

## LETTER VI.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING noticed three scriptures brought by Mr. Fuller to prove special faith is commanded, I proceed to a fourth, JOHN vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—That Mr. F. should bring this as an argument for his favourite sentiment is to me astonishing, since it appears directly against him.—He observes they contain an answer to a question; viz. What shall we do that we might work the works of God? v. 28. To which question our Lord answers, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent:" "which (says Mr. F.) if it be a pertinent answer to the question asked (and no doubt but it is so) it is as if he had said, This is what you must do if you think to please God; this is the first duty incumbent upon you in that great work of labouring for that which endureth to everlasting life, and without which it will be impossible with any other labour whatsoever to please God\*."

Let me first remark here if this believing on Christ be the *first duty* incumbent in the great work of labouring for that which endureth to everlasting life, is it not somewhat strange, that our Lord should direct to labouring first, as he does, v. 27. and don't tell them of the *first duty* incumbent on them, till they ask for it; till they by their question draw it out of him? Surely this was acting in a manner (to use Mr. F.'s own words.)

\* P. 41.

"far from his usual pertinency\*." But certainly this answer of our Lord's is directly against Mr. F. It is as if he had said, What must ye do to work the works of God? I tell you plainly, there is nothing you can do that can be acceptable and well pleasing to God till you have faith, and that faith is of his operation; "this is the work of God, that ye believe:" and then he goes on to speak more largely of this believing in him in the following verses. Speaking of himself as the bread of life, which was to be fed upon in a spiritual manner by faith, he says ver. 35. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He further informs them, ver. 36. that they had seen him, but had not believed on him, and then points out who will believe, and who only, v. 37. "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me." This doctrine of electing love and distinguishing grace offended the Jews, and we are told, ver. 41. "they murmured at him;" which made Christ reply, v. 43. "Murmur not among yourselves;" what I tell you is a fact: the doctrine I have delivered is truth; that faith is the work of God; that none will have it but those whom the Father has given me, and I now further add; "no man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him," ver. 44. How very clear and plain from the whole context does it appear, that this special faith is no duty, but the work of God, and a blessing designed only for those whom the Father hath given to Christ; and to suppose men will be damned for the want of it, is cruel and shocking.

The next passage quoted by Mr. F. is, John v. 23. "It is the Father's will that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father †. To adopt Mr. F.'s own words in answer to a

\* P. 43.

† P. 43.

quotation from Mr. Brine ; “ Perhaps it would puzzle a common reader to discern any declaration of the necessity of faith \*,” and much more to discern the duty of faith in this passage. It must be very evident to every one who reads it in connection with the preceding verses, that our Lord is there asserting and proving his equality with the Father, and that nothing more is intended than that the same divine reverence, adoration and honour, should be given to him as to the Father. And the honour here referred to is the honour due to him in the character of a judge, and not of a saviour, for they are closely connected with v. 22. “ For the Father judgeth no man (i. e. without the Son) but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father :” that is, in that capacity : yes, and all men shall be obliged to honour him too, by bowing their knees before him at the last day in judgment. Now for Mr. F. to say “ this passage not only proves Christ’s equality with the Father, but the obligations of mankind to believe in him †,” appears to me “ a most unwarrantable force put upon it.”

I go on to p. 44. where Mr. F. says “ wicked men are commanded to *seek* the Lord while he may be found, and that in the character of the God of grace, promising mercy, and abundance of pardon to them that seek him, Isa. 55. 6, 7.—Arminians quote this passage as a proof there is a day of grace, which, if men improve, they may enjoy the favour of God ; but if they let it slip, if it be once elapsed, there is no more opportunity of meeting with him. To whom Dr. Gill thus replies, “ They are an “ exhortation to public worship, signified by seeking the Lord, and calling upon him ; the time “ for which with the Jews was on the seventh day

“ of the week, and with us Christians on the first, “ these being times in which he might be found, “ it became the Jews of old, and us now, to attend “ public ordinances, in expectation of meeting “ with God \*.” And this I think is a sufficient answer to Mr. F.

It is further observed, Simon Magus was exhorted to pray to the Lord for pardon of sin. Who denies it? Prayer is a natural and moral duty binding on all men. But what has this to do with special faith? Why, says Mr. F. “ spiritual blessings, all will allow, cannot be found but in the “ way of faith in Christ.” That is true ; but they may be *sought after* in the use of means without that faith : and that is all which is here exhorted to, not to find or to get pardon of sin, but to pray for it.

The next scripture is ROM. ix. 31, 32. “ Israel hath not attained 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.” Now, says Mr. F. “ ought “ they not to have sought it by faith? Why then “ are they blamed because they did not? Did they “ right and what they ought to do in stumbling “ at that stumbling stone? Why then are they in “ so doing said to be disobedient †?”

By faith here is meant, not the grace, but the doctrine of faith, the gospel ; as appears clearly by its being opposed to the law, and this was the stumbling stone at which they stumbled, as we are expressly told in 1 Pet. 2. 8. “ which stumble at the word being disobedient.” Taking the words in this view, I thus answer Mr. F.’s questions. The doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ being clearly revealed in the gospel,

they ought to have received it, and were to blame for treating it with contempt; but I will not say they ought to have received this righteousness by special faith, or that they ought to have been clothed with it, nor do I find them any where blamed for being destitute of it. No, all they are blamed for is, for not receiving the *doctrine*, and not because they did not receive the thing itself.

“ To these (says Mr. F.) might be added such passages of scripture as command men to put their *trust* in the Lord, and blame them for the contrary practice \*.” But to trust in the Lord is a natural duty, as God is infinitely benevolent, all-sufficient in his power, inviolable in his truth, and invariable in his faithfulness, he ought to be trusted, the light of nature and reason declare it. But what has this to do with evangelical trust, and special faith in Christ? Ps. iv. 5. is here produced, “ offer the sacrifices of righteousness; and put your trust in the Lord.” To which is added, “ a trust connected with the sacrifices of righteousness, must be a spiritual trust †.” But what are these sacrifices of righteousness? Why, says an excellent commentator, “ things righteously gotten, for the Lord hates robbery for a burnt-offering, Isa. 61. 8. Some respect may be had to the unrighteous acquisitions of Absalom and his men (on the occasion of whole rebellion this psalm is supposed to have been penned) and who were now in possession of Jerusalem, and of the altars of the Lord, and were sacrificing on them; in which they gloried, and to which this is opposed †.” Now it may be considered as an address to these men, and so carries in it a sharp rebuke for their conduct in presenting robbery for a burnt-offering, and in trusting in it when they had done. Though I rather think it is an address

\* P. 45.

† P. 46.

‡ Dr. Gill on the passage.

of David's to the good men who were with him, and abode with him in this time of trouble; and the first part of the verse contains advice, not to act as their enemies had done, offer what was unrighteously gotten, but to offer sacrifices of righteousness; and the latter part is an encouraging direction what to do in this season of distress. Don't, as if he had said, be cast down, the Lord (as is observed in ver. 3.) has set apart him that is godly for himself, the Lord will hear when I call upon him.” Therefore wait upon him, put your trust in him, be of good courage, he shall strengthen your hearts, and deliver both you and me out of all our troubles. This passage then will not at all apply to Mr. F.'s point. I mean it will by no means bear him out in his doctrine of spiritual trust and special faith being commanded to wicked and unregenerate men.

Mr. F. says, p. 46. “ It is certainly impossible in the nature of things, that any one should really trust in Christ until he is really dead to the law, that is, till he ceaseth to trust in himself; but surely that does not prove that he ought not to leave the one and cleave to the other. Is it not every one's duty to be dead to the law? Surely, since man has broke the terms of the first covenant, it is not now his duty to expect life from it.” That man ought not to expect life by the law, since God has declared, and his own conscience must tell him, he has broken it; and that as Christ is so plainly revealed to be the only Saviour, that he ought not to expect life and salvation from any other quarter, is what I readily grant. “ The mysteries of redemption by Christ (says Mr. Brine) are expressed in language which is not above the capacities of men; and therefore they are able to perceive the *truth* of those mysteries, though they are not capable of understanding the *real* nature of them without an additional supernatural revelation, or illumina-

“tion of the mind is graciously vouchsafed to “them \*;” and that men ought to pay a reverential regard to the truths of the gospel, and not reject them as idle tales, is what must be allowed. But what then? Does it follow that men in general *ought*, that it is their duty to trust in Christ for salvation, by special faith, and a divine and steady confidence? I think not. “But,” says Mr. F. “every man has a warrant *so* to trust in Christ †:” and where is it? Why, two scriptures are brought; “that declaration, -whosoever will, let him come” (says our author) “is a sufficient one.” But this encouragement surely is limited—it is whosoever *will*: now all have not a *will*; therefore it is not a warrant for every man.—The next text mentioned is, “and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” This, says Mr. F. “is another as sufficient;” but is not this limited to the elect, who are by efficacious grace brought and made willing to come? “All that the Father hath given me shall come, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” Here’s election asserted; here is the certainty of the call of the elect declared, “*they shall come*;” and here is the encouragement for all those who do come; “they shall in no wise be cast out.” But where is the warrant to call *every* man to come? I confess, I have not penetration enough to discover it.

But I think, Sir, I have said enough on Mr. F.’s first proposition. I mean, I have made use of words enough, whether the arguments are sufficient to set it aside I must leave you to judge.

I now remain  
affectionately yours,

\* *Motives to Love and Unity*, p. 40.

† P. 47.

## LETTER VII.

DEAR SIR,

GIVE me leave now to make a few remarks on Mr. Fuller’s SECOND PROPOSITION; which is this, “*Every man is bound cordially to receive, and heartily to approve whatever God reveals \*.*” If Mr. F. means by receiving, no more than crediting, I agree with him. But if he means by receiving, a possessing, or receiving into the heart, I very much disagree with him. God reveals the glorious doctrine of adoption: I think every man ought to credit it; but I do not think every man is bound to receive the spirit of adoption. God reveals Christ as the only way of salvation: I think every man ought to credit it; but I cannot think every man is bound to have Christ in him, the hope of glory. Yet this is what Mr. F. advances when he says, “it is every one’s duty to believe in him with a saving faith;” for as I told you in Letter 3d, true faith brings Christ into the soul, and transforms the soul into the image of Christ. Such a reception of Christ whom God reveals, I cannot for a moment imagine every man is bound to. Mr. F. asks, p. 50. “Is he at liberty to think unjustly concerning him, to prefer his idols before him; or set up another way of salvation than that which God hath appointed in opposition to him?”—He further adds, “to imagine that they *ought not* to think so much as a *good thought* of him, but are *right* in judging him to have *no form nor comeliness, nor beauty that they should desire him*, one

\* P. 49.