

The Faith of the Gospel Vindicated:

THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THE BAPTIST MEETING, GREAT
YARMOUTH, OCTOBER 27, 1799.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

TO ALL THAT LOVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

BE assured I have your consolation very much at heart in the following publication, which contains Two Discourses, nearly as they were delivered from the pulpit. And though, in this attempt, I labour under many discouragements, it gives me unspeakable pleasure, to contemplate the kind reception it will meet with from you.

While the self-exalted pharisee is perusing this publication, with a proud contempt, and the self-conceited novice, destitute of all honest and manly criticism, is endeavouring to exaggerate its imperfections, by invidious and scurrilous invectives, you will be reading for the edification of your immortal souls. Many of you, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, and especially you who are my own dear children in the Lord, will, doubtless, receive this as a tribute of my unfeigned affection; for, you, above all others, always lay near to my heart: and it is my fervent prayer, to the God of all grace, that you may be kept by his Almighty power, through faith, unto salvation. That, though the iniquity of error abounds, and the love of many, to the truth, waxes cold, you may be included in the happy number of those, who shall endure to the end, and enter the joy of their Lord!

WILLIAM WALES HORNE.

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The Faith of the Gospel Vindicated:

PHILIPPIANS I. 17.

STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE
GOSPEL.

FAITH in Christ, is a subject so infinitely important, that we find it constituted one great part of Paul's ministry, who declared, that it had been his grand aim, and the principal business of his life, from the time of his conversion, to enforce its necessity, declare its excellency, and explain its sublime mystery. In Acts xx. 20, 21. "I kept back nothing, says he, that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." So far was this great apostle from making light of faith, or thinking it an insignificant matter, that in our text, he exhorts the church at Philippi; and it stands written as an exhortation to all Christians, and Christian churches, throughout the world, to the end of time, to *strive together for the faith of the Gospel.*

In which we have represented,

I. The children of God as *striving together*.

II. For what they strive: for the *faith of the Gospel*.

As Christians, *real* Christians, are become dead to the world, and feelingly alive to God; through the powerful influence of regenerating, and reviving grace, they will certainly be active in the cause of Christ, who has done so much for them; and cannot but strive for the faith of the Gospel, in defence of which, the saints of old, “valued not their lives unto death!” And, therefore, are consistently exhorted to *strive*.

STRIVING, saith our text. But how? We are exhorted, in some respects, not to strive; as in 2 Timothy ii. 14. *Charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers*. And again, in Philippians ii. 3. *Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory*. A striving for the gratification of their own *mind* and *will*, having nothing in view but the approbation, and praises of men, or worldly profit, and self-aggrandizement. Let us beware of this diabolic strife, which is always an impediment to the Gospel’s prosperity, and destructive to the peace and comfort of

a church, wherever it prevails. But striving, as mentioned in our text, is countenanced by the Eternal Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! We have the approbation of heaven, for this evangelic strife! May the Lord grant, then, that we may so strive, as abundantly to obtain, and keep in possession, the desirable object for which it is our honour, and happiness to strive! Christ himself exhorted his disciples, in the days of his humiliation, and *now* exhorts us, to strive to enter in at the strait gate. The disciples, doubtless, having heard of distinguishing grace, came and asked their Lord this question—Lord, *are there few that be saved?* What answer did he give? What improvement did he advise them to make of this doctrine? Did he say, like some in our day, “Seeing there are but few, comparatively, that shall be saved, and the salvation of those being certain, you need not trouble yourself about eternal things; if you are included in the number, you shall be saved, and therefore, you may live as you list, follow the dictates of your carnal mind, and indulge in all that licentiousness, in which your corrupt nature delights!” No, the holy Jesus informed them, in his answer, that this doctrine would have a different kind of influence over those who are taught of God. That, as all are not interested in the great salvation, but on the contrary, few, compared with the bulk of the world, those who are alive to a sense of their lost condition, will particularly and anxiously inquire, whether they are included; and attend the

Gospel with the greatest seriousness, and with fervent prayer, in order to make their calling sure, that they may also be assured of their *election in Christ, before the foundation of the world!* (Ephesians i. 4.) That having the evidence in themselves that they are born of God, they may adopt the triumphant language of inspiration, "*We love him, because he first loved us!*" Such was the reply of Christ: *strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* (Luke xiii. 24.) Why not able? Because they strive not lawfully; Paul says, (2 Timothy ii. 5.) *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully:* that is, consistently with the mind and will of God. The Jews of old sought to enter in, but were not able, because they strove, like our modern pharisees, to enter in by the works of the law. Romans ix. 32, 33. *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not obtained to the law of righteousness; Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling stone.* They stumbled at Jesus Christ, the way to God; at his atoning blood, and imputed righteousness; and at the free, electing, distinguishing grace of God, in Christ, which are to this day, and will be to the end of time, stumbling stones, and unexpressibly offensive, to the whole self-righteous tribe of free-agents, and merit-mongers!

The children of God are also striving against the deceitful lusts of their own hearts, the diabolical assaults of a tempting devil, and the flattering enticements of a vain world! All which are combined to oppose our progress in the divine life. These, Christian, you shall assuredly conquer; yes, you shall be more than conqueror; but remember, it shall be through him who loved you. (Romans viii. 37.) You strive, not in your own, but in the strength of Jesus, and shall do all things through him, who is the everlasting strength of his saints! And who will never fail them, nor forsake them!

But our text says, *striving together*. It is the gracious appointment of God, that his people should dwell together in Unity; for the accomplishment of which he gathers them, by the preaching of his Gospel, communicates his loving-kindness, makes known to them his everlasting covenant in Christ, and diffuses spiritual life into their souls; thus their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ! 1 John i. 3.

And, as children of the same family, loved with the same love, bought with the same invaluable price, the precious blood of Christ, members of the same mystical and glorious body, being all one in Christ Jesus; and beholding the reflection of his image in each other, they feel themselves

happily united together in mutual love. This is the society of men which the Psalmist so much admires. Psalm cxxxiii. 1. *Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* And, it is their comfortable privilege, and exalted happiness, to strive together, for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause, and glory, in the earth! Striving together in prayer! O what a precious privilege is prayer! What boundless, and unspeakable blessings have been poured down upon the church, in answer to prayer! Knowing the blessed effects of prayer, Paul exhorts the Romans, (xv. 30.) *To strive together with him, in their prayers to God.* May the Lord teach us, my brethren, to assemble together, and offer up united prayers, before the gracious throne, in behalf of the Redeemer's cause! And in his strength, earnestly, and successfully, to strive together for the faith of the Gospel! We are not to consider this a matter of indifference; and vainly suppose, with some carnal professors, that if a man is *sincere*, it is of no consequence what he believes; whether he embraces truth or error, he is safe, because, *sincere!* Evidently making his salvation dependent, not on Christ, but his *sincerity!* God forbid that we should, for a moment, countenance such a vain, and Christ-dishonouring sentiment. The falsehood, and blasphemy of which, appear too obvious to require argumentative refutation, when we seriously consider, how offensive *error* is in the sight of God, how derogatory to his glory,

and the merits of Christ! When we turn to the Sacred Pages, and read, under the Spirit's enlightening influence, the striking contrast between *Truth* and *Error*, our hearts burn with almost unbounded love to the former, while they madden with holy detestation to the latter! For in that precious volume, error is represented (as it really is) black as hell itself! While truth, in all her celestial charms, and amiable qualities, shines, through every page, bright as heaven!

The children of God strive for the faith of the Gospel, as distinguished from all other faith, (Ephesians iv. 5.) *One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.* And (Jude iii.) *It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints.* Knowing it to be a matter of the greatest importance, *strive, contend earnestly*, that ye may be sound in the ONE faith, ONCE delivered to the saints; having right views of God as a covenant God and Father; of Christ, as the only Mediator between God and Man, the way, the truth, and the life; the fountain fulness of grace; the source of everlasting love; and the able, willing, complete, and everlasting Saviour of the elect; and of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who convinces, converts, and sanctifies, all who are savingly brought to a knowledge of the precious Jesus!

Sincerity must not be substituted for the Faith

of the Gospel; for a *godly* sincerity springs from the influence of faith, over the regenerated soul.

Those who are renewed in the image of their minds, are led into the truth, agreeable to the promise. (John xvi. 13.) *When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth!*

And as new creatures in Christ Jesus are enlightened by the illumination of the Spirit; *for he who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge, of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Corinthians iv. 6.) They can behold, in the face of Jesus, the attributes of God, sweetly harmonizing in a sinner's salvation: that, in him, *mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* (Psalm lxxxv. 10.) That justice is satisfied, the law fulfilled and magnified, and *mercy built up for ever:* (Psalm lxxxix. 2.) not upon the ruins of justice, but upon the precious foundation of a crucified Christ; in whom, God is just, *yet the Justifier* of the ungodly!

But some of you may be ready to say, since there is such a diversity of opinions in the world, How are we to know the true faith of the Gospel? How is it to be distinguished from others? I answer, by the volume of Inspiration, the precious Scriptures of truth: there we have a glorious fund

of heavenly information ; *so that he who runs, may read.*

It may be farther objected, that the Bible is so full of self-contradiction, that after searching, it is impossible to know what we are to believe. What a presumptuous reflection is this upon its Divine author ! What a striking proof of the darkness and ignorance of man by nature ! So far is the Bible from self contradiction, that the prophecies and doctrines thereof, are admirable for their harmony and agreement ! Read Acts xv. 14, 15. *God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a PEOPLE for his name, and to this AGREE the words of the prophets.* Yes, the prophets and apostles are all agreed in this, that God hath visited the world, by Jesus Christ, to take out of it a people, who are the objects of his everlasting love, and in his due time, shall be the subjects of renewing, and sanctifying grace ; and thus being made meet, in Christ, shall, at the dissolution of their earthly tabernacle, have an happy and easy transition into a better state of existence, in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens !

Yes, my dear hearers ! there is, in the Scriptures, such a sweet agreement, and such a plentitude of information, that under the tuition of the eternal Spirit, *they are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.* (2 Timothy iii. 15.) And, from these Divine writings, we may fully know the precious faith of

the Gospel. To this agree the words of an inspired apostle. (2 Timothy iii. 10.) *Thou hast fully known my DOCTRINE, manner of life, purpose, FAITH, long-suffering, charity, patience.* And so concerned was he, for the spiritual prosperity of the church at *Thessalonica*, and knowing it depended entirely upon their establishment in the true Faith of the Gospel, he could not forbear writing to them upon the subject. He well knew, that, consistent with the Christian character, they must suffer tribulation; of which he had already given them verbal information, and had exhorted them to continue in the grace of God, (i. e. in the doctrines of grace.)

But he knew as well, the evil propensities of their nature, their liability to forget his exhortations, and that their natural cowardice would lead them to endeavour to shun the cross, by forsaking the faith of the Gospel; which always meets with opposition from a frowning world, a tempting devil, and the ministers of Satan, transforming themselves into the ministers of Christ. (2 Corinthians xi. 13—15.) Lest they should *turn aside after Satan*, (2 Timothy v. 15.) and embrace the *doctrines of devils*, (1 Timothy iv. 1.) *the damnable heresies*, (2 Peter ii. 1.) which Satan was disseminating in the professed churches of Christ, he writes, with all the fiery zeal, and affection, of one who knows the inconceivable worth of souls, and the great importance of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians iii. 5, 6.) *For this*

cause, writes he, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to KNOW YOUR FAITH, lest, by some means, the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your FAITH and charity, we were comforted. Timothy carried Paul good tidings ; part of which was their soundness, and continuance in the faith ; which removed his jealousy and anxiety, and administered joy to his soul, and to those that were with him. For now ye live, saith the apostle, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Second. As there is but ONE TRUE FAITH, which is plainly revealed to us in the Scriptures, and powerfully, to our souls, by the Holy Ghost, we strive for it, that the church may be sound in the faith. That, being rooted and grounded in the doctrines of grace, they may rely, stedfastly, upon the Lord, as their eternal, unchangeable, covenant-keeping God ; who, having appointed, and purposed all things, in his eternal councils for them, performs his gracious will, in all his dealings with them, and dispensations towards them, both as a God of providence, and as a God of grace.

And, knowing Christ as the inexhaustible source of love, the fountain-fulness of invincible grace, and their all-prevailing Advocate, they may come with boldness *to the throne of grace*, (Hebrews iv. 16.) *that they may obtain mercy, and find grace*

to help in the time of need. And being taught to view the complete body of Christ, the church, as one with him, and eternally in him, they may rejoice in the safety and security of the people of God; that because *Christ lives*, (and for no other reason,) they *shall live also*; (John xvi. 19.) that their living depends entirely upon Christ's living—for *their life is hid with Christ in God*. (Colossians iii. 3.) Thus they shall be enabled with boldness, to bid their enemies defiance: who must destroy Christ, in order to take away the life of his people! for *Christ is their life!*

Observe here, then, the great necessity of preaching doctrinally, in order to *comfort God's people*. (Isaiah xl. 1.) It is the meat of the Gospel;—the precious savory meat, such as their souls love, and which their Father has provided for them in covenant. And shall we keep it back? God forbid! since it is so profitable to their souls, and so much for the glory of free grace!

What teaches the Christian resignation to the Divine Will? What causes him to rejoice in complicated trials, and difficulties, in dark and adverse providences? Is it not the Eternal Spirit's gracious, and *heart-felt* application of the doctrines of the Gospel? Yes, it bears up his spirits under the heaviest pressure, and enables him to sing with Watts:

“ The Gospel bears my spirits up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation of my hope,
In oaths, and promise, and blood.”

Knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God, and that nothing happens by mere chance, or accident; but that every change and vicissitude, is directed by the unerring council of God: that not an hair of his head falls to the ground without his notice, and Divine appointment; knowing this, I say, he is taught submissively to endure affliction; and his language is, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*—(1 Samuel iii. 18.) *he performeth the thing that is appointed for me*, (Job xxiii. 14) he does all things well—he knows what is *best for me*. Being established in the doctrines of the Gospel, the Christian can triumphantly interrogate with the apostle, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (Romans viii. 35.)

O what a never-failing source of consolation is the eternal love of God in Christ! and what solid comfort, and satisfaction doth the believing soul derive from the everlasting covenant, when he can say, *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure! for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow*. (2 Samuel xxiii. v. compared with Hebrews vi. 17, 18.)

Though he may be tempest-tossed upon the ocean of trial, faith looks to the covenant, and assures him he cannot be lost : and hope, animated with faith's report, pierces through the waves of trouble, and takes anchorage *within the veil*. (Hebrews vi. 19.)

But, what joy, peace, or satisfaction, can spring from the doctrine of human merit? "I may, or I may not be saved; and though I am a child of God to-day, to-morrow I may fall from grace and perish! *I have "A never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky"* O what an arduous task! what a great undertaking! poor self-righteous creature! you save your own soul! No, you have damned it by sinning against God; and did you see yourself, as you really are, nothing but sin, you would start from your self-righteous stupor, disclaim your own righteousness, and cry, *Save Lord, or I perish!*

What distress, instead of comfort, the consideration of such doctrine must occasion in the soul, that is truly concerned about eternal things! And this, Sirs, stimulate us, the more zealously to strive together for the faith of the Gospel, since the joy, peace, and comfort of precious souls, so much depend upon their establishment in the truth!

The want of which causes so many, that sincerely seek Jesus, to go daily bowed down with doubts

and fears. Yet some will say, doctrines must not be preached, lest we hurt their tender minds; when their distress springs from a diametrically opposite cause; their ignorance of God's covenant, love, purposes, and designs; and of his never-failing, and resolute grace in Christ—that he is *resolved* to save his people—and though the gates of hell may oppose, shall never prevail against them! We are to build them up in our most holy faith, that they may know where to look for wisdom, strength, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. (1 Corinthians i. 30.)

If error abound, it is the business, not only of ministers, but of all Christians, as opportunity offers, to expose it, and thereby *strive for the faith*. What is the advice of Paul to a young minister, upon this subject? (Titus i. 13.) *Rebuke them sharply*: For what? for every inconsistency; but more especially for error, to answer this grand end, “*That they may be sound in the faith.*”

Third, Strive for the faith, on account of your propensity to err. How melancholy to see those depart from the truth, who once professed to be its warm, and zealous advocates! In the real Christian, it is God-dishonouring, and soul-distressing; but in the mere professor, who becomes a final apostate, and can violently persecute the church of God, it is a flagrant proof of everlasting perdition! Such are said to make shipwreck of faith and conscience; as in 1 Tim-

othy i. 19. *Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck.* Have not we seen something of this? Have we not seen some, that for a little time, have made a blazing profession of Christianity; and, according to appearance, warmly espoused the doctrines of the Gospel, fall away, and become vile, and open contemners, of that truth, which once they pretended so unfeignedly to love! Examine yourselves whether you be in *the faith*! Beware of the seduction of error! *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* The lip of truth hath informed us, that many shall fall away—*Because iniquity, (the iniquity of error) shall abound, the love of many, (to the truth) shall wax cold.* And many, even of the people of God, will “for-sake their first love,” and shew a coolness for truth, and an attachment to error! *The mystery of iniquity* (2 Thessalonians ii. 7.) *began to work* in the apostle’s time, and many turned aside from the faith. Paul laments this in 1 Timothy vi. 10. “*For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have ERRED from the TRUTH, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows;*” many of whom, no doubt, were God’s own people. And in 1 Timothy iv. 1. *The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and DOCTRINES of DEVILS.* And as a fulfilment, and an awful exemplification of it, we know that *the man of sin,*

who exalts himself above all that is called God, hath, for many centuries, filled all Europe with his doctrines: O then, may the Lord himself teach us to take heed, lest, through the darkness of our hearts, we embrace error for truth, and bow the knee to anti-christ, instead of following, worshipping, and adoring, the only wise God our Saviour, to whom be glory, and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. (Jude 25.)

Fourth, The damning nature of error, irresistably argues the absolute necessity of striving for THE FAITH. Sirs, it is at the peril of your souls, that you embrace, and die in, those errors which depreciate the merits of Christ, and exclude him as the foundation laid in Sion! Peter calls them *damnable heresies*. (2 Peter ii. 1.) And such enemies of Jesus Christ, as will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought and *slain before him*, (Luke xix. 27,) in the great day of his wrath, by the fire of his jealousy: for he is jealous of his own honour, who hath declared, “*My glory will I not give to another, neither my praises to graven images.*” (Isaiah xlii. 8.)

And we, who are regenerate, are called upon to keep the faith, as well as strive for it. O! how animating is that precious promise—“*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*” (Revelations ii. 10.) He who has promised the crown of life, will make and keep his people faithful.

How the apostle triumphs in this, a little before his departure from this world: "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,*" 2 Timothy iv. 7. Having on the whole armour of God, I have fought and conquered, though all the infernal policy of devils, and stratagems of wicked men, have been unitedly engaged in planning my destruction; and though they have, a thousand times, endeavoured to execute their malicious designs—though we have actually come to an engagement, I have fought, victoriously, under the banner of Christ, and wear the victor's crown! Though a legion of sins have "warred in my members, against the law of my mind, endeavouring to overcome, and bring me into captivity;" I have fought, and through sin-subduing grace, am conqueror; having *obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.* (Acts xxvi. 22.) Though sin has, times innumerable, caused me to call myself a wretched man, I thank God for victory, through Jesus Christ. I have also fought against all the errors of the age; and prophetically detected the errors of the man of sin, who shall reign, *when he who letteth be taken out of the way.* (2 Thessalonians ii.) With the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, I have fought against all error, and kept the faith, in opposition to the world, the flesh, and the devil; in the strength of Jesus, I have kept the faith, and now I die triumphantly; for, *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against*

that day ; (2 Timothy i. 12;) *who hath laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.* Thus Paul triumphed ; and such shall be the triumph of all those, who obtain mercy of God, to be found faithful !

I come, now,

II. To give a description of *the Faith of the Gospel* : First, observe that the doctrines of faith are here intended.

Paul, the speaker, in our text, was a great advocate for the doctrines of the Gospel ; they ever administered joy, peace, and satisfaction, to his soul, in the most trying seasons ! Their powerful, and holy influence over his whole soul, produced, in him, a most amiable and exemplary conduct ! The love of Christ shed abroad in his heart, constrained him to detect sin and error, to love truth, and to follow holiness ; which holiness he knew to be in Christ, and to emanate from *him*, to the glory of his grace ! That unparalleled beauty and excellency, which he saw in Christ, inspired him with longing desires, daily to grow in grace, and to be still more zealous to stem the torrent of error, and more gloriously to exalt, and magnify the Lord his Saviour, by a defence of his free grace, and everlasting love !

This was the influence which his doctrines had

over his own heart and conduct. And in his excellent Epistles, written under the immediate influence of the Eternal Spirit, how boldly, and courageously does he defend the doctrines of faith! With what sublimity of thought, and holy rapture of soul, he mentions them! How forcible, and conclusive are all his arguments in their defence!

But some will tell us, that, "Though the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel are his general theme, in his *Epistles*, when he preached to a miscellaneous congregation, he did not insist upon them. They were not the topic of his *preaching*; and, in course, ministers, who profess to follow his example, ought, also, to confine them to writing, or private conversation, among believers."

How degrading would this have been to the apostolic character! Paul would have been ashamed of such a conduct! He detested such cowardice? Let him speak for himself; 2 Corinthians x. 11. *Let such an one think this, that such as we are in word, by letters, when we are absent; such will we be also, in deed, when we are present*: and lest any should say, that he has not, here, a reference to his preaching, I refer you to his own declaration, Acts xx. 27; *I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.*

The WHOLE—observe, he *kept back nothing*. All that God commanded him, he *declared* unto the people. And, so zealous was he for the doc-

trines of the Gospel, and for preaching them fully, without equivocation, or reservation, that he charges Christ's ministers to preach no other: 1 Timothy i. 3, and iv. 6. Titus ii. 1. *Charge some that they preach NO OTHER DOCTRINE. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of GOOD DOCTRINE. Speak thou the things which become SOUND DOCTRINE.*

Here is a particular charge, given to ministers, not only to contemplate, to converse upon privately, but to *teach, speak, put the brethren in remembrance of good and sound doctrine*, that they may be the more established in the truth; *nourished up in the words of faith.* It is their business to *speak*, and *speak out* boldly, courageously, positively, the eternal, and immoveable Truth of God! so shall they glorify their Divine Master, and comfort the souls of his people!

Second—striving together for faith, dwelling in the hearts of all those who are spiritually taught of God. and,

First, Men, in a natural state, are entirely unacquainted with, and destitute of, faith in Christ: (2 Thessalonians iii. 2.) *All men have not faith.* And it is entirely of God's free grace, that any have; for the people of God, in this respect, are not different from others; but, as they lay in the

ruins of the fall, are upon a level with the rest part of mankind: *Children of wrath, even as others*, and dead in sin, till quickened, and made alive, by the power of God; for he hath *concluded them all in unbelief* (Romans xi. 32.); and it is an infinite mercy that any of us are blessed with faith in Christ.

It does not belong to corrupt nature, neither have men in nature's darkness, any thing to do with the faith of God's elect: for they are under a covenant of works, and faith is peculiar to the covenant of grace. They are *married* to the law, which is their *first husband*; and till they become dead to him, cannot be married to another, (i. e. to Christ by faith,) without being called *adulteresses*. Some may object to this reasoning, but let them remember, that it is not mine, but borrowed from Paul, (Romans vii. 3, 4, &c.) who knew, by experience, the necessity of becoming *dead* to the law, before the soul can be alive to Christ, by a vital faith, which looks alone to him, lives upon him, and affectionately claims him as an *husband*! (Isaiah liv. 5.) "*When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died*" Seeing the law's purity, and his own sinful deformity, he died, to all hope of being *justified by the law, in the sight of God*. (Galatians iii. 11.) But, he was not even invited to come to Christ, while in his self-righteous state! Whatever you may think, my dear hearers, of universal exhortations, I am

bold to assert, that not one of the self-righteous are invited to come to Christ. I have good authority for this assertion; read Matthew ix. 13. "*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"

Second. As man is dead in sin, with a nature hostile to Christ, and an heart *incapable* of believing—as faith in Christ is God's gift, and God's work in the sinner's heart, it follows, unavoidably, that *faith* is not a duty of the law; Romans iii. 28. Galatians ii. 16. and iii. 12. and Romans ix. 32. all, undeniably prove faith opposite, in its nature, to the works of the law; that it is not a duty which God requires of his people, but a grace which he gives them. In the first-mentioned Scripture, we are told, *that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*; so that it is evident, faith cannot be one of the deeds, or duties, that God has made incumbent upon his creatures in the decalogue. And Galatians ii. 16. beautifully corresponds with this: *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* Faith and the law are here held in contrast, by the apostle, as having nothing to do with each other: the former points to, and embraces a bleeding Christ, as the way to God; the latter demands perfect holiness of the crea-

ture, and curses to eternity for the least transgression. They are so diametrically opposite in their design, their nature, and their language, that they must not be blended together; for *the law is not of faith*, (Galatians iii. 12.) and, consequently, faith cannot be of the law.

May you learn, my dear friends, to distinguish between the law and the Gospel! the want of which occasions much darkness and distress of soul. We are always to keep distinct the following things: the *Old* covenant and the *New*, the seed of the serpent and the seed of Christ, the *Old* man and the *New* man, the *Law* and the *Gospel*; and be assured that your comfort, and establishment in the truth, very much depend upon this.

Farther, had faith been a duty of the law, the Jews of old would have obtained that which they sought after, (the peculiar favour of God,) for they sought it by the works of the law; but faith was not of the law, and therefore they could not obtain it, as it is written, Romans ix. 32. *they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.*

O! may the Lord enable you to seek him, so as to find him, and experience the blessings of grace peculiar to his spiritual Israel!

Having asserted that faith is super-natural, a grace of the Spirit, the gift of God; and, there-

fore, not a duty of the law, the question naturally follows in the

Third place, How comes faith? and what are its operations? This is a question that ought to be well answered, and therefore I shall refer you to the infallible language of inspiration, in Romans x. 17. Galatians iii. 2. Hebrews iv. 2. The first Scripture informs us of the glorious channel through which the Lord conveys faith to the soul. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* This proves that the preaching of God's word, is more particularly employed, by the Eternal Spirit, to give his people faith in Christ. *How can they hear without a preacher? And that is entirely of God's free grace, for how can they preach except they are sent?* Every true minister of Jesus has his qualifications from heaven, is educated in the grand College of Immanuel, and ordained by the *Bishop of Souls*; (1 Peter ii. 25) who sends him to do his appointed work:—"Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah i. 7.)

Thus commissioned, he exclaims, *Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!* (1 Corinthians ix. 16.) A twofold necessity is laid upon me, woe is unto me if *I preach not*, and woe unto me if I preach *not the Gospel*.

The Lord thus sends forth his ministers to preach his precious word, which comes *not in word only, but also in power and in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost.* (1 Thessalonians i. 5.) *The Lord opens the hearts of sinners, that they attend unto the things which are spoken;—* (Acts xvi. 14.) *the Holy One of Israel, who teaches his people to profit,* (Isaiah xlvi. 17.) gives them the hearing ear, *and as many as were ordained to eternal life believe.* (Acts xiii. 48.) Not because they are obedient, and perform the duty of faith, but because it is given unto them to know, and believe, the *mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.*

Paul interrogates such in this language. (Galatians iii. 2.) *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Not by the works of the law; the Spirit is not given, because they *are* obedient, but to make them obedient; that they may *serve in newness of Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter:* (Romans vii. 6.) *and then, the service of the Lord becomes perfect freedom: they delight to do the will of God, because his law is written upon the table of their hearts.* (Psalm xl. 8.)

It is by the hearing of faith that the Spirit is thus received; by hearing the love, mercy, pity, and compassion of the Father, in the gift of the Son, faithfully preached; by hearing of the love of Christ, in his covenant-undertaking, and wonder-

ful sufferings for his people.—The Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shews unto them—their deaf ears are unstopped, to hear the voice of Christ, saying, *Behold me, behold me—was ever sorrow like my sorrow—*(Lamentations i. 12.) Their eyes are opened to behold him, in all his bleeding charms, and with divine ravishment of soul, they gaze upon him, till the wonderful sight endears the Saviour to their hearts!

Herein is the distinguishing grace of God manifested, and gloriously magnified, for *many* hear externally, *few*, comparatively, are savingly taught by the Spirit. *For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* (Hebrews iv. 2.) Hearing will profit nothing without believing, and *faith is the gift of God*; (Ephesians ii. 8.) consequently, it is to the *praise of the glory of his grace*, (Ephesians i. 6.) his free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace, that you are profited by the preaching of the Word: *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* (1 Corinthians iv. 7.)

If Evangelical Faith is a duty, the believer may *glory, and boast himself against the unbeliever.* (Romans xi. 18.) He may, with the greatest propriety, address him thus: Faith is the duty of

every creature where the Gospel comes; *I* have been *obedient*, and performed my duty, by believing; you still remain in a state of *disobedience*, neglecting to do your *duty of faith*; “*Therefore stand by thyself, come not near to me, I am holier, I am more obedient, than thou.*” (Isaiah lxxv. 5.) O Sirs! may the Lord shew us daily, more of our own insufficiency and nothingness, that, under the influence of distinguishing grace, we may *abhor ourselves*, (Job xlii. 6.) and looking to the *High Rock*, Christ Jesus, triumphantly exclaim, with the Psalmist, “*Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord! but unto thy name be all the glory.*”

All boasting and glorying in *Self*, is excluded, because,

Fourthly, Faith is the work of God, and the free gift of God. I would appeal to the Scriptures in order to attest the truth of this. For remember, you that are displeased with this doctrine, that the Bible, the precious book of God, is the object of your displeasure. The Scriptures always were, and always will be affrontive to the proud, carnally-minded Pharisee; *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Corinthians ii. 14.)

And, now, I will prove from *God's own word*, that faith is his work, and his own free gift; and

when we have a **THUS SAITH THE LORD**, blind, fallible worms of the earth ought to be silent! Read Colossians ii. 12. 2 Thessalonians i. 11. 1 Peter i. 5. 1 Corinthians ii. 5. with many other passages that I might quote; all which beautifully corroborate to prove, what I have already asserted—*Faith God's work, God's free gift; and harmoniously agree, in ascribing all power, praise, and glory, to God, and the Lamb for ever!*

That Faith is the work of God, is evident; for *we are risen with him*, (i. e. Christ) *through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* The very same power that raised Christ from the dead, *quickened us who were dead in trespasses and sins*, and gave us faith, which is emphatically termed, **FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD**: the powerful, invincible, wonderful, operation of the Spirit. We were shut up in nature's darkness, and unbelief; and in that state we must have remained, had not that God, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts*: (2 Corinthians iv. 6.) The very same power that created all worlds, created us *new creatures* in Christ Jesus; or wrought faith in our hearts; which are synonymous terms. Now I would ask, Is it the duty of an unconverted man to make himself a new creature in Christ?—to give himself the Holy Ghost?—O presumptuous idea! bordering upon blasphemy! and not less presumptuous, and erroneous is the idea of Evangelical Faith, as the duty of the unconverted!

For, if faith is the work of the Spirit, and at the same time the duty of the creature, it consequently follows, that it is the duty of a man dead in sin, to give himself the Spirit of God ! A sentiment equally as absurd as presumptuous ! and to be detested by all sincere advocates for the glory of Free grace !

Faith is not the work or duty of the creature, but the work of the Spirit : *Such power belongeth unto God.* (Psalm lxii. 11.) *It is according to the good pleasure of his goodness,* that he worketh in the hearts of sinners, *the work of faith with power.* (2 Thessalonians i. 11.)

It is the almighty and miraculous work of God, to take away the *stony heart*, (Ezekiel xi. 19.) slay the *enmity of the carnal mind*, (Romans viii. 7.) break the strong holds of the devil, and create a new man in Christ : All which must be accomplished before any one can *believe to the saving of the soul* : (Hebrews x. 39.) for real believers are said to be in the Spirit : *Without faith it is impossible to please him*, (Hebrews xi. 6.) and we know, *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*, (Romans viii. 8.) consequently, believers must be in the Spirit ; *for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new ;* (2 Corinthians v. 17.) and the new creature is the *workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*

(Ephesians ii. 10.) Such a renewed soul is *kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation*, (1 Peter i. 5.) who manifests his power, in the believer's perseverance, by strengthening him in his ever-living Head, and Advocate, who prays for him, that *his faith fail not*. (Luke xxii. 32.)

Being preserved, called, and kept by the power of God, in Christ Jesus, he bears witness to the truth of Paul's assertion, (1 Corinthians ii. 4, 5.) that the preaching of the Gospel is not with *enticing words of man's wisdom*—endeavouring to reconcile the two seeds which God hath eternally separated, taking the children's bread and casting it to dogs; enticing unbelievers to come into the church, by telling them the faith of God's elect belongs to every creature where the Gospel comes—No, the believing soul knows, that preaching the Gospel is not with these enticing, flesh-pleasing words of man's wisdom, but *in demonstration of the spirit, and of power*. He knows, by happy experience, that his *faith does not stand in the wisdom of man, but in THE POWER OF GOD*. *For by grace are ye saved through FAITH, and THAT not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*. (Ephesians ii. 8.)

Fifth. Faith is termed a *mystery*, and those who have it in possession, are said *to hold the mystery of faith in a good conscience*, (1 Timothy iii. 9.) *even the mystery which hath been HIDDEN from*

ages, and from generations, but is now made manifest to his SAINTS, (Colossians i. 26.) for unto them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to others it is not given. (Matthew xiii 11.) The Father hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes. And if any object to this, or require a reason why God hath done so, a very precious reason is annexed, "*for so it seemed good in his sight.*" (Matthew xi. 25, 26.)

He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, in preaching his word; to whom he opens a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ: (Colossians iv. 3.) who speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, by declaring, and vindicating, from the Scriptures, the eternity, co-equality, and unity of the three persons in the God-head—(1 John iii. 7) THESE THREE ARE ONE! The eternal, inseparable, union of Christ, and his people, (Ephesians v. 30) "*This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*"—The union of the two natures in Christ, human and divine, (1 Timothy iii. 16.) "*Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh!*" These are mysteries that soar beyond the utmost stretch of either human, or angelic imagination! But, though in themselves incomprehensible, faith assures the Christian that such *mysteries* really exist. He knows that they are every way compatible with the incomprehensible nature of the Deity. He does not

aim, with the *Infidel*, to define the Divine perfections of Jehovah, and bring them down upon a level with his carnal reason; he is more happily engaged, in contemplating, with love and amazement, the innumerable, and unsearchable attributes of his covenant-keeping God; and his divinely animated soul, is taught to exclaim, with one of old, *Canst thou by searching, find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*

Grace teaches him to believe in God, and concerning God, as he is revealed in the precious Bible; where he has discovered himself the God of love and grace. Consequently, the Christian rejoices in the *mysteries* before mentioned: that Father, Son, and Spirit, bear witness in behalf of his soul, to the everlasting covenant-engagements, which cannot be broken: that, agreeable to this covenant, the Son assumed human nature, died on the cross, finished salvation, ascended to glory, and as an Advocate, intercedes for him at the Father's right hand. And, deriving spiritual life from Christ, he feels his soul vitally united to him, as an evidence of his membership in that eternally complete body of Christ—the *church purchased with his own blood!*

Sixth. As faith is a grace of the Spirit, and a mystery taught by him, it certainly must be a blessing of the new covenant; for all the blessings of grace were provided by the Father, in the

covenant, and given into the hands of Christ, in the behalf of his elect, to whom they are communicated by the Eternal Spirit. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love,* (Ephesians i. 3, 4.)

Before the foundation of the world was laid, the Father blessed his people with *all spiritual blessings*; and observe, they are all *in Christ*; for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. (Colossians i. 19.) All the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM, Amen unto the glory of God, by us: (2 Corinthians i. 20.) and these exceeding great and precious promises, were all made in covenant, to Christ, the representative of his church. According to Paul’s account, this is the basis of our hope of glory.—*In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began!* (Titus i. 2.) And, who could he promise it to but Christ? Now, as the Father provided, and gave all spiritual blessings, in covenant; it was the office of the Son to receive them; as it is written in the Psalms, “*Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast RECEIVED GIFTS for men; yea, for the REBELLIOUS also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*” (Psalm lxxviii. 18.) And, as Christ hath received them, it

is the office of the Eternal Spirit to communicate them to the redeemed soul: *He shall glorify me, saith the dear Redeemer, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* (John xvi. 14.)

Faith, then, is a covenant-blessing of the Father, treasured up, and promised, in the Son, and wrought in the soul, by the Holy Ghost. *It is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end, the promise might be sure to all the seed.* (Romans iv. 16.) All the spiritual seed of *Abraham*, or of Christ,—the children of the promise, the spiritual *Israel*: *for they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh; these are not the children of God: but the children of the Promise are counted for the seed.* This is the seed for whom the Father provided the blessing of faith in Christ: as it is written, (Galatians iii. 7.) *Know ye, therefore, that they which are of FAITH, (or believers in Christ,) the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through Faith, preached, before, the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So, then, they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* Hence it is plain, that faith is a covenant blessing, which leads me to observe,

Seventh, and lastly, That it is peculiar to God's people. *Thy blessing is upon thy people,* (Psalm

iii. 8.) saith the Psalmist; and his peculiar blessing is upon none other. *Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people! saved by the Lord* (Deuteronomy xxxiii. 29.) These are the people that SHALL believe, through the preaching of his word, who are eternally one with Christ! (Read John xvii.) "*For as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.*" *Ye believe not*, saith the blessed Jesus, *because—of what? Because ye will not perform the duty of faith? No, but, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.* (John x. 26.) Offensive as this doctrine is to some, Paul rejoices in it. (2 Thessalonians ii. 13.) "*We are bound to give thanks always to God, for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.*" We find then, that faith was provided in covenant, for the elect of God, and for them alone; and to them, and them only, is it communicated.

May the blessed Spirit of all grace enlighten the eyes of your understanding, to view the bleeding, Saviour exhibited on Mount Calvary's eminence, groaning under the load of your transgressions; that looking unto him, *the author and finisher of your faith*, (Hebrews xii. 2.) you may be taught to join this heavenly triumph of the blood-bought throng: *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen. (Revelations i. 6.)

The Faith of the Gospel Vindicated:

SERMON II.

GALATIANS III. 11.

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

THE context informs us of the dreadful state of those who have not faith in Christ. That they are under the law, under the covenant of works; and, consequently, under the curse: for it is written, *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse—cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* What a wretched situation is this! Under the law, and under the curse! And this is not the state of the wicked profligate only; but of many *professedly* virtuous and pious: who are working *for* life, and *desire* to be under the law. Who are in bondage to the law, and have not *one desire* to be liberated! If an objection is made to their being placed upon a level with the profligate; let it be considered, that they are more especially, and *avowedly*, the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, and are more hostile to the Gospel, than those who never made any profession of Christianity!

Self-righteous thoughts and imaginations are as inimical to the attributes of Deity, as offensive to the Lord of glory, and as great a violation of his holy law, as the immorality, and open profanity of the profligate part of mankind! (Romans x. 2.) *For, they, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for RIGHTEOUSNESS, to every one that believeth.* Here they are represented, in open rebellion *against the Lord, and against his anointed Son the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* They are seeking justification by a righteousness of their own, in opposition to the righteousness of Christ! And the pompous language of their proud, self-righteous hearts, is, *We will be like the most High.* Is this the humility, self-abhorrence, and self-abasement, requisite in poor, lost, undone, rebellious sinners, when coming before a God of immaculate purity, and unsearchable holiness?

If any such persons are before me, I would address them in the language of Paul, "*Ye that desire to be under the law, do ye hear the law?*" *Do you hear its extensive demands, its holiness, and purity? Do you hear its spiritual voice? Its threatening and condemning language, for the least violation, of any one of its righteous precepts? No, the law is more spiritual, more holy, and more extensive in its demands, and prohibitions,*

than you are aware! The law of God is not like human laws, which condemn only for external transgressions; it extends to the thoughts, and intents of the heart!

It is thought a privilege, by some people, that human laws cannot condemn for *thinking*: but, it is not so with the Lord Jehovah, who searches the heart, tries the reins, and knows our every thought! The omnipresent God is privy to all your vain thoughts, and impure desires, which shame forbids you to reveal to mortals! He demands *truth in the inward parts*; but finds, in us, nothing but falsehood, iniquity, and rebellion!

The law is a glorious transcript of his immaculate purity, and teaches the holiness of a God! One sinful thought is a violation of all its righteous precepts! Oh Sirs! you that desire to be under the law; let me ask you once more, Do ye hear what it saith to you? Do you know that you are cursed by it? CURSED IS EVERY ONE that continues not in ALL THINGS, and you have not continued in *any one*; but violated every precept. You are not aware, I say, of its extensiveness, but are yet in nature's darkness and ignorance! If you had ever been taught by God's Spirit, you would see the consequence of being under the law—you would see its spirituality, purity, and holiness; and would confess, that by the law is only the knowledge of sin. It shews no mercy, nor lenity,

nor discovers any way of deliverance from sin! The letter killeth, but administers no healing, no life-giving balm!

In what state did the apostle find himself, when the law was brought home to his heart and conscience? He tells us in Romans vii. 9. *When the commandment came, sin revived and I died!* He died to all hopes of being justified by it, in the sight of God. And now let me ask the *convinced* sinner, how *he* views the law? what his experience is in this respect? You are ready to reply, poor sinner, in such language as this, “I see and feel myself condemned by the law, which is an administration of death, how am I to escape its dreadful sentence? Sin does, indeed, revive in me: and I feel myself incapable of subduing it! To whom, or where shall I flee for refuge?” Poor distressed soul, take comfort; the Eternal Spirit, who convinced you of sin, will carry on that work which he has begun in you; and give you a knowledge of salvation, by a crucified Jesus. Our text informs you, that justification, in the sight of God, is not by the works of the law, but, that the vilest of sinners, shall be cleansed from their sins in the blood of Jesus, obtain pardon through him, and live a life of faith on him: for

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

The just, or justified ones, those who were eternally justified in Christ. Though I suppose that

is too ancient a date for some of you ; but, it must be so, consistent with the analogy of faith. For what is it to be justified, but to be acquitted from the wrath of divine justice, against sinners? And that God's people were thus acquitted, from eternity, is provable from his love. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love* ; (Jeremiah xxxi. 3.) and there is no wrath nor anger in love. To be just, or justified, is, also, to be delivered from all charge that justice may bring against the sinner. And were not the people of God thus holy, and without blame, by virtue of their union to Christ, from everlasting? Was not Christ set up from everlasting, as the righteousness of his people? And are they not completely justified in his righteousness? Nevertheless, this is not known to any of those justified ones, till revealed, by the Eternal Spirit, in their regeneration.

Having received the like precious faith, which is once revealed to all the saints, the soul is enabled to look to Christ. And is made happy in the knowledge of this, rejoicing that he stands in a justified state! Happy, being free from all condemnation, and at peace with God. He has now access to him, free access—can approach him as his gracious God, and loving Father, in Christ Jesus. Looking to Christ by faith, having peace with God, his love shed abroad in his heart, he has fellowship with him as his God, his Father, and his friend!

Persons, possessing this charming experience,

are the just intended in our text; who shall live by their faith. And, Christians, your experience attests the truth of this. May the Eternal Spirit, then, engage your hearts and attention, while I consider,

I. The blessed effects of faith.

II. The qualities and properties of faith.

First, the blessed effects of faith; of that precious faith in Christ, which brings joy, peace, comfort, consolation, and full satisfaction, to the justified soul!

How precious must that faith be which has the Spirit for its operator, Christ for its object, and which brings the sinner, arrayed in Immanuel's righteousness, near to the infinitely holy Jehovah, who communes with him as a man with his friend! Which assures him that he shall dwell with the Lord for ever! That he has, agreeable to the eternal promise, an inheritance in the skies, where God shall wipe all tears from his eyes; where all sorrow and distress shall be for ever banished, and where the whole soul, swallowed up in the beatific vision of God, shall, with inexpressible delight, gaze upon the dear God-man, who redeemed him with his own blood!

O invaluable blessing! Is it ours? Do we feel the influence of this precious faith? If so, we are

experimentally acquainted with its powerful and wonderful effects,

First, in delivering the poor distressed, and self-condemned sinner from that dreadful law-work upon the conscience, which all God's people, in some measure, experience. O! what dreadful apprehensions, and tormenting expectations of divine wrath, are then felt by the convicted criminal! Convinced of the awful disparity between the pure law of God, and his polluted heart and life, his most earnest and insatiate enquiry is, "*What shall I do to be saved?*"

He feels sin warring in every member, and strives against it; but in vain; it overcomes him; and daily carries him captive in its odious and galling chains! This is to convince him, that sin is conquered only in the strength of Jesus! In vain does he strive in his own strength; for every struggle he makes, serves but to convince him that he is a helpless sinner; and that he must unavoidably fall a victim to sin, which is the dreadful sting of death!

In the 24th and 26th verses of the context, the law is spoken of under the character of a school-master. According to some, the *ceremonial* law, to teach and instruct; as this law taught the Jewish church, through types and shadows, to look to the great and illustrious Antitype, the adorable Redeemer. But as this epistle was written to a Gentile

church, I think it is very evident that the decalogue, or law of Ten commands, is intended, which teaches the holiness and purity of God, and shews the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And as it is the office of a school-master, not only to give instruction, but also to correct and chastise; the law severely chastises, and rigorously condemns, for the least transgression of its righteous precepts!

You that have felt this law work in your consciences, have known the severe correction of this school-master. But mark the design of God: *The law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master.* Faith delivers from the law. It enlightens the eyes of the sin-despairing soul, to look to Christ; to behold him as the way to God, paying his ten-thousand-talent debt to inflexible justice, and standing in the sinner's place, as *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* (Romans x. 4.) Faith teaches him to see his sins in the wounds of Christ, whose precious blood heals his wounded conscience, and sets him at happy liberty! He is no longer *under a spirit of bondage to fear, but has received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, Abba, Father!* (Romans viii. 15.) O! happy experience! Wonderful change!—Brought out of darkness *into marvellous light,* (1 Peter ii. 9.) from death to life, (James ii. 10.) from a prison of bondage to

perfect liberty, from sorrow, almost insupportable, to joy, unspeakable, and full of glory!

Before this wonderful change took place, the poor sinner was shut up in bondage to the law, and crying in the bitterness of his soul, *A wounded spirit who can bear!* His wounds appeared to him incurable, and his salvation impossible! And in this state, he must have continued, had not the skilful hand of the great Physician, who wounded him, applied the balm of Gilead. No cure from any other! No other hand can administer relief to the wounded conscience! It is the prerogative of God alone, *to kill, and make alive; to wound, and make whole.* (Deuteronomy xxxii. 39.)

No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,
No cure for such, till God, who makes them, heals.

COWPER.

O what a sweet healing balm is the blood of Jesus! It cleanses from all sin, heals the wounded conscience, and administers peace to the troubled mind. By faith in this precious sin-cleansing blood, the sinner is brought near to his covenant God, and Father!

By faith the sinner looks to the man Christ Jesus, and affectionately embraces the record that God gives concerning his Son! He hears the proclamation of Divine forgiveness with rapture and astonishment! Such a charming invitation as this, is music in his ears, and inexpressible joy

to his regenerated soul: "*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 i. 18.)

Are you convinced that this Scripture is descriptive of your state! If so, it must be truly precious to you. What can be more delightful than to hear the great God proclaim himself a God of pardon! but it cannot be sweet to any but the convinced sinner. This precious balm cannot be valuable to those who never had a wound. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It is the sin-sick soul, wounded by the arrow of Divine conviction, who is here addressed; to whom the Lord hath made known the purity of the law, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin! *By the law is the knowledge of sin*; and, therefore, the Lord always speaks first by the law, to convince of sin, before he reveals his Divine pardon in Christ. As in the foregoing part of this first chapter of Isaiah, (v. 15.) *When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.* This is the voice of God's law, wherein he expresses his disapprobation of sin—that he cannot accept of any offering by the law of works; for the law knows nothing of pardon, and remission of sins. And, saith the Lord, *their hands are full of blood*,—they are yet un-

cleansed; therefore, in his strict justice and holiness, his *soul hateth* their *sacrifices*! And he not only declares his disapprobation of their sin, but farther insists upon their *spotless purity*, ere they can appear before him! (v. 16.) *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil.* This is not a condition of salvation, but the demand of inflexible justice. Not the voice of the Gospel, but of the law. It is a blessing to know, when the Lord speaks in his strict justice, as an absolute God, and when in his infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, as a God pardoning iniquity: for the want of making this distinction, many err; not *knowing the Scripture*, nor the voice of the law from the voice of the Gospel! On which account, I have taken the liberty of making this digression.

Observe, here then, that the Lord speaks in his law, before he makes the precious invitation contained in the 18th verse. And thus he powerfully speaks to all his dear people, before he speaks, pardon to their souls; that they may see the necessity of being washed, and cleansed, to appear acceptable before a God of perfect holiness! As we read again, in Isaiah xliii. 22—25. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob! but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering,*

nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquity. Hearing these complicated crimes alledged against him, called over by Jehovah himself, what can the expectation of the convicted sinner be, but to hear the awful sentence, *Depart thou cursed; as thou hast wearied me with thine iniquity, I justly consign thee to the gloomy regions of eternal horror!*

But, thus alarmed of his danger, convinced of sin, and driven from all his false refuges, Divine mercy interposes, and Jehovah speaks as a God of grace; informing him, that though sin hath abounded like a sea, free grace abounds like an ocean! *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

Had I the tongue of an angel, I could not express half that joy, peace, and comfort, which this administers to the soul! O the sweetness of Divine forgiveness! To hear the great God say—*I, even I am he, against whom you have sinned, that blotteth out thy transgressions; and if I lay nothing to your charge, who shall? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?* (Romans viii. 34.) *It is Christ that died, whose blood cleanses from all sin; (1 John i. 7.)* Therefore, not for your sake, will I do this, but for my own

sake; for the sake of the oath, the promise, and the blood of my everlasting covenant. *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* (Hebrews x. 16, 17.)

Now is the invitation peculiarly precious! Because seasonable, and very applicable! Now is it, indeed, applied by almighty power, and spoken in all the sweetness of pardoning love!—Come *now*, and let us reason together; even *now*, though you have lifted up arms of hostility against me: *now* you are convinced of your sin, and are made willing to lay down your weapons of rebellion with which you have been fighting against Christ, and his truth; *come now*, wait not to make any preparation, come just as you are, for *now* will I magnify my free grace in your salvation!

Come unto me, now you have tried various ways, and cannot find any one, for an escape from endless ruin; *let us reason together*; I have found out a way, whereby my justice shall be glorified, and harmonize with mercy in the pardon of all your sins! You are *reasoning* within yourself, saying, There is no hope of being saved, consistent with strict justice,—no pardon, no forgiveness for me;—Cast away this carnal reasoning about the impossibility of your salvation; *My grace is sufficient for you: though your sins be*

as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!

Such precious invitation being thus, powerfully applied to the soul, the sinner's terrific fear of Divine wrath is all dissipated, and he draws near to God at a gracious throne. *Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the House of God, he draws near with a true heart, in full ASSURANCE OF FAITH, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.* (Hebrews x. 9.)

This is the blessed effect of faith, teaching the sinner to look alone to Christ for pardon, and,

Second, To the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST for justification. Being comfortably, and wonderfully, delivered from the spirit of bondage, the believer goes on his way rejoicing; *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith.* He is filled with all joy and peace in believing; for *the Lord hath put a new song in his mouth, even praise unto our God,* (Psalm xl. iii.) and he addresses the true worshippers of God, like the Psalmist, *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* (Psalm lxvi. 16.) *He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon*

a rock, and established my goings. He hath given me faith in Christ, his dear Son—O precious faith! *I had fainted, unless I had BELIEVED to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* (Psalin xxvii. 13.) *He is gracious unto me, and hath delivered me from going down to the pit, having found a ransom—the precious Christ, who is the LORD my RIGHTEOUSNESS!* I now disclaim my own righteousness, which is as *filthy rags*, and look entirely to Christ for justification; *for, behold, God is my salvation, I will trust, and not be afraid, for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation.* (Isaiah xii. 2.)

Faith looks *to*, and rejoices *in*, the righteousness of Christ. It desires no other. The believer, under its animating influence, breathes out the desires of his soul to God, like an inspired apostle, *I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*—(Philippians iii. 8. 9.)

Faith puts on the righteousness of Christ as the *best robe, the wedding garment*, the only clothing in which the soul can appear before God! The believer wishes thus to be found in Christ, at all

times ; whenever he waits upon God in the ordinances of his house, or in his more retired and private moments, in his approaches to the Lord in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving ; in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment : assured that he is the only blessed man, *unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.* (Romans iv. 6.)

He views himself as eternally justified in this spotless righteousness. *Being justified, by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* (Romans v. 1.) was the triumphant language of Paul, and is the language of every believer. He has peace with God, for his sins are removed, and he stands for ever *complete* in Christ ! The law of God, which stood written against him, is *magnified*, and made *honourable*, in his justification by Christ's righteousness, and, the once frowning justice now smiles upon him : *For CHRIST is the end of the law for RIGHTEOUSNESS TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.* (Romans x. 4.)

Third, Faith fixes steadfastly upon Christ ; which proves it to be genuine : for it is the nature of faith to be steadfast, as we read in Colossians ii. 5. "*Joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith.*" The man who has not faith, *is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed ;* (James i. 6.) while the believer is built up in his *most holy faith* upon

the unmoveable rock of ages! He daily discovers more of the corruptions of his nature, his weakness, and insufficiency to perform any thing truly good; *for without me*, saith Christ, *ye can do nothing*. (John xv. 5) Knowing this, by experience, he looks to the Almighty Jesus for every thing, and fixes steadfastly upon him, being assured, that none but Christ can do him any good. *For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*. (1 Corinthians iii. 11.) *This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other*. (Acts iv. 11, 12.) *For thus saith the Lord God, behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste*. (Isaiah xxviii. 16.) And the reason why he shall not make haste, is obvious: Faith fixes steadfastly on Christ the *sure* foundation, and gives him boldness and courage in the day of trouble! *The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion*. (Proverbs xxviii. 1.)

Christ is all in all to the believer: his wishes, desires, affections, hopes, joys, confidence and expectations, all centre in the adorable Redeemer; and he feels, daily, more of the necessity of being saved by his infinitely free grace.

He no longer *halts between two opinions*, (1 Kings xviii. 21.) nor carnally asks with Pilate,

What is truth? The Spirit of truth hath led him into all truth. (John xvi. 13.) That precious promise is made good to his soul, Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. The power and influence of truth have made him free from the dominion of sin, and all slavish fear; and from the erroneous doctrines of the man of sin. He is no more tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, grows up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians iv. 14, 15.)

False Christs, and false prophets may cry, *Lo here, or, Lo there is Christ*, he does not believe them; he is better taught, and *knows not the voice of strangers*, so as to be allured by them: he hears the great Shepherd's voice, and follows him. *Leaning upon his Beloved*, he addresses him in this joyful, and affectionate language, *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise; for in point of justification in the sight of God, I am determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

In all the vicissitudes and changes which he

must unavoidably experience, in this world of misery and woe, he thus triumphs in Christ: *The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted.* (Psalm xviii. 46.) *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* For Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

His faith, which fixes so steadfastly upon Christ, is a soul-supporting assurance, that nothing can ever separate from him; relying upon his invincible grace, he bids defiance to all his enemies ever to cause a separation.

I have a mansion in his heart,
Nor death nor hell shall make us part. WATTS.

The world, with its delusive smiles, entices him, or, by its persecuting frowns, endeavours to deter him from following Christ; but in vain; *for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* (1 John v. 4.)

Satan also makes use of a thousand fraudulent arts, in order to attract him, or by fiery temptations strives violently to separate him from Christ: and this implacable foe certainly would accomplish

his design, did not Christ hold him fast, for he has an heart prone to wander from his God: the *old man* is always ready to yield: but Jesus saith, *none shall pluck him out of my hand.* Faith, in such a precious promise, looks to Christ, its *shield*, *wherewith he is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked!*

These enticements, and temptations, are overruled for his good; for they have a tendency to endear Christ to his soul. Thereby he has fresh instances of the Almighty power of Jesus, to *deliver the godly out of temptation*; and, being more abundantly convinced of his own inability, to repel the force of the enemy, it causes him to cleave closer to Christ, and to look unto him the Strong for strength.

He trembles at the very thought of departing from the Almighty Saviour! His language is, *Lord! to whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and I believe, and am sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Thy name, my inmost powers adore,
 Thou art my life, my joy, my care;
 Depart from thee!—'tis death—'tis more,
 'Tis endless ruin, deep despair. STEELE.

Sin, earth and hell united, cannot move him from his steadfastness. They may very much distress him, but cannot destroy him; for he is kept by the power of God; and is likened *unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock; and the*

rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

Fear not, then, Christian; you that have fled to Jesus for refuge, be of good courage. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.* (Isaiah liv. 17.) Here is a positive promise of everlasting victory over every foe: though assailed on all sides, fear not, you are also surrounded by an immensity of love and mercy; the Lord hath *set an hedge about you*; (Job i. 10.) nay, he declares that he will *be unto you a wall of fire round about.* (Zachariah ii. 5.)

Who can feel himself interested in these promises, without exclaiming, with the Psalmist, *I will love thee, O Lord my strength. 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.* The Lord is worthy to be trusted, and greatly to be praised.

Gratitude, love, and adoration, are justly due unto him for such distinguishing grace! Such wonderful salvation? *Thanks be unto God, that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians xv. 57, 58.)

Your labour, toil, and difficulty, shall not be in vain; for, observe, they are in the Lord. You suffer them in Christ; *for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.* (Philippians i. 29.) Your sufferings are all, in covenant, appointed for you, and not one is in vain! They are of infinite service to you, and shall all work together for your good, and terminate in God's glory. Had not Lazarus died, *the Son of God could not have been glorified* (John xi. 4.) in his resurrection? if you were never in distress, you never could praise God for his supporting, and delivering grace: if not exposed to dangers, he could not be glorified in your protection and deliverance.

The mount of danger is the place,

Where we shall see surprising grace. WATTS.

God's surprising grace, manifested in your deliverance, *will fill your mouth with laughter and your tongue with singing; for the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

"From all your afflictions, his glory shall spring,

And the deeper your sorrows, the louder you'll sing."

But why should the Christian be so courageous, why so confident of a victory over his foes? Because,

Fourthly, Faith realizes the precious promises of God to his soul. *It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* (Hebrews xi. 1.) It takes God at his word: *thus saith the Lord* is enough for faith; though there appears no prospect of the promise ever being performed. Though there may appear, according to sense, an impossibility of its performance, faith causes the believer, *against hope to believe in hope*, and brings the very substance of the things hoped for, into real possession! The soul inherits them by faith, knowing that it is impossible for God to lie; but, that he who has promised, is able, and certainly will perform!

Faith has to do entirely with the divine promise; and prefers God's word even before all ocular evidence. We have a striking proof of this in 2 Peter i. 16—19. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were EYE-WITNESSES of his Majesty—We have also A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY, unto which we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

Though the apostles saw the glorious trans-

figuration of Christ, when they were with him in the "holy mount;" which was to them a very striking evidence of his Deity and Messiahship; yet the word of God was esteemed by them, "a more sure evidence."

Faith considers, the ability, faithfulness, and veracity of the promise-maker, the creator and upholder of all things, who has declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."—The nature of the promises, that they are all absolute and unconditional; not "yea and nay," not yea, ye may be saved; or *nay*, ye shall not; according to your obedience or disobedience; "for all the promises of God in him (i. e. Christ) are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God. They shall be my people, and I will be their God," is the unchangeable determination of Jehovah.

The real believer lives upon the eternal promises, and is daily nourished and supported by them. O how sweet are they to his soul in the worst of seasons! They are applicable to his state and situation, at all times; and, *a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* (Proverbs xxxv. 11.) Such is the nature of the following promises, that they are calculated to comfort and support the tried soul under the heaviest pressure:—*My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor*

forsake thee; and I that speak in righteousness am mighty to save. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. And also, the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent.

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” In his own due time, he will do it; for though he hides his face from you, and leaves you to walk in darkness, it is but for a little time: “In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment,” but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord.” He was angry, not with thy soul, but with thy sins.

When the Lord applies these promises, under their soul-reviving influence, the believer, though walking in darkness, “trusts in the name of the Lord, and stays upon his God.” Yea, confidently trusting in a promise-performing God, he triumphantly exclaims: “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Rejoice not against me, O thou mine enemy! when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.” (Micah vii. 8.)

Eighth. Faith enables the Christian to please his God, which he could not do by the works of the law. He is now comfortably fixed upon the rock Christ, and his goings are established in the ways of wisdom ; he walks with God, by faith, like *Enoch* of old, and obtains “ this testimony, that he pleases God.” (Hebrews xi. 5.) The Father views him in his “ Beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.” Being washed from his sin and uncleanness, in the blood of the Lamb, he is “ made a king and a priest unto God ;” (Revelations i. 5, 6.) and, as one of the “ holy priesthood, offers up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter ii. 5.)

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES.—He serves God in newness of spirit ; he worships him in the spirit. The Lord requireth truth in the inward parts ; he demands the whole heart. (Proverbs xxiii. 26.) “ My Son, give me thine heart.” The believer gladly acquiesces in the divine request, and willingly surrenders his heart to God ; fervently addressing him in such language as this : “ Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it thee : thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart ; a broken and a contrite heart, O God ! thou wilt not despise.” (Psalm li. 16, 17.) The whole heart is offered unto God, which is acceptable THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Nothing can be acceptable but that which is offered upon the “ golden altar” of a

precious Jesus; ascending up before God with the incense of his powerful intercession. (Revelations viii. 3, 4.) All the prayers, praises, and spiritual sacrifices of the heaven-born soul, are performed in the strength of Jesus, and with confidence in him, are offered up before the Eternal throne; whose vicarious sacrifice renders them acceptable.

He acts now upon different principles, and from nobler motives, than when he laboured under the covenant of works: "The love of Christ constraineth him." That attractive expression of his Redeemer, has a powerful influence over him, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John xiv. 15.) Gratitude calls aloud for his obedience, and tells him, that it is "but his reasonable service to present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." (Romans xii. 1.) Dissolved by divine goodness, his language is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" (Psalm cxvi. 12.) Or as it is poetically and beautifully paraphrased by Cowper:

What shall I do, was once the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now,

When tempted to sin, his *new man* is taught to express his hatred to it, like Joseph *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!* (Genesis xxxix. 9.) A God of Grace! who has loved me, and saved me with an everlasting sal-

vation ! And shall I grieve the spirit, slight his love, and bring reproach upon his cause, and distress his people, by yielding to the corruptions of my nature ? How can I exercise such base ingratitude, by the commission of such a detestable crime ! Yet, such is the viciousity of my heart, that I should immediately become guilty of it, if preventing grace did not forbid it !

He knows, by sad experience, that *sin* and *sorrow* are inseparably connected ; and he is also as well assured, that in the presence of Christ is a fulness of joy : on which account he thirsteth for God, for the presence of Jesus, the living God. But remember, it is the *new man*, who thus pants after Christ. The *new man* is the image of God in the soul, which causes the Christian to delight in the law of God ; for *I*, saith *Paul*, *delight in the law of God after the inward man*. *He is zealous of good works* ; not in order to be *saved* by them, but because Christ hath *redeemed and saved him from all iniquity*. (Titus ii. 14.) Not that he *may* be justified, but because *he is justified*. (Ephesians ii. 8—10.) Not to merit the love of God, but because God *hath* loved him. (Jeremiah xxxi. 3, and 1 John iv. 10.) He is not working for life, but *from* life ; (Romans viii. 2.) not to be seen of men, like the Pharisee, in order to be applauded for his pretended virtue and holiness ; but to glorify God : agreeable to the exhortation, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in Hea-*

ven. (Matthew v. 16.) Whatever he does *for*, or *in*, the cause of Christ, is not done with a view to merit the Divine favour, but for the benefit of the saints. After he has done all, he humbly acknowledges to the Lord, that he is but an unprofitable servant. *My goodness*, says David, *extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight.* (Psalm xvi. 2, 3.)

Thus the real Christian, stimulated by love, and gratitude to God, and by a sacred pleasure, which he finds in his ways, waits upon him with renewed strength, and increasing faith. He obeys the Lord as a kind and indulgent Father; and has the inexpressible satisfaction of acting under the Divine approbation. The Eternal Father smiles upon him, in and through the Son; and, in the most endearing accents, expresses his delight in him, and in his services, which spring from that active and invigorating principle of love, and which are *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.* (Philippians iv. 18.) How encouraging, and at the same time, how sweet and melting, to hear the munificent Father of mercies say, *thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee.* (Isaiah lxii. 4.)

Sixth. Faith assures the believer, that though he is miserably poor in himself; in Christ, he is

unsearchably rich. O what scenes of wonder open to his view, when faith teaches him to claim kindred with Christ! When the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that he is a *child of God*; (Romans viii.) then is he assured, that though he has *nothing, yet he possesses all things*, (2 Corinthians vi. 10) being *heir and lord of all*; (Galatians iv. 1.) yea, an *heir of God, and a JOINT-HEIR with Christ*. (Romans viii. 17.) What a wonderful vicissitude! Who can behold it without joining the angelic choir, in extacies of joy, and songs of praise to the Lord, *who thus raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes, and to make him inherit the throne of Glory*. (1 Samuel ii. 8.) There were music and dancing when the prodigal's rags were taken off him, and he gloriously arrayed in the best robe: and in like manner, yea, in an infinitely greater degree, see the poor sinner, in his conversion to God, emerging from the gloom of extreme poverty, exalted to the zenith of grandeur, and *unsearchable riches in Christ*! Angels rejoicing at his happy return to God; and the eternal Jehovah himself, as the object of his love and choice, *rejoiceth over him with joy*. (Zephaniah iii. 17.) The Redeemer looks upon him as a new trophy of his victory, a *chaste virgin espoused unto him*, a *jewel* in his eternal crown of glory, and the joy and delight of his heart! (Solomon's Song iii. 11.) *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown where-*

with his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

O! how admirable is Divine grace! That the Lord should thus visit a rebel against him; whose sins had rendered him odious to the Divine purity, and obnoxious to eternal wrath! Who lay perishing *in his blood*, (Ezekiel xvi. 6.) *wretched, miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*; (Revelations iii. 17.) and knew it not, until it was discovered to him by the enlightening Spirit of God.

But God's Grace is FREE GRACE, beyond all expression *free!* And with this soul-enriching grace, he blesses all the spiritually poor. (Matthew v. 3.) *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye, through his poverty might be rich.* He took our poverty, that we might have his riches; He bore our sins, that we might have his righteousness; He died, that we might have redemption through his blood, and enjoy the everlasting smiles of a God of love! That our souls might be enriched with an amiable train of graces, (Galatians v. 22.) *that being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, (Colossians i. 12.) *an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter i. 1.)

Faith assures the believer, that these incalculable blessings are his own everlasting treasure, and teaches him to say, *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.* (Lamentations iii. 24.) He gave himself to me in covenant; (Jeremiah xxxii. 38—40.) he is mine by virtue of my union to Christ, (John xx. 17.) with whom I am a joint-heir; and therefore cannot be disinherited!

No, believer, though you may be poor in this world, you are *chosen of God*, RICH IN FAITH, and an heir of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him. (James ii. 5.) It is impossible for you to be disinherited, for *who shall separate you from Christ?* And having him, you possess all things. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* 1 Corinthians iii. 22, 23.

What are the boasted riches and grandeur of the worldling, when compared with your's? They will not admit of any comparison, kings and emperors, who are not blessed with faith in Christ, when once compared with you, must sink into contemptible meanness, languishing poverty, unenviable misery, and extreme wretchedness; in the eyes of all; who can behold the unsearchable riches of Christ!

In vain they boast their little stores,
Trifles are *their's*, a kingdom *your's*. STEELE.

Seventh, as our text expresses it, the believer *lives* by his faith. He is dead to the law, to the world, and to sin; and is looking unto Jesus, the fountain of everlasting life. (Galatians ii. 20.) *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Christ is his daily bread. *I am the living bread which cometh down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* (John vi. 51—55.) The broken body of a crucified Christ, and his precious streaming blood, which cleanses from all sin, keeps his soul alive to God, preserves him from all slavish fear, fills him with courage and boldness, inspires him with a lively hope, feeds a sacred flame of affection to God, keeps up a serene and heavenly frame of mind, maintains a lasting peace in his conscience, and fills him with unutterable joy! As an inspired writer beautifully expresses it, *Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (1 Peter i. 8.)* He not only feeds upon Christ, but he lives in him. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do*

nothing. (John xv. 5.) As the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine, so the believer derives spiritual life from Christ, by which he grows in grace, and *flourishes in the courts of our God.* (Psalm xcii. 13.) Christ is the living head, and he a member of his mystical body!

Christ is also the *heart* of his people; for as the blood flows from the heart, through various arteries, and diffuses life into all the members of the body, returning back again by the same canals inverted, and thus by its continual circulation, supports that life which it gives; so the precious blood of Christ flows freely, as a life-giving balm, delivering his church from spiritual and eternal death; filling believers with an heavenly animation, by which they live unto the Lord.

The christian then, observe, lives *in* Christ, and continually derives life from him, as a member of his body. And, that life which he receives *from* Christ returns to him; so that he not only lives *upon* Christ, and *in* Christ, but also *to* Christ; enjoying fellowship and communion with him, and living to the glory of his name! Knowing that whether in life or death, Christ is his, and he is blessed. (Philippians i. 21.) *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

We come now to consider,

II. Some of the properties of Faith.

O! that we may know by happy experience its blessed effects! And then shall we be familiarly acquainted with its glorious properties.

To speak then of the properties of faith; observe, *First*, It is *unfeigned*. This is what *Paul* so much admires in young *Timothy*: 2 Timothy i. 5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.* Not that we are to infer from this, that faith is hereditary, and therefore this ennobling quality was received by descent, or communicated to him by his mother. If so, the Oriental nations, by all probability, would, by this time, have been well stocked with Christians; for though the primitive believers themselves have been long since extinct by death, their natural progeny must be very considerable; but the degenerated, and unbelieving state of those nations is a convincing proof, if we had no other, that those who believe on the name of Christ, *are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* (John i. 13.)

My dear young hearers! You that are under the instruction and care of affectionate parents, who know the Lord, be assured you must have far superior teaching to their's, before you are Christians indeed. You may, by their example and advice, become *Dissenters*; for a *Dissenter*

may make a *Dissenter*, but, none but the eternal Spirit can make a real Christian, and give you that faith which is unfeigned; and which distinguishes the believer from all the *formal* and *hypocritical* professors in the world. Whatever outward garb of religion *they* may put on, being unrenewed in the image of their minds, their faith is but *feigned*, which renders them odious and detestable to him, who searches the heart.

Their lifted eyes salute the skies,
 Their bended knees the ground;
 But God abhors the sacrifice,
 Where not the heart is found. WATTS.

They draw nigh unto the Lord with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. All their works they do to be seen of men. Their religion consists in the performance of such external duties as are more visible in the eyes of men; but ignorant of Christ, and dead in sin, they have no mental and private communion with the Lord: and, consequently, are feeding upon their duties, while the Christian hungers for the bread of life. What will such profession avail in the sad hour of death! *The hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.* Job viii. 13, 14.

Not so the child of God: With what fervency he breathes out his desires to the Lord! He asks in *unfeigned faith, nothing wavering*; (James i. 6.) *and cometh to God, believing that he is, and that*

he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews xi. 6.) He pleads the promised blessing: Lord! *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* (Genesis xxxii. 26.) O! the sweet communion he enjoys with his God, which no mortal creature is privy to but himself!

He looks with unfeigned affection to Jesus Christ; and calls him as a witness of the reality of his love: *Lord! thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* (John xxi. 17.) Or, if jealous of his deceitful heart, he cries, *Search me, O God! and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

But, as I have already taken up too much time, must hasten to a conclusion; and, therefore, can only just mention two or three more of the most conspicuous, and shining qualities of faith. And, it is,

Second, an *holy* faith; which has *the Holy One of Israel* for its author and finisher: its doctrines are holy, and *according to Godliness*; (1 Timothy vi. 3.) and have an holy influence over the believer's heart and conduct.

It is the only *holy* faith, or if any other should claim any kind of holiness (but, for my part, I know of no other holiness,) still the faith of God'

elect has the ascendancy, and can boast of a superior holiness; for it is the *most* holy faith. (Jude xx.) *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. Most holy.* Holy in the greatest degree; coming immediately from Christ, and looking to him, as its *most holy object*, and insuperable delight!

Thirdly, it is *tried* faith! *Tried* in the furnace of affliction, by the eternal God himself—*tried* by the fiery temptations of Satan—*tried* by a persecuting world—*tried* by inward sin.—But genuine faith will stand the trial, and become,

In the *Fourth* place, *victorious* faith, which gains a complete victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil—yea, more, it is victorious over death himself, the last of enemies! Faith points to death's great conqueror, and when the Christian has a view of the risen Jesus, Death appears no longer in his frightful forms; but, on the contrary, has an angelic appearance! Yea, even in his cold embraces, the believer shall join the apostolic triumph—O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?

Knowing the reality of this, I cannot conclude without saying, that it is,

In the *last* place, *precious* faith; (2 Peter i. 1.) which lives, and leans upon a *precious* Jesus, and

relies upon the exceeding precious promises of God in Him—is *precious* in life—*precious* in death—but, here it ceases;—swallowed up in sight—when the believer, in full possession of all that faith caused him to hope for, joins the everlasting song of angels, and glorified spirits, in ascribing all glory to God and the Lamb!

The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT HEPHIZIBAH CHAPEL, WOOD-STREET,
LONDON, JULY 1, 1810

MATTHEW XVI. 19.

“AND I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; AND WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT BIND ON EARTH, SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN; AND WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT LOOSE ON EARTH, SHALL BE LOOSED IN HEAVEN.”

THE language of our ever adorable Redeemer, is, at all times, and upon all occasions, worthy of the strictest attention; inasmuch as it is the language, not of a man, nor of an angel, but of that eternal Jehovah, by whom we live, move, and have our being! But more especially does it demand our attention, and engages all the powers of our souls, when, with the Omnipotent arm of his Salvation, he holds forth the sceptre of free pardon, and, with the heart-melting voice of eternal love, proclaims himself the *God of grace*; and reveals his determination, to carry into glorious effect, the gracious purpose of his unalterable will, in the salvation of that Church, which he has purchased with his own blood!

This declaration of Christ the more imperiously demands attention and investigation, as it has, ever since the rise of Papacy, been most ignorantly employed by that antichristian church, to defend, and prove the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope; and his power, either to lock or unlock heaven, at his pleasure; and to save, or condemn, eternally, the souls of men, as he may be disposed! Indeed, this scripture has been most wickedly, or ignorantly employed, by the advocates of priestcraft and superstition, of every description, in all ages of the New Testament church, for the worst of purposes; to give that power to man, which belongs only to the Lord!

That the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter, cannot be denied; but that he gives the very same keys to all his ministers, and, in certain instances, to all his people, is equally as plain and proveable, from every part of the Sacred Records, as well as manifested in the experience of all, who are born of the Spirit.

In order to elucidate this beautiful language of Christ, to Peter, and to refute the preposterous, ludicrous, and irrational doctrine of the Pope's supremacy and infallibility, we must take the whole of the conversation in connexion with our text; in which Peter is asked for a confession of his faith, or his opinion of Jesus: to which he immediately replies, as influenced by the Eternal Spirit, "Thou art Christ, the Son of God!"

In reply to this noble confession, Jesus pronounces him blessed; and assures him, that such a confession could not have been made, such knowledge could not have been attained, but by immediate communication and revelation from heaven. “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father, which is in heaven.” (ver. 17.)

Here he calls him *Simon Bar-jona*, his old, original name: but farther to instruct, and comfort him in the great concerns of salvation, he immediately calls him by the new name, which Christ himself had given him—a *Stone*: as recorded in John i. 42. “When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas;” which is, by interpretation, *a Stone* (or Peter.)

John, here, evidently says, our Lord gave Simon the new name of Cephas, or Kephaz, a Caldee or Syriac word, which, when translated into Greek, is a *Stone*, or *Peter*.

The very same word, used by Christ, in our context, is used by the apostle in the interpretation, or translation of the name *Cephas*.

Σὺ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς ὁ ἐρμηνεύεται Πέτρος. (John i. 43.) “Thou shalt be called *Kephas*,” which is, by interpretation, *Petros*, or Peter, or, according

to our translation, a *Stone*. Then it follows, allowedly, that if *Petros* is rendered *Stone* in one text, it may in another ; and, consequently, I consider this continuation of our blessed Redeemer's address to Peter, to be this ;

“ I, moreover, inform thee, that thou art a stone, in the magnificent fabric which I am about to erect; and on this Rock (i. e. Christ), on which your faith is founded, will I build my whole church, and so securely, that hell, with all its rage, shall never be able to destroy it !”

Peter had confessed that Jesus was Christ, the Son of the living God ; who is the rock on which his church is built ; and, upon such a confession, Christ informs him that he is a stone, founded upon that rock. “ For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ.” It is said of the Israelites, “ They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. x. 4.)

“ God is a rock, his work is perfect,” (Deuteronomy iv. 32), and, no other rock, no other foundation, will ever be acknowledged, by the regenerate soul ; who is taught to sing with David, “ 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.” (Psalm xviii. 2.) While standing on this immoveable rock, with defiance to the gates of hell

to harm us, we would boldly ask the Roman Catholics, and all the enemies of Christ—we would ask them in a tone of triumph, peculiar to faith—we would ask them, in the very language of inspiration, “Who is God, save the Lord? or, who is a rock, save our God.” (Psalm xviii. 31.)

On this rock Jesus resolves to build his church: and let it be particularly noticed, that he is resolved to build it *himself*—*I will build*—It is his grand prerogative to redeem with his own blood, and make his Redeemed willing to return to Sion!

My church—His own people, his complete body, his elect. “Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Saviour of the body.” (Ephesians v. 23; Colossians i. 2—4.) All the redeemed, throughout all nations, and at all periods, are intended by the church. Hence it is said, “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.” (Ephesians v. 25.) He first *loved*, which is a proof that he knew for whom he died, and then gave himself for it; not for the world at large, but for it (the church), which is also an undeniable evidence, that he has a right to his people, and shall see them all seated round his eternal throne of glory! It is composed of men called by Divine grace, in consequence of their election, and redemption, to worship God in spirit and in truth; and on account of their immaculate holiness, and undiminished completeness in Christ, are denominated “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any

such thing—holy, and without blemish.” (Ephesians v. 27.) “The church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.” (Hebrews xii. 25.)

Peter is most agreeably informed, and the same divine information is given to every true believer, that he is a stone in this gloriously complete building, which laid in the quarry of everlasting love, from all eternity; there known, and infinitely dear to the Lord. In due time taken out of nature's quarry, by the power of the Comforter, and brought home to the church: where such a “*lively stone*” is hewn fit for its proper, and appointed situation, in the building; when every thing uneven, unfit, and that would prevent its union, and compactness with the other stones, is cut off: such as self-righteousness, self-confidence, fleshly and pretended holiness; that Christ alone may be honoured and glorified, as the wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification of such a regenerated soul—A *polished* stone, as was Peter, ornamented with light, life, love, and all the graces of the Spirit, most brilliantly to reflect the great Redeemer's praise and glory!—A *precious* stone—a costly jewel, bought with no less a price than the blood of Christ, and everlastingly invaluable in his esteem!

In the text, Peter has the promise of *a gift* of no inconsiderable value: nothing less than the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*; and these, I will contend, are given to all the ministers of Christ; and, in a certain glorious sense, to all

who are so highly favoured, as to be called to a knowledge of their own personal interest in Christ.

We must, then, enquire, what kingdom is here intended. And I am well assured, that not the shadow of an evidence can be found, to prove that it is the kingdom of eternal glory. Jesus himself keeps those keys, and will never admit any there, but those for whom it was prepared, from the foundation of the world. (Matthew xxv. 34.)

Neither has any but our Redeemer, power to cast a soul into hell. "I am (saith Christ) he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelations i. 18.) On this account, we have no occasion to fear the frowns, or curses of *Rome*, or of any priest whatever. It is God that justifies, Who is he that condemneth? Nor the rage of devils; they act only by Christ's permission, for the benefit of the church; and he can lock them up, and restrain their fury at his pleasure!

Neither have angel, or man, or any short of Christ, the keys of admission into the glorious liberty of the Gospel, and the enjoyment of new covenant blessings. For thus saith the Lord, "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open, and none shall shut,

and he shall shut, and none shall open." (Isaiah xxii. 22.) When he shutteth up the soul in darkness and distress, there is no opening till he is pleased to bring the prisoner out of prison, and say to the captive, "Go free." No man (saith he) cometh unto the Father, but by me." But, by the *Kingdom of Heaven*, here, we are, evidently, to understand the Gospel dispensation, and, by the *Keys*, that knowledge of those Gospel mysteries, which have been hidden from ages and generations, but are now revealed, and made manifest to the saints in Christ. "Which glorious kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36.) That is, not supported, nor carried on, by worldly sagacity, polity, and power—not requiring an arm of flesh to uphold it, nor sword, nor cruel inquisition, to defend it! But is supported by a supernatural agency, in the hearts of men. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans xiv. 17.) It does not consist in grimace, formality, outward pomposity, and vain parade; but is spiritual, internal, and hidden from those who are lost. (2 Corinthians iv. 3.)

The subjects of this kingdom are spiritual men, who have seen a precious Christ, the King in his beauty. And this King of glory, seated on his holy hill of Sion, qualifies, and sends forth ministers, who have the *Keys* of the mysteries of truth, to unlock, open, and explain them, to the edification of Christ's mystical body. Christ, in another place,

speaks of the key of knowledge: "Woe unto you, lawyers," saith he, "for ye have taken away the key of knowledge;" that is, they darkened counsel by words, by expositions, and false glosses: which is now most awfully the case, with many who are **BLIND GUIDES**, that neither enter the kingdom themselves, nor suffer others, who are entering, to go in. Though those who are entering, have keen appetites for the "*bread of life*"—for a complete Christ, and a complete salvation by him; those blind guides represent it, as *poison*, and intimidate their trembling and timid minds! But, sooner or later, the Lord will deliver them from such deceivers, and bless them with the keys of the experimental knowledge of himself; and then shall they go in and out, and find pasture.

The Lord, the Spirit, qualifies, and sends forth his ministers, to preach the everlasting Gospel, for the calling home of his redeemed, and for the edification of his church: for the accomplishment of which, he gives them,

First, the **KEY** of experimental godliness, by which they *unlock, open, and explain*, the sacred Scriptures. Man's sinful deformity; the law's purity, and extensiveness; the incapability of man to obey the law, and perform any thing that is truly good; the enmity of the human heart to God; the *stubbornness of the will*; the alienation of the affections from God; the necessity, and power, of a spiritual birth, or the regenerating work of the

Spirit; the preciousness of Christ, in his blood and righteousness, to the regenerated soul; the everlasting love of a covenant God, and Father, in Christ Jesus, to his own elected family; cannot be known, cordially embraced, and affectionately enjoyed, till powerfully experienced, as the soul is led into them, by the secret, and insuperable teaching of the Holy Comforter. As well might the illiterate clown lecture upon the most abstruse parts of science, and philosophy, as any man, however learned, preach the Gospel, till he knows that glorious Gospel, in its power and preciousness, by heartfelt experience, for himself. Experience of the life, and power of godliness, is the only KEY to the Scriptures: and it is the prerogative of Christ, to give that KEY to whomsoever he pleases. —“ How shall they preach, except they be sent?” The Lord opens unto them the Scriptures, by giving them to feel, in their own souls, the truth, reality, and preciousness of their contents! Where is the possibility of knowing the condemning power of the law, but by feeling its tremendous sentence, pronounced in our own souls? And how shall we proclaim deliverance from it, by a precious Jesus, who is the end of it, and who completely fulfilled it, for his people, except we have felt, and enjoyed that deliverance ourselves? I would appeal even to common sense, in defence of this position, and ask, Where is the possibility of a man’s defining, and describing that which he never saw, and of which, he never even heard? A KEY to the Scriptures is given to the ministers of Christ: and that KEY is SUPER-

NATURAL UNDERSTANDING. Jesus comes with the KEY of redeeming love, and unlocks, and opens the heart. He opened the heart of Lydia, that she might attentively hear, understand, and cordially embrace, the things spoken by PAUL; and he *opened* the understanding of his disciples, that they might *understand the scriptures*: who, with a joy peculiar to the sensations of celestial love, rapturously said, one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he walked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32.) In like manner does he send the Holy Comforter into the hearts of all his ministers, and people, to reveal the great and precious concerns of our salvation, and to furnish, and influence with experience, knowledge, love, and zeal, all that he employs, and intends to make useful, in the great work of the pure evangelic ministry. And thus,

Secondly, he gives us a KEY to your experience. We are acquainted with the exercises of your minds, however painful, or however pleasurable. Having been arrested, apprehended, tried at the bar of divine justice, found guilty, had the sentence of death pronounced upon us, imprisoned in dark unbelief, and distress of soul, slain by the law, and killed by the Lord himself, to all hopes of salvation, but by Jesus alone! and, as he never killeth but to make alive, we have felt, and known, and do now, with a lively

gratitude to the Lord, remember, the pardoning love, and free justification, so conspicuously manifested in our enlargement from the prison-house, out of which we were brought, by the blood of the everlasting covenant: when we went on our way rejoicing, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. We have thus a KEY given us, by the precious Jesus, to all your distresses, troubles, conflicts with enemies, temptations, sinful besetments, and painful exercises of mind; as well as to your pleasurable experience of joy and peace, life, and liberty, in Christ Jesus. And thus we have, evidently, given us, by our gracious Lord, a KEY to open that kingdom of heaven, which is within you; and which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans xiv. 17.)

But the Lord must give us ability to turn the KEY to any good purpose: and then, he himself must oil the wards of the lock; that is, visit your hearts with the oil of his divine grace, or our every attempt to *unlock* the things of the Spirit to you, will prove ineffectual, fruitless, and abortive.

Third. That precious object of our Faith, the Glorious Redeemer, revealed in our souls, and formed in us the hope of glory, is a most delightful KEY to unlock, and open all the *prophecies* of the Old Testament, and all the types and shadows of the ceremonial law. The time of his coming,

his birth, his ministry, his poverty, his temptations, his death, and the consequent atonement made for all the sins of all his people, form a **KEY** so exactly fitted to the wards of the lock of the law and the prophets, that when the Lord is pleased to put that **KEY** into the hand of faith, the lock is turned with the greatest ease; and we find, as we open it, to our inexpressible satisfaction, that the Old Testament is full of Christ! and that he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world!

Fourth. By leaving us to the buffetings of hell, the plague of sin, and the painful operations of self-righteous pride, and legality, our blessed Jesus gives us a **KEY**, that exactly fits those dreadful *prison locks*, by which many of God's children are confined in bondage, and kept from the enjoyment of the Lord.

We are not ignorant of Satan's devices, in suggesting, some times, the impossibility of God's loving such a very depraved, polluted, and unworthy sinner; and at another time, that you ought to make yourself better, that by such an holy preparation, you may meet with reception at the Gracious Throne. Neither are God's ministers strangers to sin's plague, and the imperious rising of inward impurities. Nor of that Arminian pride, which keeps you from venturing your all on Christ, and from looking entirely out of yourselves, to him alone, for righteousness,

strength, and complete and everlasting salvation. By these trying exercises of soul, the Lord furnishes his ministers with a **KEY**, by which, instrumentally, they unlock the prison-door, for the liberation of those, who have known Gospel liberty, but are in bondage to *corruption*, and *unbelief*: for, saith the apostle, "The Lord comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians i. 4.)

The Lord gives his ministers *comfort* in all their tribulations, by fresh displays, and fresh views, of the *freeness*, sovereignty, and eternity of grace, in Christ, by which, all the people of God, are everlastingly *safe* and *saved*: that by comfort flowing from such a delightful, and never-failing source, they may undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free!

Herein we see the *wisdom of God* displayed in all the temptations, and trials of his ministers: He afflicts with a design to comfort, and comforts them, that they, as instruments in his hand, may comfort, and console his afflicted people. Thus we are taught to tell you, the source of your distresses, the gracious, and wise design of the Lord, in such afflictive dispensations, and the end they will, most assuredly, answer. That they are designed as a furnace to purge away the dross and tin of your self-righteousness; to make you

infinitely more sick of yourself, and more in love with the altogether lovely Jesus, and feelingly dependant upon his all sufficient grace.

Fifth. The KEY of spiritual enjoyment is given to God's ministers, that they may glory in the riches of free grace, and be instrumental in *unlocking* that spiritual kingdom, where celestial consolation, and permanent peace abound, to the believing soul. At the entrance of which are the gates of righteousness. "Open to me, saith the Psalmist, the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord." It is within these gates, where redeemed souls praise, and enjoy Christ! A believing view of the righteousness of Christ, gives such unspeakable pleasure, that nothing can hold that soul in captivity, who is so divinely favoured.

And though we cannot open them to others, we are directed to turn the key of our own experience, and to tell of the perfect, and eternally justifying righteousness of Christ: and while we speak, the Lord is pleased to apply it with power, and render the preaching of righteousness, a blessing, in the deliverance of the captive from *legal chains*! Thus furnished with those important KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, God's own ministers are led by his Divine Providence, held in his hand, and graciously made *instruments*, in unlocking the various gates, doors, chains, and bonds, by which the redeemed are held in bond-

age, deprived of consolation, and kept from free, and glorious access to a covenant Father.

While the church of Rome vainly boasts of the Pope's infallibility, and superstitiously considers him Christ's vicar, and Peter's successor, on earth, who has power to pardon or condemn; the children of the Lord feel the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, and with pleasure acknowledge that his ministers are blessed with the KEYS, by which Gospel mysteries are opened, their chains unlocked, and their captive souls brought into liberty. But they consider them only as INSTRUMENTS in the HOLY COMFORTER'S hand: and, consequently, ascribe all the glory of their liberty, consolation, and salvation, entirely to the Lord! And while the love of Christ most efficaciously constrains his ministers, to speak the things which become sound doctrine, it also most sweetly impels them, on the very summit of their most extensive usefulness, to ascribe all that they are, as christians and ministers, and all that they do for the benefit of the church, entirely, and unreservedly, to *free grace*! "Unto me, saith the apostle, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" (Ephesians iii. 8.) "I have preached the Gospel in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; but this is of *grace*: and that grace was not obtained by study, or philosophic research; nor purchased by my good works, or

duties, (for then would it cease to be *grace*,) but it was given, freely and unmeritedly. Jesus hath *given* me this grace: he hath, as if he had said, given me the *keys of knowledge, and experience*; and enables me to *unlock*, and open to you, the unsearchable riches of Christ. I cannot preach without him; for my sufficiency is of God: and then he must apply his own truth to your souls, or my preaching will be abortive."

With what holy indignation against self, and fiery zeal for the Redeemer's glory, did he address the Corinthians, when they entered into contentions for their *favourite* ministers, and erroneously exalted, and ascribed unto them, that power which belongs alone unto the Lord! How pointed and powerful are his interrogations? "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (1 Corinthians iii. 5.)

Have we not many professors, in this day of abounding error, who contend more tenaciously for their *favourite* ministers, than for the truth? Have we not many who are so amazingly *priest-ridden*, as to contend zealously for men, who, under the garb of pretended fleshly *sanctity*, are the public, and avowed enemies to salvation by *grace*; and the persecutors, and professed opponents, of all who contend earnestly for the faith,

once delivered to the saints? And have we not other professors, that, we have reason to believe, know and hear the truth, who talk more of the *man*, than his *master*; more of the *minister*, than the truth that he *delivers*: considering him as an *oracle* almost infallible? Whenever this is the case, I am authorized, by the third chapter of the first Corinthians, to tell them, that they are, in that instance, carnal, and walk and talk as men: not as christians, whose eyes of faith and adoration are fixed on Christ alone, the only infallible head of his blood-bought church!

My dear Sirs! may the Lord teach you, not to think more highly of men than you ought to think; but to think soberly. Not to be intoxicated with the admiration of men's persons, or talents—but while you account every minister of Christ, worthy of double honour, and esteem them highly in love for their work's sake, and do every thing in your power to strengthen their hands, in such important employ, think them still but men of like passions with yourselves, whose sufficiency is alone of the Lord.

“ Ah! spare your *idol*, think him human still,
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too:
Doat not too much, nor spoil what ye admire!” *Couper*.

Having scripturally proved, that all the ministers of Christ, divinely qualified, and sent forth by himself, are furnished with “*The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*” I shall proceed to notice, more particularly, the use of these *keys*, according

to the annexed promise: "*Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*"

In the elucidation of this, it will be necessary to keep in recollection the important truth for which I have been contending: that ministers are *instruments*, and but *instruments*, in liberating imprisoned souls, and opening the kingdom of heaven, or the mysteries of the everlasting Gospel. It is God who giveth the increase: to whom, alone, belong the kingdom, power, and glory, for ever and ever!

Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth—The Lord has promised to bring his people into the *bond* of the covenant. (Ezekiel xx. 37.) Not but they were in the covenant, and securely bound up in Christ, from everlasting; but there is a glorious period with them all, when they are brought to a knowledge of it: which knowledge is generally communicated through the medium of the Gospel ministry.

The Lord gives the man his message, and sends him to preach to poor, sensible, self-condemned sinners; who labour under distress of soul, unbelief, and a thousand doubts and fears, concerning their interest in *Christ*. While he describes their state, proclaims the freeness of Divine pardon,

and the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, the Holy Comforter attends it with such an invincible and unctuous power, that the sinner is brought to Christ; into the bond of the covenant; into Sion: and, by the spirit of adoption, loses his slavish fears, and confidently cries *Abba*, Father. By these keys, a minister of the Spirit, ministerially, and instrumentally, locks up, most comfortably and securely, every elect vessel, to whom his ministry is blessed, by the testimony he bears to divine truth; which has, in the liberated soul, the confirmation and broad seal of heaven! Sorrow is turned into joy; doubts and fears, to blessed assurance; and the sinner is *bound*, that is, confirmed, established, and built up in everlasting love: and feels so securely locked up in the covenant of grace, with Christ, that he can testify, the Gospel came not in word only, but also in power to his soul, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. (1 Thessalonians i. 5.) While the minister rightly divides the Word of Truth, turns the key of experimental godliness, contends earnestly for the faith, and bears testimony to the truth, as it is in Jesus, the sinner, blessed under his ministry, can say, "What the man delivers is the truth! I feel it! 'Tis my own experience, and precious to my soul! I rejoice to find myself eternally *bound* up in the heart of that Jesus, whom he preaches, and in whose hand he has been instrumental, in *binding* my soul *in love* to the truth!"

Through ministerial instrumentality, our blessed

Jesus thus *binds* up the broken-hearted, proclaims liberty to the captive, and opens the prison to them that are bound. (Isaiah lxi. 1.) In giving his ministers their great commission, he gives them this command, “*Bind* up the testimony, seal the law amongst my disciples.” (Isaiah viii. 6.)

The advocates of free-will, and human merit, “*Bind* heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Matthew xxiii. 4.) But the advocates of free grace *bind* up the testimony of the Lord against them, to the *triumphant* deliverance of those, who were led captive by them in their self-righteous chains!

Thus, as instruments in the Divine Comforter’s hand, they bind up the *wounds of God’s* afflicted ones; whose souls become *bound* to Jesus, in the most unfeigned affection and supremest delight: rejoicing in the *bond* of the everlasting covenant! And whatsoever a minister of the Gospel thus binds on earth, is bound in heaven; because it is, in every respect, consonant with the divine will—For, observe particularly, that it is only an execution of what Jesus determined before to be done. Whatsoever thou SHALT bind. Here is God’s SHALL—and, therefore, being executed according to his purpose, and by the power of his grace, it must meet his approbation, and be infinitely delightful in his sight: and thus it is bound, confirmed, and

approved of, in heaven. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One." (1 John v. 7.)

Three, that bear record, in the economy of the covenant, to all that love, and grace, and to all the exceeding great and precious promises, in which the liberated soul rejoices, and by which the Lord is *bound* to save him, with an everlasting salvation!

O, ye highly-favoured saints of the Most High! Lift up your heads with joy, and give all glory to the God of your salvation! That which is confirmed in your experience, on earth, is *bound*, confirmed, and settled, in the courts above! He, who has called you by his grace, pardoned your sins, and sealed you for his own, is *bound*, by oath, and absolute *promise*, to take you to glory: so "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Hebrews vi. 18.)

And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. By the preaching of Christ, in his incarnation, atonement, righteousness, and all his mediatorial glory, captive souls are loosed from the power of Satan, the condemnation of the law, the charge, and dominion of sin, and, freely justified from all things, appear holy, and without

blame before the Lord, in love ! This also is done in heaven : in the very *heart* of HIM who knows no variation, nor the shadow of a turn ! 'Tis recorded in the heavens, on the heart of everlasting love, and cannot be revolted !

The total sum of the text is this, That whatsoever is done on earth, by the instrumentality of his ministers, or in his people, by his Spirit, is done in heaven ; inasmuch as it is God's own work, and, therefore, done in *his heart*, for them, as well as in *their hearts*, by his Almighty power ! And the salvation of his people being the execution of the purpose of his heart, by his own efficacious grace, it follows, unavoidably, that they cannot possibly fail of eternal glory : for what God does shall stand for ever ! Give him all the glory ! To him be glory for ever !