. If you never thought yourself an Atheist, nor saw that you were without God, it seems that you are without God to this day, and without love to him; for, since all by nature are without God, and have lost God, how can they love him till they have found him out whom they have lost? And surely they never found him who never saw that they lost him. The true God is the God whom we have lost; whose knowledge we have lost, whose image we have lost, whose favour we have lost; and therefore, if the God whom you pretend to love be a God you think you never lost, and so never saw yourself to be without him, it is not the true God that you love; you are but an Atheist still, having never seen yourself to be so, and to be without God.

2. What knowledge and apprehension have you got of GOD; for, love to God supposes knowledge of him; *Ignoti nulla cupido*. There may be, indeed, a great deal of knowledge without love; but there can be no love without knowledge. Now, has God shewed you his being and glorious excellencies, as infinitely above all creatures; and all the creatures to be insignificant nothings, compared with his all-sufficiency? And has he manifested himself to you, in Christ, in whom alone he is always well pleased; in whom alone he is reconciled; in whom alone his fulness dwells; and in whom alone his excellencies shine most brightly and savingly. No sinner can love God who hath not seen him in Christ; "He that hath seen me, says Christ, hath seen the Father." He that hath not seen Christ hath not seen God; and so hath not seen the true object of love. For a sinner to pretend that he loves God, and yet hath not got a view of him in Christ, is the grossest ignorance imaginable; because, out of Christ, he is a consuming fire to sinners, a sin-revenging God. If you know the God whom you think you love, you would love him no otherwise, out of Christ, than as you do the fire that would consume you to ashes. But God in Christ is a God of love; for, in him his law is magnified, his justice satisfied, his wrath appeased; and therefore, if you truly love God, or love the true God, your mind has been enlightened to apprehend him in his glory in Christ. Has then the God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined in your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ? 2 Corinthians 4:6. Have you discerned him in the light of the gospel, wherein Christ is held forth? Have you discerned him in the light of the Spirit, accompanying the word powerfully? For, it is a light of God's commanding and creating. Have you discerned him in a light that shined into your heart, and not into your head only? Have you discerned him in a light that gave you the knowledge of his glory; the glory of his wisdom and power, the glory of his holiness, and justice, and truth, as well as, at the same time, the glory of his mercy, love, and pity; the glory of all his excellencies? And have you discerned this glory in the face of Christ, or in the person of Christ, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person? Hebrews 1:3. Have you discerned this glory of God shining in him as a JESUS, and as a CHRIST; that is, as he is a Saviour, and anointed of God to be so; sent and sealed of God to save by his blood and righteousness, meritoriously; and by his Spirit and grace, efficaciously? In this wonderful work of redemption and salvation through Christ, have you seen such marvellous devices, as become the infinite wisdom of God, and answer all the ends of the glory of God's perfections, as well as of the salvation of the sinner? In this case, your love is a true love, terminating on the right object; if, at the same time, your view of God this way has been attended with so much application of faith, and persuasion of the love of God to you in particular, as at least to create in you kindly thoughts of God. Though you see him infinitely just and holy, and yourself a sinful guilty creature; yet apprehending the atonement and propitiation in the blood of

Jesus, all harsh thoughts of God, as an enemy, have been removed, and kindly thoughts of him, as a friend, declaring his good-will, through Christ, in the word of grace. The persuasion of faith is here included, whether you have seen it or not.

[2.] Examine your love to God, by the nature and qualities of the act, if it be true love to this God. How shall I know this? Why, enquire how your love acts upon this glorious object. It is the nature of love, to make one desire fellowship with the object beloved: so, if you have true love to God, you will have a desire of more intimate union and communion with him. What then is thy great desire and request? Is it as Psalms 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his temple?" It is the nature of love to make one impatient at the absence of the beloved object: so, if you have true love to God in Christ, his absence will be grievous to thee; and all other comforts will signify nothing to thee without him. "O that I knew where I might find him?" O how long, how long! It is the nature of love to delight in the presence of the object beloved; even so, if you truly love God, his presence will be thy delight: welcome, O beloved! well's me! that now I have got thee in my arms; "I will not let thee go. I held him, says the spouse, and would not let him go, till I had brought him into my mother's house, to the chambers of her that conceived me. O! stir him not up. I charge you, by the roes and hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my love till he please." It is the nature of love to bear affection to everything that is like unto the beloved object; even so, if you love God, you will love all that bear his image; you will be a companion of them that fear his name: and delight in the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. How can they love God, that care not for those that bear his image? It is of the nature of love to hate whatsoever is disagreeable to the beloved object; so, where there is true love to God, there will be true hatred of sin; the love of God, and the love of sin are contradictory things. A believer may be overcome by sin; but he has no love to the overcomer: and this appears, because his sin costs him many a prayer, and tear, and cry, and sigh, and watching, and application to the throne of grace, and to the blood of Christ for cleansing and healing. The love of God destroys the love of sin, and the love of the world. It is the nature of love to think much of the beloved object; so, where love to God takes place, it carries the thoughts towards him, and the mediation of him is sweet. Love may be known by our thoughts and meditations; many think they love God, and yet God is not in all their thoughts. They think of nothing but the world, and the things thereof; they cannot dwell upon this glorious object, nor are their wandering thoughts any grief to them. It is the nature of love to speak much of the beloved object; we may know by the speech of some, that they have no love to God, never a word of God, from morning to evening in their mouths, unless it be to profane his name. True love will make you speak of him in conversation, and speak to him in prayer, and speak for him, in defence of his truth and cause. In a word, it is the nature of love, to make a man serve where he loves. O! What service has God from you? Does the love of Christ constrain you to judge, "That if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died, that henceforth they that live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died and rose again?"

[3.] Examine your love by the immediate spring of it: or the means whereby it is wrought in the soul, namely, Effectual calling. None are lovers of God, till they be effectually called. Here it may be inquired How shall I know if my love to God be such as is the fruit of effectual calling? To this it may be replied, If your love be the fruit of effectual calling, then you will be convinced that it never grew in your heart naturally; and that it is not the fruit of your natural power, or free will; and that,

by nature, you are haters of God, Romans 1:30, Romans 8:7. If you never saw your enmity against God, and never suspected your love to him, nor never had any love to him, but what you had naturally all your days, I must tell you, your love to him is nothing but enmity against him; for true love grows in the garden of grace, and not of nature. Again, if your fruit be the fruit of effectual calling, then your affections have been drawn to Christ sweetly and irresistibly, as with a cord of love; for this drawing power is put forth in effectual calling; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee, Jeremiah 31:3. We love him, because he first loved us," 1 John 4:16. Again, if your love be the fruit of effectual calling, then the gospel of free grace will be very precious to you; for, that is the outward means of effectual calling; and that which is the means of the new spiritual birth, 1 Peter 1:23, is still the means also of spiritual growth: and therefore, they that are effectually called and regenerate, have still an earnest desire after, and delight in it; "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word; that they may grow thereby," 1 Peter 2:2. If your love to God be not attended with a love to the doctrine of the gospel, it is but a spurious brood, and not of the right kind. Further, if your love to God be the fruit of effectual calling, then the Spirit of God will be very precious to you: because, it is by the power and efficacy of the Spirit that the call is made effectual; for then the gospel comes not in word only, hut in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thessalonians 1:5. You will desire more and more of that free Spirit, for carrying on the work of faith with power, and for exciting any grace that ever wrought; your prayer will be, "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, and the spices shall send forth the smell thereof." You will always find the Spirit when he comes by his gracious motions, running only in the channel of gospel doctrine, that tends to lead men out to Christ and his righteousness; and not in the channel of legal doctrine, that has a tendency to lead men in to themselves, and their own works; for, thus the Spirit came to you at first in effectual calling: "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Galatians 3:2. Surely your love is not the fruit of effectual calling, if the Spirit, that calls effectually, be not precious to you: if you can hear sermons from day to day, and never care whether the Spirit powerfully accompany them or not, your love is to be suspected; but, if he hath begun the good work in you, then you will find a need of the same power to carry on the work that began it; and your cry will be, "O for more of the Spirit! Oh! dead preaching and hearing, without the Spirit! O to see the power and glory of God, as I have seen it in the sanctuary!"

[4.] Examine your love by the original root of it, the everlasting love of God and his purpose of grace; for; it is a love that issues from a being called according to his purpose. Here an exercised person may say, "How shall I know, if my love to God be the fruit of God's everlasting love and purpose, in Christ, from all eternity concerning me? Is it possible to know, that my love to him in time is such as will evidence his love to me from eternity? O how shall I understand that?" Why, this may not only be known by the marks already delivered, but further, in these four particulars.

1. If your love to God be such as flows from, and evidences his everlasting love to you, and purpose of grace concerning you, then this loving purpose towards you, has produced in you a loving purpose towards him. What for a purpose is it? It is a purpose of marriage with the Son of God. His purpose of marriage with you from eternity hath produced in you a purpose of marriage with him in time. Can you tell me, if ever such a purpose was wrought in your heart? It is true, there are purposes that come to no effect; but this is an effectual purpose, that hath taken effect; insomuch that you could find no rest till the match was made up, as Naomi said of Boaz, when

purposing to match with Ruth, Ruth 3:18, "The man will not rest till he hath finished the thing;" even so, Christ Jesus, when betrothing a sinner to himself, as he will not rest till he hath finished this thing, so he works in the soul that purpose also, that he cannot rest till that thing be finished. Now, can you say thee was a time when the Lord wrought such a purpose of marriage with him in your heart, that you could not rest till it was some way finished, by a joining hands with the Son of God? Insomuch that when he offered his heart and hand to you, you were made to offer your heart and hand to him, saying, "Lord, take thou me to thyself; take thou me for such is the deceitfulness of my heart, that I know not if I dare say, Even so, I take thee: that is, indeed, what I would be at: but seeing it is thou, even thou only that canst make it sure work, and a sure bargain; therefore I put the making of the marriage in thy own hand. O take me to be thine for ever: I offer myself, with a thousand good-wills; O take me, take me: take me and my blessings to eternity. I put my heart into thy hand, and leave it with thee." Tell me, man, woman, were you brought to such a purpose as this? O poor soul, it is a fruit of his purpose from eternity of marrying you: it is a fruit of your being given to Christ in the council of peace: for Christ says, John 6:37, "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me." Again, if his loving purpose towards you, has produced a loving purpose in you towards him, then it is not only a purpose of marriage with him, but also a purpose of cleaving unto him; a purpose never to leave him; a purpose to abide with him as his purpose is to abide with them for ever, John 14:19; so it produces a purpose in them to abide with him for ever; saying with Ruth, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for where thou goest I will go; where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God," Ruth 1:16. It is a purpose to bed and board with him, if I may be allowed the expression; to live and die with him; and to live upon him, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Again, another part of the loving purpose in them that his purpose doth produce, is a purpose, through grace, to glorify him: they purpose to glorify him in time, and to glorify him through eternity. However little they reach of their purpose while here below, yet this is a particular disposition wrought in all that love God, by virtue of their being called according to his purpose, that they have a great inclination, a strong purpose to glorify him with their hearts, their lips, and lives. They are a chosen generation, a particular people, that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness, to his marvellous light, 1 Peter 2:9. These are they who love him, and whose love to him flows from, and evidences, his everlasting love and gospel of grace to them.

2. If your love to God be such as is a fruit of his everlasting purpose towards you, then it will produce in you an everlasting purpose towards him: thus to cleave to him, and serve him and glorify him. There are some fleeting purposes which many have, which last but for a moment; but the believer's purpose, to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever, is an everlasting purpose; it is a firm, permanent, fixed, habitual constant purpose. Whatever winds may drive him from the thing he purposes: yet, no wind can drive him from his purpose, when once it is wrought of God in his heart. Temptation may drive him from seeking and serving his God sometime: but yet the temptation cannot drive him from his purpose of seeking and serving the Lord. He may be drawn to sin; but he can never be drawn to a purpose of sinning, or a purpose of living in sin; nay, if some strong corruptions prevail against him, and lead him captive, yet he can confidently appeal to heaven it was never his stated purpose; and it was against his purpose, and against his prayers, and against his tears, and against his hope, that such and such an iniquity prevailed against him. It is with him as it is with a mariner that sets out for such a distant haven, with a full purpose to sail straight to it;

but, against his purpose he is carried to this port and that port, which he never designed; and, perhaps, with cross-winds, carried hither and thither; yet still his purpose remains: and he never rests till he come to the place he designed.

3. If your love to God be the fruit of his eternal purpose and decree, then your heart will be reconciled to these eternal counsels of God, concerning the choosing of some and passing by others. The doctrine of predestination, which the apostle here speaks of in the context, will not be a terrible and harsh doctrine to you: you are brought to such a view of the absolute sovereignty of God, that you dare not quarrel with his decrees; nay, your heart will justify God and acquiesce in his wise and sovereign disposals, saying, "O! Is it not fit and right that the potter make of the clay what he pleases? and that God have mercy on whom he will have mercy?" &c. "Is there then unrighteousness with God? God forbid," Romans 9:14-15, Romans 9:19-20. Hence, by the bye, we cannot think that any Arminian can have a love to God: for, in principle, he pulls God down, in effect, from the throne of his absolute sovereignty and dominion.

4. If your love to God be the fruit of his everlasting love and purpose of grace towards you, then your love to him will be accompanied with the admiration and adoration of free and sovereign grace; you will not only stoop to sovereignty, without quarrelling his decrees, but you will admire and adore the freedom of his distinguishing love, and ascribe all the glory and praise of every part of your salvation to this free and sovereign mercy of God. You will desire to say with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33, and to acknowledge with the same apostle, "He hath found us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," 2 Timothy 1:6. You will desire to admire the beauty and glory of all the links of the golden chain here: "Whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

2dly, Try whether all things shall work for your good, by the begun experience of the thing itself, whether you have found already the footsteps of this truth in your hearts, God's making all things work together for good. Try if he hath begun to make some things work already for your good; for, if he has begun to make some or many things already work for good to you, hence you may conclude, he will go on to make all things work together for good to you. I shall reduce this to four heads.

1. Have ever any of you been brought under sickness and distress of body? Rub up your experience a little, and reflect upon it, whether or not has this done you good? Did it humble you to the dust that you were dwelling in the house of dust? And did it bring your sin and guilt before you, and make you fly for refuge to a Saviour? Did it bear in the apprehensions of mortality upon thy heart, and excite thee to seek after a happy immortality? Was it a praying time, a wrestling time, a mourning time, and a turning time? Some are the worse of affliction; but, are you the better? Can you say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted?"

2. Hath ever any here sustained some great temporal losses, so as you are brought low, in outward respects? Well, consider if ever it wrought for any good to you; was you made to search the cause, and see your sin lying at the door? And what particular sins provoked the Lord? And

dost thou now see that these things are not the best things, and that vanity is written upon them, and upon all things under the sun? And, by this, thy heart hath been more set a pursuing after the one thing necessary. Do you see your loss made up in God, and in communion with him? and, thereupon, art satisfied in the last God you have got? For, the first gods you set your heart upon, were vain and perishing objects of love; but now you are where you should be, and where you would be; only you would still have more and more nearness to this true and everlasting, ever-living God? Or, have you learned to live a little more upon the providence of God, and upon the promises of God in the use of lawful means? Are you brought to prize a little from God, and receive it with thankfulness? whereas before, you could turn your nose up at a feast: "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Or, are you brought unto this disposition, to see more evil in thy heart, than thou wouldst believe was in it? That it is a murmuring, covetous, and impatient heart, as well as a hard, wicked, and wandering heart? And art thou humbled before God for the pride of thy heart? This is some good.

3. Has God left you to yourself to commit such and such sins, whereby God is provoked, and your peace is disturbed? Now, what good have you got of this dispensation? Hath it cost you many tears in secret? Many a long look to the fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness? Or, has the Lord thereby given you a sight of your nature? "I was conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity." Has it bred in you a holy watchfulness against every sin? Or, hath it occasioned your admiring the free, absolutely free grace of God in Christ, and the long-suffering patience of God? Hath it made you pity others under the same temptation? and to lay out thyself more for honouring God than ever you did? Surely then it has wrought for good to thee.

4. Have you been brought under the hidings of God's face? And hath this been for good to you? Is sin embittered, because it is the cause of it? Hath it endeared the presence of God more to you? Hath it awakened you to more frequency and fervency in holy duties? Hath it made you more useful and helpful to poor tempted and deserted ones than before, when they are saying, Alas! there was never any like me! I am a reprobate! It is in vain for me to wait on the means of grace? Well, you may tell such, If it be so with you, it was so with me: and this may give some relief. See what experience you have of God's beginning to make all things work together for your good. Hath he begun to do so? Well, "He is a rock, and his work is perfect." He will make all things work for good.

We shall now shut up the subject with an use of exhortation, both to saints and sinners. There are a few duties I would exhort believers unto.

1. Admire the wonderful goodness of this God, who makes all things work together for good to you. Well may you say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee. Who is a God like to thee? How great is his goodness?"

2. I would charge every soul here, not to make use of this truth to indulge the commission of one sin, or to go on in the way of sin: "What! shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. Shall we do evil that good may come of it?" Romans 6:1. What God can do, in his infinite power and wisdom, is one thing: and what we, in faith, may expect, is another. Is any soul here engaged in love to any particular lust? Then, if ever you expect good at the hand of God, O bid adieu to your lusts, saying, "What have I to do any more with idols?" For, as all things work together for good to them that love God: so all things work together for hurt to them that love sin;

and, therefore, away with sin.

3. Entertain good thoughts of God in all the ways of his providence, and whenever the dark side casts up, look over to the bright side of it by faith, and you will see all his ways of mercy and; truth to them who fear his name. Beware of harsh thoughts of God Be restless till you have the persuasion of two things, viz., that God loves you, and that you love God. If you could live in the view of this always, believers, then you would always have this persuasion too, that all things shall work together for your good.

4. Whatsoever providence may expose you to, yet resolve to live by faith, and to live in love: and then whatever come to pass, you may be satisfied all is well still, and all will be well still. By a life of faith you will feel all things working together for good.

5. Beware of practically contradicting the design of providence in working for your good, or of having any hand in making them work for your hurt, so as to be the worse of them, which people may do many ways: as when, in affliction, they betake themselves: unto unlawful means of relief; when they use unlawful means without dependence upon God; when they reckon God's former favours to be snares and entanglements; when they refuse the comforts of the word under their affliction, Exodus 6:9; and when they weary of their life, with Rachel.

6. Beware of censuring and challenging providence, when yet it is working for your good. Men are guilty of censuring the providence of God, not only through atheism, in denying providence but also through unbelief, in questioning the love of God; through sensuality, in misconstruing all providences, which do not gratify their lusts and carnal desires.. Sometimes through hastiness, in passing sentence upon providence, before these signal periods of it come, that would manifest its meaning. Sometimes from ignorance and want of consideration, not knowing that God may send lesser crosses to prevent a greater, Jeremiah 24:5.

7. Put a remark upon all the good that you get by the providence of God. Remember how often the cross hath borne down your pride, restrained your predominant, sent you to your prayers, and to a God in Christ, the hearer of prayer. It is necessary to make this remark upon the good of providence, because, when it is made, and well improved, the crosses that you are ready to make arguments of your unbelief, would rather prove confirmations for your faith.

8. Join issue with providence, in endeavouring to get all the good you can out of every dispensation, and particularly out of affliction: and that by prayer, Job 27:10, James 5:13; and by being suitably exercised by them, not despising the chastening of the Lord, nor fainting when he rebukes, Hebrews 12:13; nor despairing of a happy issue; but expecting, according to the promise, that all things shall work together for good. On the other hand, I would speak a word to the wicked and ungodly, who are enemies to, and haters of God. To you I would offer, 1st, A word of terror and conviction: but I have prevented myself in the third inference as to this, and so I shall conclude,

2dly, With a word of counsel. And the advice I offer is that which you have, Job 22:21. If you would have all things working for your good, then acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee. Be restless till you get saving acquaintance with God in Christ, as he is revealed in the gospel, whereby you are called outwardly to acquaintance, and to peace and reconciliation with him; and wherein God prays you to be reconciled to him, 2 Corinthians

5:19-20. In this gospel-dispensation he is calling and inviting you to come to him: and though the call will not be effectual without the efficacy of his grace; yet how doth he make the call effectual, but by charming the heart with the out-ward call: therefore hearken to the voice of the charmer in the outward call; wait for the Spirit to come, and draw out your heart towards him, in faith and love. Put not the gospel-call from you, under any temptation drawn from the secret purpose of God; for, though all whom he calls effectually, are called according to his purpose; yet that purpose is not the rule of their faith, nor the first object of the faith of any man. As you cannot know a man's thoughts, but by his words: so, you cannot know God's purpose, but by his promise. Do not first pore upon God's thoughts and designs, for that is not the first object of your faith; but first hear and give ear to his word: and if you believe his word, with application to yourself, then you may be sure of his purpose and thoughts toward you, that they are thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. It is the faith of his promise you are called to, and not the faith of his purpose; but, whenever you have the faith of his promise, then you may have the faith of his purpose: whenever you believe in Christ, as given to you in the word, then you may believe that you are given to him in the decree of God. You are to make first pour calling, and then your election sure; for, whenever you hear his call, and believe in him, according to his word, then you may conclude that you are called according to his purpose.

QUESTION. What is he saying to me, in the outward call of the word that may engage me to hear him?

ANSWER. He is saying, man, woman, will you enlist with me as a Captain, to fight all your battles for you? Will you match with me as your Husband, to protect and provide for you? Poor sinner will you have me to be your portion? O diseased sinner, will you have me to be your Physician? O ignorant sinner, will you have me to be your Prophet to teach you? O guilty sinner, will you have me to be your Priest, to pardon you? O enslaved sinner, will you have me to be your King, to subdue your iniquity, to conquer your enemies, to break your rebellion and enmity? Poor bankrupt, will you have a Surety, to pay all your debt? Poor oppressed sinner, will you have a helper, to bear all your burdens? Will you have one that can supply all your wants, and heal all your wounds? Will you have one that can portion you for eternity? Poor mortal worm, that art to crumble into dust in a little, will you have one that can jointure you for eternity, and make you happy in death, and happy in judgment, and happy through eternity? Will you have eternal life? "He that hath the Son hath life:" and his complaint is, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." He himself is the true God, and eternal life. What say you? either are you content or not. If you be not content, and will not have salvation that is come so near to you, then, "How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?" Is not your ruin of yourself, when you will not have salvation from the guilt of sin, and from the power of sin? Must not your hell be the hottest? "Wo to thee Chorazin and Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you: and thou Capernaum, that art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell." Turks and Pagans, that never heard the gospel, will be, may I say, set upon the surface of hell, while you must be thrust down to the centre of damnation. Christ says, "I would have gathered you, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." But, are you satisfied? You are called outwardly by the word; but are you made content to have Christ for yours in all respects, as a Prophet, Priest, and King, to save you from sin, as well as to save you from hell. Can you say it before God, men, and angels, that your heart is made content? Then you are not only called outwardly, according to his word; but

inwardly, and effectually called, according to his purpose. The decree is open; and the everlasting love of God, that runs under ground from all eternity, is broken up above ground in drawing you with loving-kindness, and making your heart content with Christ, and close with him in all his offices. And now, has his love manifested to you in the gospel, drawn out your heart's love towards him? Then you may apply all the comforts that the text bears; "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose."

S. Unbelievers' Joy in the Word?

Unbelievers' Joy in the Word? by Ralph Erskine An Important Question concerning the Joy which Hypocrites may have in the Word.

"May not hypocrites and unbelievers have joy and delight in the word, like these, Isaiah 58:2. and like Herod, that heard the word gladly; and the stony ground hearers, that received the word with joy?"

Answer: Such is the difference between spiritual and carnal joy, that whereas the godly sorrow of the believer is the matter of his joy; insomuch, that he is more glad when his heart will melt for sin, than he would be, though he had all the carnal pleasures in the world. On the other hand, the carnal joy of the wicked is matter of sorrow; yea, in the midst of his laughter his heart is in heaviness.—Again, even the greatest sorrows of the godly are medicinal, therapeutic, and preparative to a later joy; whereas the greatest joys of the wicked are hurtful, pernicious, and preparative to a later sorrow: but godly sorrow works out the poison of sin that would mar their joy. But more particularly, the difference between the godly and the wicked in their delight, may be viewed in four things, that is to say: the matter, the manner, the measure, and the end of their joy and delight.

1. As for the matter and ground of the godly man's delight, it is God himself; Christ himself, the gospel itself: whereas the matter of the hypocrite's delight is rather his own knowledge of these things; and so his knowledge puffs up.
2. They differ as to the manner of their delight: that of the godly is solid and constant, and proceeding from the special grace of the Spirit; but the delight of the wicked man and hypocrite is unsound, unsolid, and unconstant; proceeding from the common grace of the Spirit, and not from the new nature, but some impression on the old nature; and so his delight is not natural; neither is it the man's element, as we have illustrated above.
3. They differ in the measure of their joy. The delight the believer has in the Lord, and in the word and law of the Lord, is his chief delight; it is his exceeding joy, Psalms 43:4: but the natural man has something that he delights more in; he takes more pleasure in worldly riches and honours; but the godly has more delight in the word than in all manner of worldly enjoyments; "O how I love your law! It is sweeter to me than honey: therefore I love your commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold," Psalms 119:97, Psalms 19:10, Psalms 119:27. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? O Lord, lift you up the light of your countenance upon us. Then has you put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased," Psalms 4:6-7.
4. They differ in their end and effect. The delight of the godly leads them to desire conformity to the law, inward and outward, while the wicked content themselves at most, with an outward reformation. The difference between them is like that of the two painters, or skilful draughtsmen, who, both together, beholding one and the same picture, very artfully drawn: the one beheld it with admiration; and contented himself with seeing it, and commending it; but endeavoured not himself

to make another like it: the other beheld it with a desire of imitation; and so praised it, as to set his skill a-work to make one like it. So it is with the regenerate and the unregenerate man; the regenerate man likes and delights in the word of God, so as he desires and endeavours a conformity to it: but the unregenerate man rests in the contemplation of the word; and remains at rest, though he attains no conformity to it.

S. What It Means to be "Dead to the Law"

What It Means to be

"Dead to the Law"

by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) The following essay from "The Beaties of Erskine," appears as it was originally printed with the exception of the title. The original title of this chapter heading is as it appears below. The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for Reformation Ink. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed.

What sort of Death, this Death to the Law is:

1. It is an universal death: I do not mean that it is common to all the children of men, though it be a common death, to the children of God, and to every one of, them; yea it is a rare death to the children of men. The world lies in wickedness, and are dead in trespasses and sins. Few are dead in this sense: but what I mean by its being universal, is, that the man that is dead to the law in point of justification; he is dead to every part of the law in its old covenant form, to the precept of it, to the penalty of it, so as he is not to be justified by the one nor condemned by the other. His gospel obedience thereto is no part of his righteousness for justification before God; if he should obedience to the law as a rule of life in the hand of a Mediator, any part of his righteousness for justification, he so far turns the covenant of grace, and the duties therein required, into a covenant of works, and he seeks to live unto that, to which he is and should be dead. It is true the law as a rule of life does not require obedience for justification; but Yet this corrupt nature is prone to turn to the old bias, and to turn the rule of obedience into a rule of acceptance. If a man make faith itself an act, or any act or fruit of it, the matter of his justification he turns it to a covenant of works: the believer is dead to faith itself in this respect; yea, he renounces itself, and all things else, but the righteousness of Christ for justification. In this sense he is dead to repentance, love, and other graces; he is dead to all obedience to the law as a covenant of works; to his natural legal obedience before his conversion, and to his spiritual gospel obedience after his conversion; which though it be a righteousness which God works, yet because it is the believer that is the subject, and made the actor thereof, it is called his own righteousness, or conformity to the law; all which he renounces in. the matter of justification, desiring to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness that is after the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

2. It is a lingering death. It is not easy to get the law killed; something of a legal disposition remains even in the believer while he is in this world. Many a stroke does self and self- righteousness get, but still it revives again. If he were wholly dead to -the law, he would be wholly dead to sin; but so far as the law lives, so far sin lives. They that think they know the gospel well enough, bewray their ignorance; no man can be too evangelical; it will take all his lifetime to get a legal temper destroyed. Though the believer be delivered from the law, in its commanding an condemning power and authority, or in its rightful power over all that are under it; yet he is not de. livered wholly from its usurped power, which takes place many times upon him, while here, through remaining

unbelief.

3. It is a painful death; it is like the cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye. The man hath no inclination to part with the law. It is as natural for him to expect God's favour upon his doing so and so, and to expect life and salvation by his own obedience or doing as well as he can as it is natural for him to draw his breath. If we do our best God will accept us, is the natural language of every one who is wedded to the Do and Live of the first covenant. And, O what a pain is it to be brought off from that way? To die to the law is most unnatural, strange doctrine; and legal pangs, and pains of conviction, and humiliation must be borne, before a right thought. of dying to the law can be brought forth.

4. It is an honourable death: to be dead to the law is a death that brings honour to God, to Christ, to the Law, and to the believer. It brings honour to God's holiness, which is now satisfied by Christ's dying and honour to God's justice which is now satisfied by Christ's dying. It brings honour to Christ, for now the man values the righteousness of Christ, as being indeed the righteousness of God, and a full, sufficient perfect righteousness. It brings honour to the law, when instead of our imperfect obedience, we bring an obedience better than men' or angels in their best estate could give it, even the Lawgiver's obedience; which indeed doth magnify the law and make it honourable. It also brings honour to the believer himself: he is honoured and beautified with a law-biding righteousness truly meritorious and every way glorious: this is the honour of all the saints.

5. It is a profitable death; it is profitable both for happiness and holiness; profitable both for justification and sanctification. Our legal righteousness is unprofitable; "I will declare thy righteousness and thy works, for they shall not profit thee." Isaiah 57:12. It is unprofitable for justification; for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified it is unprofitable for sanctification; for his filthy rags do rather pollute than sanctify him. But the righteousness which is of God by faith, is profitable every way: they are happy that have it; for they are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses; they are holy that have it. Being dead to the law, is the way to live unto God.

Thus doth the Husband by his Father's will, Both for and in his bride the law fulfil: For her, as 'tis a covenant; and then In her, as 'tis a rule of life to men.

First all law-debt he most completely pays;

Then of law-duties all the charge defrays, Does first assume her guilt, and loose her chains; And then with living water wash her stains: Her fund restore, and then her form repair, And make his filthy bride a beauty fair; His perfect righteousness most freely grant, And then his holy image deep implant. This article was made available on the internet via REFORMATION INK (www.markers.com/ink). Refer any correspondence to Shane Rosenthal: Rosenthal2000@aol.com ÿÿÿ

S. What Sinners Should Plead with God

What Sinners Should Plead with God by Ralph Erskine

1. Plead his promise, Ezekiel 36:26-27. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." It is a free, gracious promise: cry to him to make good that word to you, seeing he has said, "Once again I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel and do this for them." Ezekiel 36:37. Tell him, that now you are come to inquire, and request him to do it.

2. Plead your own feebleness and inability to help yourselves; this was the impotent man's plea at the pool of Bethesda, John 5:6-7 "When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?' 'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.'" So say you, Lord, I have lain many years with this dead plagued heart, beside the open fountain of your blood; I am unable to move to it of myself; I have none to put me in: ordinances cannot do it; ministers cannot do it; you must put to your helping hand, or else the work will remain unperformed.

3. Plead his power, in a sense of your own weakness. Do you feel the power and multitude of your corruptions within you? Say with Jehoshaphat, "Lord I have no might against this great company; neither know I what to do: but mine eyes are upon you." With you all things are possible. Though I may despair of help in myself and others; yet, you have forbid me to despair of help in you. You said, Let there be light, and there was light; therefore say, let there be faith, and it will immediately take place; for faith is your work and your gift: it is "the work of God that we believe: by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God."

4. Plead your necessity, your extreme need of Christ and of faith in him. O man, there is not a starving man that needs food so much as you need Christ: there is not a wounded man that needs a physician; a shipwrecked man that needs a plank; a dying man, with the death rattle in his throat, that needs breath so much, as you need Christ. O then, cry, "Give me Christ, or else I die." I may live without friends, without wealth, and honour, and pleasure; but I cannot live without Christ, and without faith. Plead his power; how easy it is for him to help, saying, as Psalms 80:1 "you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth!" It will cost you no more pain to work faith in me, than it does the sun to shine forth. Yea, he can more easily put forth his power and grace, than the sun can dart out its beams. It is no trouble nor loss to the sun to shine forth, so neither will it be to him, to show his power and mercy: a look, or a touch, will do it; since he can so easily do it. You may cry with hope; he will never miss an alms bestowed on a beggar, out of the ocean of his bounty. Nay, as the sun, the more it shines displays its glory the more; so will he gain glory by putting forth his power to help you.

5. Plead his mercy, and the freedom and extension of it. Plead the freedom of his mercy, that needs no motive, and expects no worth: it runs freely, so that the mountains cannot stop the current of it, no more than the rocks can stop the ebbing and flowing of the sea. Plead the extension of his mercy to others: he had compassion on men's bodies, that came to him for healing, and will he not have compassion upon souls, that come to him for life? Is not mercy the work that he delights in? The perfection of his nature, he takes pleasure to display.

6. Plead Christ's commission, Isaiah 61:1, that he came "to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." Cry, Lord, here is a poor prisoner, a locked and bound up heart; here is employment for you. O loose and knock off my fetters, and bring my soul out of prison. O here is a naked sinner for you to cover, a wounded soul for you to cure, a lost sheep for you to seek and save; and was not this your errand? You came to seek and save that which was lost. And will you not find a lost sinner, that desires to seek you through your grace? Plead his commission under the broad seal of heaven; for, "Him has God the Father sealed." And plead the value of his blood, and merit of his righteousness: and upon that ground whereby all grace is purchased: plead for faith and grace to receive Jesus Christ the Lord.

Thus I have laid before you some directions, in order to the receiving of Christ. O cry for grace to follow them, and put them in practice, so you may indeed close the bargain with him. O shall all these directions be lost, and Christ be still slighted and rejected! O friends, you cannot please God better, than by coming to Christ and embracing the offer of him; and you cannot please the devil better than by refusing the offer of Christ; and putting him off with delays, till you perish in your unbelief. And now, after all that has been said, what are you resolved upon? Will you receive Christ or not? Our glorious Lord and Master has sent us to pose you man, woman, and demand whether you will receive him or not? O! what answer shall we return with? Must we go and say, that all this people, upon no terms, will receive him; none of them are for precious Christ? Oh! God forbid! shall he not see the travail of his soul, who travailed through all the armies of God's wrath for you, and gave his soul an offering for your sin? O give your soul to him, saying, Lord, in spite of the devil and of unbelief, through grace I will open my heart and arms to receive Christ! The Lord himself help you to receive him, and walk in him.

S. What is that Good that All Things shall Work For?

What is that Good that All Things shall Work For? (Romans 8:28) by Ralph Erskine In order that they who love God may know what they are to look for, we shall take both a negative and positive view of the matter.

1st, Let us view it negatively. They are not to expect that all things that befall them, shall work for their temporal good and prosperity in the world. Sometimes, indeed, this good takes place, as Joseph said to his brethren, Genesis 50:20, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." And as it was with the Israelites, Exodus 1:12, "The more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Of this good the text may be understood; but it is not always to be expected; because, external prosperity is not always good for the people of God. Neither are they to expect that all things should work to this good of absolute exemption from the inbeing of sin, while they are here. God sees it good and fit that they live by faith, in the daily improvement of Christ, for purging away their sin. Nor are they to expect that all things shall work for their absolute freedom from losses and crosses in the world; because it is not good for us to be without them, and they are part, of these things that work for their good. Nor are they to expect that every thing should work for the good that they have in view; but for the good that God hath in view, whose thoughts are infinitely higher than our thoughts. But then,

2dly, Let us consider the point positively. They may expect that all things shall work together for their spiritual good and eternal welfare. We would incline to branch this out in a few particulars.

1. All things shall work together for furthering their knowledge of, and acquaintance with God in Christ: and surely this is a notable good! "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ; whom thou hast sent," John 17:3. Now, all things shall contribute to make the saints know more and more of the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory, 1 Corinthians 2:7. And to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, Ephesians 3:9-10. That, with the apostle, Romans 11:33, they may stand at the side of this ocean, and cry out, "O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And that, by all things, they may come to know more of the power, holiness, justice, truth, goodness, and glory of God in Christ. We use to say, "Experience teaches fools." Surely there is not an experienced saint, but will find, that by all the good things and bad things he hath been trysted with, by all the various vicissitudes and changes of providence, he hath come to see more of God than he saw before.

2. All things shall work together for their participation of the image of God, in a greater degree; and surely this is good; and it is brought about by the promises of God, 2 Peter 1:4. By those we are said to be partakers of the divine nature: and also, by the providences of God, particularly trying

ones; "He chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness," Hebrews 12:10.

3. All things shall work for their further purification: they shall purge out some particular lust and corruption; "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin;" Isaiah 27:9. This is a desirable good, whatever be the dispensation that contributes to that end.

4. All things shall work together for furthering their communion and fellowship with him; whatever they have heard, or seen, or felt of the word of God, or of the rod of God, contributes to this good end—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus," 1 John 1:3. We can go to God boldly by the blood of Jesus; and communicate the very secret of our souls to him, and find him communicating the secrets of his covenant to us.

5. All things work together for their further humiliation; and this is good indeed; "He led thee through the great and terrible wilderness, wherein there were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; wherein there was no water;" there is a sum of the evil things that befell them; but it follows, "He brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; he fed you in the wilderness with manna, that your fathers knew not:" there is a sum of the good things that befell them; well, but what was the end and design of all these things? Why, it follows, "That he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good in thy latter end," Deuteronomy 8:15-16. It is good to be humbled and have low thoughts of ourselves; we are apt to say in prosperity, Our mountain stands strong, and we shall never be moved; we think, with Peter, that we are able to suffer with Christ, and to do great things for him: or with Zebdee's children, that we are able to reign with Christ: but we need to be humbled and proved, that we may know what we are.

6. All things work together for their further consolation; and this is a desirable good; God doth, with all that befalls them, convey some joys and comforts of his Spirit, whether he bring them to the mountain or to the wilderness: this good end shall be reached in the Lord's time. When he brings them to his holy mountain, then he makes them joyful in his house of prayer, Isaiah 56:7. When he brings them to the wilderness, then he speaks comfortably to them, Hosea 2:4. Yea, he even gives them the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and makes them sing there; and as their sufferings abound, makes their consolation abound, 2 Corinthians 1:4-5.

7. All things work together for their good, even for furthering their life of faith, that they may know more what it is to live by faith on the Son of God, Galatians 2:20. If sensible enjoyment were always allowed to believers here, in their present circumstances, they would be ready to surfeit on their provision; therefore, with their sweet meals, the Lord orders some sour sauce for helping their digestion, in order that they may live, not by sense, but by faith; in prosperity we talk of living by faith, and darken counsel many times with words without knowledge; but in adversity, we come to have the practical knowledge of what it is to live by faith. And indeed that is a happy and blessed dispensation that tends to the rooting of a soul further in a crucified Christ, and to a living upon a promise, when there is no visible prop in all the world to lean to; this is clearly believing.

8. All things work together for furthering their submission to the will of God, and holy contentment in every case, that they may learn with Paul, Php 4:11-12, in every state to be content; and know how to be abased, and how to abound; and to say, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." I can welcome reproach, as well as honour and esteem; a prison as well as a

palace, a hard stone for my bolster-piece, as well as a soft pillow; though I praise, as well as others, and bless the Lord for comfortable accommodations and favourable dispensations, when God allows them; yet, if he deny them, I am content: "Shall we receive good things at the hand of the Lord, and not receive evil?" O sirs, how good is it to get this disposition wrought?

9. All things work together for furthering their spirituality, for weaning their hearts from the world, and elevating their affections heavenwards, so as they may have less of the spirit of the world, and more of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in their hearts: 1 Peter 4:12 "Think not strange concerning the fiery trial, which shall try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Even the glorious Spirit of God, comforting and supporting you with the hope of the glory to be revealed. O! what a good thing is this to have the good Spirit of God, the glorious Spirit of God? Though a spirit of reproach be without you; yet the Spirit of glory and triumph within will make amends. And, O what a good work is it, when all things work for putting out a base, carnal, worldly spirit, and for bringing in more of a glorious and heavenly Spirit?

10. All things work together for furthering their preparation for heaven; nothing shall hinder, but rather further their course towards heaven. As all trying dispensations of providence work for their having more of the Spirit, of which our apostle speaks in the preceding context; so, they work for hastening their progress towards heaven, and can be no hinderance but a furtherance to it; as appears from the apostle's triumphant language in the following context, towards the close of the chapter, ver. 35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angel, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Man's frowns may occasion God's smiles; losses of worldly goods may make up your heavenly treasures; "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Corinthians 4:17. In a word, as there would be no end of speaking of all things that work together for good to them; so, there is no end of speaking of all the good which all things work in their behalf. The God that hath all things at his command sets all things a-working for them; and makes even the worst things contribute to the best advantage. Herod and Pilate, Jews and Gentiles, combined to crucify Christ, "The Lord of glory," Acts 2:23. Here is the worst thing that ever was done; but, behold the act of free grace and deep wisdom in God! that made this work to be the greatest good that ever was. We have a sample of all other things working for good to God's people, even the rage and fury of men and devils, contrary to their designs, working for their happiness; and death itself, contrary to its nature, working for their eternal life. <http://www.puritansermons.com/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net