

---

**TEN**

***SERMONS***

**ON**

**FAITH.**

---

**By EZRA STILES ELY, A. M.**  
**PASTOR OF THE THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.**

---

**PHILADELPHIA :**  
**PRINTED BY JOHN W. SCOTT,**  
**FOR RUFUS LITTLE.**  
**1816.**

District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

☆ (seal.) ☆ *BE it remembered, That on the nineteenth day of August, in the forty first year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1816, the reverend Ezra Stiles Ely of the said District hath deposited in this Office the Title of a Book the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, to wit:*

*"Ten Sermons on Faith. By Ezra Stiles Ely, A. M. Pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in the City of Philadelphia."*

*In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the Times therein mentioned."*

*—And also to the Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to An Act entitled "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the Times therein mentioned," and extending the Benefits thereof to the Arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other Prints."*

*D. CALDWELL, Clerk of the  
District of Pennsylvania*

# CONTENTS.

---

Introductory Address . . . . . 5

Sermon I. The *Spirit* of Faith.

2 Cor. iv. 13.

*We having the same Spirit of Faith—also  
believe.* . . . . . 9

Sermon II. Saving Faith.

Acts xvi. 31.

*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou  
shalt be saved.* . . . . . 29

Sermon III. The Character and Confidence of a Believer.

Romans x. 11.

*Whosoever believeth on him shall not be  
ashamed.* . . . . . 53

Sermon IV. Weak Faith.

Romans xiv. 1.

*Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye.* 73

Sermon V. Those Persons described who have no Saving Faith.

2 Thessalonians iii. 2.

*All men have not Faith.* . . . . . 89

**Sermon VI. The Increase of Faith.**

**Luke xvii. 5.**

*Increase our Faith.* - - - - 107

**Sermon VII. The Object, Means, and Use of Faith.**

**John xx. 31.**

*These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.* - - - - 128

**Sermon VIII. Strong Faith.**

**Romans iv. 20.**

*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in Faith, giving glory to God.* - - 151

**Sermon IX. Assurance of Faith and Salvation.**

**1 John v. 13.**

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* - - - - 170

**Sermon X. The End of Faith.**

**1 Peter i. 9.**

*Receiving the end of your Faith, even the salvation of your souls.* - - - 197



# INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

*PEOPLE OF MY CHARGE.*



MY DEAR FRIENDS,

YOU have heard the substance of the following discourses, but I am desirous that you should have them in possession, read them until you have practically applied all of them, and then transmit them to your children. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you all may believe on the Christ Jesus to the saving of your souls; may grow in knowledge, increase in faith, arrive at the stature of Christian men, and be fully assured of an inheritance incorruptible in the heavens.

With the humble hope of being instrumental in producing and perfecting saving faith in the minds of the people of my charge in particular, have I prepared the following pages

for the press ; but should Providence send them to those who are strangers to us for their edification, it would be a source of joy and gratitude.

I confess that the desire of preaching the gospel to every creature often throbs in my heart, and runs through every vein, while I have peculiar pleasure in addressing you, and never feel so much at home as in my own pulpit ; but since it is impossible to be a living teacher in many places, I take this opportunity of preaching by notes to all who may be willing to give me their attention.

It may be objected to this little publication, that others have written on the subject in a better manner than I have done. What then ? Because other ministers of Christ are better preachers than I am, shall I therefore cease to offer Jesus Christ to my fellow-sinners ? The principle of the objection, if made a general rule, would exclude from the field of usefulness all preachers and writers but the best ; and consequently the gospel must be confined to a few.

If others have enjoyed the satisfaction of doing good according to their ability, I am

disposed to do the same : and I am persuaded that many will peruse my treatise, who have never seen one before from any pen, on the same subject : while not a few in the circle of my acquaintance will read what I have written with more attention than they would a better work of another man, because they either feel the partiality of friendship for me, or else have been constrained to regard me as the minister by whom they have believed.

If any other consideration than the love of promulgating the truth has influence in the publication of these Sermons, it a desire of expressing my high regard for those to whom I am bound in the tenderest ties, in inscribing the volume,

TO THE DEAR PEOPLE OF MY CHARGE,

*The Third Presbyterian Congregation in the  
City of Philadelphia.*

We have cost each other much, and therefore ought to be mutually precious in each other's esteem. "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel:" "for what is it wherein ye are inferior to other churches,

except it be that I myself was" with your consent, "burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong." "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

*Philadelphia, August 15th, 1816.*

# Sermons on Faith.

---

## SERMON I.

---

### THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.

*"We having the same Spirit of Faith—also believe."* 2 COR. iv. 13.

PAUL frequently speaks of the Holy Ghost under the appellation of THE SAME SPIRIT. "Now there are diversities of gifts," saith he, "but the same Spirit." "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit." 1 Cor. xii. 4, 8, 9. By the same Spirit, therefore, in the language of the text, is to be understood the Holy Ghost, for the Apostolical writings apply these terms to no other personage. "We also believe," saith the great Apostle, referring to a passage in the Psalms, \* "and therefore speak," even as others have believed and therefore spoken; and our faith we ascribe to our "having the

\* Psalm cvi. 10.

same Spirit of Faith," which wrought in the pious of ancient times. Now in Paul and every other child of God "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will:" wherefore we affirm, what we conceive to be the doctrines implied in the text,

I. That the Holy Ghost actually dwells in every believer : and

II. That every act of saving faith must be ultimately ascribed to this inhabitation.

In entering on a series of discourses on the subject of faith, it is important, in the commencement, to prove a fact to which we must make frequent reference, and by which we account for the very existence of that mental operation which "gathereth fruit unto life eternal." Indulge me then, if I spend some time in evincing the truth of THE FIRST PROPOSITION,

*That the Holy Ghost actually dwells in every believer.* The truth on this subject must be ascertained, from the word of God, and from the consciousness of the believer himself; for the operations of the Spirit on the human mind correspond with "the testimony of Jesus."

Never did our Saviour speak more explicitly, than when he said, "the COMFORTER which is the Holy Ghost," (John xiv. 26.) "dwelleth with you, and shall be in you:" never in a more literal manner, than when he

promised to send from the Father "the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father," and the Son. John xv. 26. If, therefore, the declarations and promises of Christ are true, there is an actual indwelling of God the Spirit, in the mind of a Christian. He dwelt in the primitive disciples and abides in all who have believed through their word.

The inspired writer of the Acts of the Apostles declares, (Acts xiii. 48, and 52.) that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed;" "and the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." When Ananias addressed Saul of Tarsus, he said, "the Lord hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Acts ix. 17.

"As I began to speak," said Peter, concerning his interview with Cornelius and his friends, "the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said. John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Acts xi. 15, 16. The apostle now perceived, that every disciple of Jesus must be baptized by the reception of the Spirit of God.

To the Corinthian Christians Paul said, "your body is the temple of THE HOLY GHOST WHICH IS IN YOU, which ye have of God." 1 Cor. vi. 19. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit

of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. iii. 16. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." 2 Cor. vi. 16. The same apostle writes to the Romans, (ch. viii. ver. 9.) "*ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*" Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by *his Spirit that DWELLETH in you.*" From these passages it is evident, that the Holy Ghost does actually reside in the body and spirit of a genuine Christian, so that we become in some sense one with him, for "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." 1 Cor. vi. 17.

The word of God assures us that Jesus Christ dwells in every believer, and that this inhabitation is accomplished by the union of the Spirit to our spirits. Christ dwells in our hearts, (Ephes. iii. 17.) *through the Holy Ghost given to us*, and it is by the Spirit that we are made complete in the Mediator. "Christ liveth in me," said Paul, and so did the renewing Spirit, whose office it is to apply



the redemption, which was purchased by the blood of atonement.

Concerning the duration of the Spirit's residence in his people, we are assured that it shall be for ever. He will *abide* in them : will make their hearts his home : will never leave, never forsake them.

In addition to these plain declarations of the divine word, the people of God have a consciousness of their own mental operations to prove that the Holy Spirit dwells in them. Here I shall not be satisfied with the rhapsodies of the enthusiast, or idle dreamer, but must have sober, substantial evidence ; and such as ought to convince a sceptic. Let us have the same sort of evidence which is requisite to prove the existence of the spirits of our fellow men.

The immortal mind is not perceived by any of our organs of sense. We neither see, nor smell, nor hear, nor taste, nor feel spirits ; and yet we rationally judge that they have being. We cannot discern any relation which they bear to space, and still we correctly judge that they exist somewhere, and in certain definite places. For instance, you believe that I have a spirit, but you cannot render it palpable to any one of your senses ; and you think that my spirit resides within my body, but you cannot describe its seat. In like manner, I conceive that I am now preaching

to the spirits of two thousand persons, and to spirits, which, although they cannot be measured as matter, by lines and angles, yet are nevertheless within these walls, and within the bodies which I behold. If any one should deny that there are many reasonable beings, many thinking minds present, he would be thought a fit subject for bedlam.

Now I affirm, that believers have the same evidence that God dwells in their hearts, as that spirits inhabit the bodies of their neighbours, and that rational human spirits are at present convened in this church. The speaker is conscious of the existence of his own mind, and he perceives that certain external and sensible operations result from his thoughts, volitions, and other mental acts.

He concludes, when he sees a form like his own, when he perceives the natural language of intelligence, when he hears the articulations of the human voice, when he observes the signs of design, of hope, of fear, of attention, of affection, that spirits like his own dwell in these organized bodies. From your attention to his expressions of thought, it is evident that you must possess something capable of attention, of perception, and thought. Where there is thought there must of necessity be a thinking being; where hope and fear exist, there must be a substance capable of affections and passions; and where reason is found, there must be a rational spirit.

Your eyes do not see ; but your minds have that perception, which we call sight, through the instrumentality of your eyes. Your ears do not hear, but your souls hear through them. When, therefore, you discover that others see, and hear, as well as yourselves, you infer, that they have minds too ; and you cannot divest yourselves of the belief that persons exist, whom you hear, and to whom you speak. You believe, irresistibly, that spirits exist in conjunction with their bodies, and these compound beings you love, fear, or hate, on account of something which you discover in your social intercourse with them.

We learn that the Spirit of God dwells in us by the mental operations which HE produces. If he operates in us, and the word of God informs us, that he dwells within us, the divine testimony and our own experience correspond. All true Christians find that the Holy Ghost abides in them,

*First, as the Spirit of Truth.*

Our Saviour promises, that *the Spirit of truth shall be in his people* ; and declares that they *know him*, after their reception of him. It is indeed a fact that they *know him*, for they are persuaded that they are taught of God. When they were without God, they were conscious that they perceived, judged, and determined like natural men ; and now they are equally conscious that they discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner ; that

they reason, judge, resolve, hope, and fear as new men, as those who are led by the Spirit ; which they could not do unless the Holy Ghost were in them.

It is not natural to a sinner to know God, and therefore when he comes to the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ, he understands that a supernatural work has been performed in him, not by his own spirit ; but by the indwelling of the Spirit of God ; who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us ; and whose province it is, to guide us into the knowledge of all necessary truth. When I think as a man, I know that the spirit of a man inhabits this body ; but when I think as a child of God, I know that the Spirit of his Son is sent into my heart. The person who now relies upon Jesus Christ for salvation, formerly had no discernment of the true character and excellence of the Mediator. He did not feel himself to be a lost sinner, in danger of everlasting perdition ; but when the Comforter is come, he is reproved for sin, (John xvi. 7, 8.) feels the weight of the sentence of condemnation, and experiences in himself the truth of the Lord's declaration, that "when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." John xv. 26. "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you

into all truth:"—"he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John xvi. 13, 14. Since it is not natural to the rebel to know Christ as a Saviour, every one who can say, that he perceives the Son of God to be altogether lovely, and a Redeemer suited to his wants, may also affirm, that the Spirit of God, and of grace and glory, has rested upon him. In short, you have the same proof that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you, which you have of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; for "hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, *God dwelleth in him*, and he in God." 1 John iv. 13, 14, 15.

The Spirit of truth also causes the person into whom he enters to understand the gospel plan of salvation. That which once appeared darkness and confusion now becomes light and order. The newly enlightened man marvels that he did not discern the same spiritual objects formerly, in the same manner: "but he was without spiritual life until the Holy Ghost took possession of his breast: and how could a dead man see, or hear, or admit, or love truth divine?"

All true Christians find that the Holy Ghost abides in them,

*Secondly*, as the Comforter.

The natural man is conscious of deriving some consolation from natural objects, and so is the spiritual man from the Holy Ghost. He knows by his own experience that the Spirit of God is the Comforter in his soul. He feels such support under trials, and peace of mind as the world cannot give. Christ had comforted his disciples by his bodily presence, but when about to depart he said, the Father "shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." When this promise is fulfilled to any child of the Most High, he finds peace in believing in the Lord Jesus, and joy in the communion of the good God, who occupies his humble breast. He converses with the Sanctifier within him: and therefore in pronouncing the Apostolical benediction, we say, "the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Hence Paul conjured the Philippians to obedience, by the "fellowship of the Spirit," as well as the comfort which they had in Christ. Philip. ii. 1. Stand aside, alluring world; be absent my hearers, for a moment: cease, the preacher; and let me commune with the Everlasting Jehovah, that now within me moves to holy intercourse!

"Wilt thou dwell within this bosom, O my God?"

*"Canst thou doubt it? Lo, I dwell with every one that is of a humble and contrite heart."*

“If thou hast made a temple of this body, O thou Holy One, who inhabitest eternity, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”

*“I will cause all my goodness to pass before thee; for I am the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in compassion.”*

“Now I know of a truth, that thou art my God, for thou hast caused me to see, and trust thee. Whom have I, O God, in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire in comparison with thee.”

Lo, I see heaven open, and the Son of God descends to earth. He clothes himself with human nature; he obeys in the form of a servant, and, accursed for my sins, dies. I believe in him; he promises to save me, and I know that flesh and blood have not revealed this, but the Spirit of Jesus. Sweet communion! Blessed Spirit! never forsake me.

And he will not, for all Christians find the Holy Ghost dwelling within them,

*Thirdly, as the Spirit of Union.*

By taking possession of our hearts to give us the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, the Holy Ghost effects our union to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head, and to all believers, the mystical body of the Redeemer. It is the Spirit who brings us into such a covenant relation to Jesus for salvation as is ever accompanied with feelings of union to him and his cause. Of these feelings we may be conscious,

and the Bible assures us that they are some of the fruits of the Spirit. Christ is the vine ; believers are the branches ; and if I may extend the figure, the Holy Spirit is the vital fluid which connects the whole. The branch could not be connected with the vine, nor live in this union, without the prevalence of the fluid which God has rendered essential to the existence of vegetable life : neither could we be one with Christ, so that we should live in him, and he in us, without the all-prevalent efficacy of the Spirit of truth and consolation. Without Christ we should be dead ; and without the Holy Ghost we should be destitute of union to him. The same Spirit teaches us, that the saints are our brethren, and causes us to love them for Christ's sake, so that we have fellowship with them, and enjoy comfort in their society. Hence John says, (1 John iv. 11.) " beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." " If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." Of this love to God and his people Christians may be as conscious as of their natural affection for their partners, or children, or parents ; and hence they may be convinced of the inhabitation of God the Spirit of truth, comfort, and union. Finally, the people of God are sensible that the Spirit dwells in them,

*Fourthly*, as the Spirit of Sanctification.

To make any one hate sin is the work of the Holy Ghost ; but the disciples of Jesus



feel an utter abhorrence of transgression. They lament the past alienation of their lives from God, and therefore seek to live near him in future. They feel an unconquerable enmity against those lusts which they once cherished; and who is he that destroyeth sin in us, and enables us to overcome the world, but the *Holy Spirit*, the Spirit of purity? It is he who casts out the foul spirit from the madman among the tombs, and induces him to pursue holiness in the fear of God. It is he who casts out slavish fear from the bosom of a sinner, and makes him a good soldier of Jesus Christ. In short, when we have evidence of possessing the graces of the Spirit, we have proof that he has taken up his abode in our hearts. You cannot see his operations, neither can you see the motions of the fluids in the vine, but you have evidence, in the fruits produced, of both. Let any one pluck a cluster of grapes, and he will say, the branch from which I took them was connected with the vine, and partook of the juice and fatness of the root. In like manner, let any one discover the illumination, the hope, the fear, the love, the penitence, the courage, the progressive sanctification, the good works of the Gospel, and he may affirm, that the person who bears these fruits is savingly united to Christ, by the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost. We are persuaded, my hearers, that the Holy God

does as truly dwell in the saints, as he did in the temple at Jerusalem, between the cherubim, or as he now does in heaven. Yes, believer, the Spirit of God as certainly dwells in you, as your souls inhabit your bodies. He is in each child, who is led by him in the paths of purity, as evidently as the speaker and his hearers are within this church; and I cherish the opinion, that I have proved the fact, to the conviction of your minds.

Our attention is now required by THE SECOND PROPOSITION,

*That every act of saving faith must be ultimately ascribed to this inhabitation of the Holy Ghost.* I qualify this statement by the word *ultimately*, because in the first place faith is ascribed to the believer himself. Faith is his act. Once, however, the same person who now believes, did not believe. While he was a natural man he never performed one mental operation which could be called *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, nor had he any such discernment as is requisite to faith; "for they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."\* "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."† Without the spiritual discern-

\* Rom. viii. 5.

† 1 Cor. ii. 14.

*ment* which is here spoken of, there is no exercise of saving faith ; unless one may have saving faith without *knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ*.

Whence, then, is it, that a person who once believed not to the salvation of the soul, now believes, so as to inherit everlasting life ? The answer is given in the scriptures. He has become a spiritual man by the introduction of the Holy Spirit into his mind, who, in taking possession of him for the Redeemer, quickens him, and both enables and persuades him to act under divine influence. The act of faith on the Lord Jesus *is an effect*. It must have *an adequate cause*, or else the first axiom of all our reasoning is annihilated. This adequate cause is not found in the natural man ; but so soon as the Spirit of truth enters into him, the fruits of the Spirit, among which faith is enumerated, may be expected to appear, for he is thenceforth a spiritual, a new man in Christ Jesus.

This is the doctrine of our Saviour, for he teaches us that without him we can do nothing, and that we are without him until the Spirit takes up his abode in us. JESUS is indeed the author and finisher of our faith ; but then he becomes so by his Spirit. No man can, indeed, come to Christ, or believe on him, except the FATHER draw him ; but the Father draws men by the agency of the Holy Ghost : so that our faith has its origin

in the Father, Son and Spirit. Hence it is said to be **THE GIFT OF GOD**. Hence it is written that *your faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*. Christ came to his own and his own received him not. Subsequently, nevertheless, some of his own to whom he came received him ; and in accounting for this, Christ informs us, by his servant John, that *as many as believed on his name*, did so, because *to them gave he POWER to become the sons of God*, by causing them to be born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. In other words, they believed because they were regenerated ; and yet no man is regenerated but by the Holy Spirit, for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” “It is the Spirit that quickeneth ;” or that makes alive to divine things, by the work of regeneration. Until this work be performed, a sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and has no more power to believe on the Lord Jesus and thereby become a child of God, than Adam would have had power to receive mercy had no mercy been proffered by his Maker. If then, like a dead man, the sinner is without any spiritual ability to please God by the performance of any good action, he is unable to believe to the salvation of his soul, until the Spirit of God come unto him, and take up his abode in his heart. All our ability to come to Christ, to receive him, to

accredit his testimony concerning salvation, and to rest upon him, is from the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, abiding in us. For this reason he is called, in the text, *the SPIRIT OF FAITH*; and for this reason Paul ascribes our faith to our *HAVING* the same Spirit.

**IN CONCLUDING THE DISCOURSE**, let me address the renewed and the unrenewed, in the language of inspiration. “So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

**CHRISTIANS**, in God you live, move, and have your being, in a spiritual sense. You are Christians because God has made you so, by taking possession of you for himself. You are the temples of the Holy Ghost. He is the supernatural principle of divine life in your minds. Cherish then his instructions. Comply constantly with the prescribed means of growing in grace, which you know he will bless. Grieve not the Holy Spirit, by whom

you are sanctified, by negligent and prayerless lives; or by ascribing to him ignorance, bigotry, superstition, fanaticism, and idolatry. Be careful to distinguish his work, and acknowledge it with gratitude. If you have been brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; to repentance, love, and purity of heart; give him the praise. Continue to commit your minds to his guidance, and ask his blessing, that you may be able to try the spirits which demand your attention, by the holy Bible. Yes, bring the Holy Ghost himself, in his operations, to this test, that you may know that he is the Spirit of God; and that you may ascribe to him his own performances. Strive to keep your whole body, soul, and spirit in a state of holiness, that he may abide in you with joy.

ALAS! MY IMPENITENT HEARERS, the Holy Spirit has no place in your minds. When you have heard the gospel, Jesus Christ has freely offered to send his Spirit into your bodies and spirits, as the Spirit of conviction, illumination, and consolation; but you would not accede to his proposals. He never has required that you should *merit*, or *procure* the indwelling of the Holy One, but simply that you should *receive* Him. Yet you have rejected him, and said, "we love our sins: we have no desire to be holy."

Let me affectionately warn you, that unless the Spirit of Christ be sent into your hearts,

it is impossible that you should be regenerated; for God makes us new creatures only by communicating to us the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit alone who quickens a sinner, dead in trespasses, and the work of *quicken-  
ing*, or of *regeneration*, is simultaneous with the entering of the Spirit into our minds. Except, therefore, you be born again, except there be in you a new principle of life, by the introduction of the Spirit of God, you cannot become alive to God, so as to know him, believe on the Lord Jesus, love holy beings, and enjoy the society and business of heaven.

Upon the introduction of the Holy Ghost into your minds depends your *power to become sons of God*. And on your becoming sons of God by regeneration depends your ability to enjoy God in glory. You see, therefore, that the introduction of the Spirit of Faith is absolutely essential to the commencement of a holy life in you, to the perfection of the work of sanctification, and to an entrance into heaven.

Yet you have refused, lightly esteemed, and even abused this Holy Spirit. You have slighted his word, and all the means by which he communicates the richest grace of Christ. At all the exhortations, instructions, and entreaties of the Lord, that you should be reconciled by receiving his Spirit, you have been unmoved. You will tell me, that you *cannot* admit the Spirit. I answer, that you

are *unwilling* to receive him. You will re-join, "that you *cannot will* to receive him until you *perceive spiritually* some motive for receiving him, which shall be *the reason* of your choice ; and that the native state of your mind presents a complete inability to perceive spiritual things in such a light that the reception of the Spirit should be an object of choice." I know and admit all this ; for it is the truth of God ; but I know also, that *God's people shall be willing in the day of his power*. I know also that the Spirit may bless the instruction which I have given, and the exhortation which I offer, by making them instrumental for the conveyance of himself to your minds. He may cause my preaching to become the power of God unto salvation ; and therefore I persist in warning the wicked, that unless they receive the Spirit of God they will never be renewed, never enter heaven. Your unwillingness to be made holy would of itself be a sufficient cause of condemnation. God is under no obligations to make you willing to be saved, and if he should not, you would infallibly be damned. O ! consider your situation ; and remember that the Father and his Son, are more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for him, than any earthly parent is to bestow a blessing on his child. AMEN.



## SERMON II.

---

### SAVING FAITH.

*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”* ACTS XVI. 31.

THE words of the text contain a divinely inspired answer to the question, “what must I do to be saved?” To all who are solicitous to enter into life eternal, they are an infallible direction. Would *you* be saved, my hearers, *you* must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; for the promise of Jehovah secures pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification to believers, and to them alone. Without faith there is no salvation for them that hear the gospel.

Will you not, then, seriously ask, “what is faith?” Will you not give all diligence to ascertain the nature of SAVING FAITH? May the Holy Ghost enable me to teach, and you to hear, for the salvation of your immortal souls.

The word *faith* is used in the Holy Scriptures to denote,

1st. *Proof, or evidence.* “He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance,”

(πίστιν) *faith*, or *proof*, "in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts xvii. 31.

2dly. *The system of the gospel*. "They had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth *the faith* which once he destroyed." Gal. i. 23. "Earnestly contend for *the faith* which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3.

3dly. *Fidelity or faithfulness*. "Shall their unbelief make the *faith*, (the fidelity) of God without effect?" Rom. iii. 3. In Titus ii. 10. the English version renders the original word for faith, by *fidelity*. "They have cast off their first faith." 1 Tim. v. 12. "For therein," (that is, in the gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith;" from the faithfulness of God, to faith in man.

4thly. *Any judgment of the mind, founded on testimony, that a proposition is true*. This is the proper sense of the word faith, and it is used in the three forgoing cases I have given, because evidence, of some sort, is the ground of faith; because the system of the gospel ought to be accredited; and because the attribute of faithfulness in any person is calculated to produce faith in his testimony. This operation of the mind in judging that any proposition of a testifier is true, which we call believing, is performed by that mental faculty which is commonly called THE JUDGMENT. We cannot give assent to any statement without the co-operation of the fa-

culty of perception : or, in other words, we cannot believe without some knowledge of the testifier and his statement. We must understand that a proposition is stated, before we can believe that it is true ; and we must be thoroughly persuaded of the veracity and competence of the testifier, before we can accredit his testimony, upon this ground, that it is his testimony. A notorious liar may assert a proposition which I know, from some other source than his testimony, to be true. He may meet me in the street and say, *You are going to church* ; which proposition I may judge to be true from my own consciousness of my purpose, and the act of walking : but instead of saying, “ *I believe your proposition,* ” I should reply, “ *I know it.* ” Should this same liar assert something which should appear to me to be probable, I should say, “ *I neither believe nor disbelieve what you say, but I think it may be true.* ” Should a person of known veracity immediately after make the same assertion which the liar had just made, every one who knew his character would unite with me in saying, “ *I believe the proposition which you assert to be true.* ” Simple judgment and believing are operations of the same faculty ; but *in judging* that a proposition is true we proceed upon our own perception of the truth contained in the proposition ; whereas *in believing* we proceed upon our persuasion of the veracity and com-

petence of the person who testifies that a proposition is true. When we judge a statement to be true, we perceive the truth asserted; but we may believe a proposition to be true, while we do not perceive the whole, or even any part, of the truth contained in the proposition. We *judge* that to be true, which we know to be true; but we *believe* a proposition to be true upon the veracity of the testifier, of the truth of which we should otherwise have no knowledge. A parent may state to a little child, *that all the angles of a right-angled triangle are equal to two right angles*; and before the child understands even the terms of the proposition he may say, "I believe that my father has stated the truth; but what the truth contained in his proposition is, I know not."

Some operations of the faculty of judgment ever precede that operation which we denominate believing, or faith. The child for instance judges that his parent is a man of truth; and that he understands the subject about which he proposes to state something. The Christian also has such perceptions of the divine character as produce in his mind the judgment that God is a being of perfect knowledge and faithfulness, before he believes that proposition of God to be true, the truth of which he does not fully, and perhaps not at all, perceive. Should the Lord inform us that he would utter a true proposition in

Arabic, we might hear the sound of words, as from Sinai, and say "we believe, Lord, that thou hast spoken the truth ; but we know not what the truth is which thou hast spoken."

Were the doctrine of Christ's deity, or the proposition that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one God, as perfectly unintelligible to me as a statement of a truth in the Chinese tongue, I should still say, "Lord I believe all thy propositions upon these subjects to be true : O teach me to understand the truth contained in them." We believe "*that God is a spirit ;*" and we understand in part what is meant by the terms ; but did we understand less, we might still believe as firmly as we now do, that the proposition is true ; because we have previously judged that God is faithful, and that he has uttered this testimony concerning himself. This, however, could not be the case, were our belief dependant on our own perceptions of the truth, and not founded on the character of the testifier, and our knowledge that he has asserted those propositions to which we give our assent.

The different operations of the mind in believing have acquired different names, which are chiefly derived from the objects about which the faculty is employed, or from the effects which result from our faith. Hence we speak,

1. Of faith in our senses ; because we fig-

uratively consider them as testifiers, and believe their evidence concerning external objects :

2. Of faith in human testimony ; because we believe the assertions of faithful men, who are competent to judge in those matters to which we give our assent :

3. Of historical faith, because we judge some history to be true :

4. Of the faith of miracles, because miracles were the object of it, or followed the exercise of it :

5. Of temporary faith, because its duration is short ; and

6. Of saving faith, because its object is the testimony of God concerning the Saviour ; and its result, everlasting salvation.

If you assent to the proposition, that what you see, hear, feel, smell or taste, actually exists, you give credit to your senses : if you judge that another man has told you the truth concerning any thing which he knows, you have faith in human testimony : and if you are persuaded, that the facts narrated in the Bible actually occurred, you have historical faith. The apostle in describing the operations of faith, in the epistle to the Hebrews, says, (chapt. xi. v. 3.) “ through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God ; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” This is one of the simplest operations of

faith, and is possessed by all who assent to the historical proposition, that God created all things. This faith millions have who will never be saved.

The faith of miracles was peculiar to inspired persons. Inspiration was essential to it ; and every operation of it was a judgment that God would, according to his intimation, perform a miracle. Concerning this belief our Lord said to his apostles, "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, 'remove hence to yonder place,' and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Mat. xvii. 20 *Of this kind of faith* Paul declares, that it is inferior to LOVE ; for says he, "though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, (i.e. love) I am nothing." 1Cor. xiii. 2. It was in consequence of the communication of this apostolical grace that Jesus said, "whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," for all who exercised this faith were made acquainted with the secret counsels of Jehovah, and could declare, in ancient times, things not yet done ; or could command, and the wheels of nature stood still. Because of God's determination to give this faith to the writers of the sacred volume, he said to Peter "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ;" and to all his brethren, who were called to the same peculiar ministry, "if two

of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father." With the apostolic age this faith ceased ; and if any church, bishop, or pope, demands reverence for infallibility, or pretends to hold the keys of Peter, we require that miracles should be wrought in proof of a divine inspiration.

Temporary faith is but too common in every age. It is such a belief of some portion of divine truth as is produced by natural causes, and such as was exemplified in the case of Herod Antipas, who "feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him ; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly." Mark vi. 20. When Jesus "was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." John ii. 24. "These have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." Luke xiii. 13. In temporary faith, Jesus Christ the Saviour is not the object primarily regarded ; and from any other faith but that which is spoken of in the text, a sinner may fall away, into everlasting perdition.

The way is now prepared for me to treat exclusively

### OF SAVING FAITH.

An excellent description of it, we find in



“the Shorter Catechism.” “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.”

Let us contemplate, Ist, THE ORIGIN ; IIIdly, THE NATURE ; and IIIIdly, THE PRINCIPAL OPERATIONS, of saving faith.

I. Under the term, *origin*, I comprehend not only the *first cause* of the existence of saving faith, but all the *secondary causes* : or, every thing which is antecedent to it, and at the same time connected with it, by the constitution of God. Faith is said to be *a grace*, or *something given* to the sinner by the Holy Spirit. “It is the *gift*,” or the grace “of God.” Ephes. ii. 8. “Unto you *it is given*, in the behalf of Christ, not only *to believe on him*, but also to suffer for his sake.” Philip i. 29. Jesus is said to be, (Heb. xii. 2.) “the author and finisher of our faith ;” and we are said to be justified, and to live, by “the faith of God,” by “the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,” by “the faith of the Son of God,” because we live by the faith which Christ *gives* us. If faith is not an *effect* of the Spirit, there is no propriety in denoting it a grace, or a work of the Holy Ghost.

We conclude that God is the *first cause* of our faith. But *how* does the Spirit communicate this *grace* ? Is not faith *an act* ? Yes, it is an operation of the human mind, but it

“is such an operation as the Spirit of Christ enables and persuades us to perform. All those means, which are used by God to produce the operation of faith in the mind of a sinner, are called the secondary, or instrumental, causes of our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the head of these secondary causes we place REGENERATION, or that free, sovereign, and gracious act of Almighty God, which quickens one who was before absolutely dead to spiritual things. In regeneration God commences a new life in a sinner, or so operates upon him, that he may subsequently have the functions of a new, a holy creature. Before regeneration a man cannot believe to the saving of his soul, any more than before his existence as a natural man he could believe the testimony of his neighbour. “Ye must be born again,” that ye may believe on the only begotten Son of God, and may have life through his name. In an unrenewed man there is neither spiritual discernment, judgment, feeling nor activity. Let a man be renewed, or let Jehovah commence a spiritual life in him, and then he may believe.

This regeneration is ordinarily performed by God through the instrumental agency of the gospel; for “we are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.” 1 Peter i. 23. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.”

James i. 18. Subsequently to regeneration, in the order of nature, there is something, necessary to the act of believing on the Lord Jesus. It is *spiritual perception*, which is commonly called *knowledge*; hence it is written, "this is eternal life *to know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Before we can, as spiritual men, know any thing, we must be born of God; and before we can believe any thing, we must know something, or have that operation of the mind which is called *perception*. Hence I do not hesitate to assert, that prior to the act of believing on the Lord Jesus, there must be in our minds such a perception of our own sinfulness and misery, and of the meaning of the terms Jesus Christ, the Saviour, as are essential to the intelligent belief of the proposition, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." One who did not *perceive* or *know*, as a renewed person perceives and knows, what is meant by the terms of the proposition, CHRIST, SAVE, and SINNERS, might believe the proposition to be true, but could not believe as a gracious person, and in the sense of the gospel, the truth contained in the proposition. We must know what the testimony of God concerning the Saviour is, before we can receive the truth contained in that testimony for our salvation. The communication of this knowledge is commonly called the "divine illumination of

the mind," which is one of the immediate effects of that operation of God which we call regeneration, or effectual calling. God effectually calls, or makes alive by his Spirit, and the result is, the "enlightening of their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God."\* No man is regenerated whose perceptions concerning himself, God, and Christ have not been rectified, so that he discovers himself to be condemned, vile, and abominable ; God to be holy, just, and good ; and Jesus to be such a deliverer as the guilty sinner needs. If you include under the term *regeneration*, as some do, not only *the act of God* in making us new creatures, but the effect which is produced by it, the illumination of our minds, and the whole of essential saving knowledge communicated to us, then we admit that nothing else is requisite as a preparative to saving faith but regeneration, and that saving faith is the first act of a renewed man. We affirm, however, that after the Spirit of grace begins to operate on a sinner for his salvation, that sinner is made to see himself a guilty, loathsome, accursed creature, and he also discovers that Christ is a desirable, an all-sufficient Saviour. Through the divine light which shines into his mind, he perceives that he is dead in trespasses and sins, and thus through the conviction of sin,

\* Confession of Faith, chap. x. sec. i.

he dies to the hope of justification by the works of the law. If, after regeneration and the illumination of his mind by the renewing Spirit, whereby he is made a partaker of the divine nature in respect to knowledge, he should be left to himself, and the same Spirit should not work in him faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, he would sink into despair: but he who is elected shall be regenerated, and the regenerated shall believe to the salvation of the soul. All who have saving knowledge shall have saving faith, for "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Psalm ix. 10. Let us proceed to consider,

*Illy, The nature of saving faith.* Let us confine our attention to one act of saving faith, because every other act is like it in kind, although not in degree. Saving faith in every instance is a mental operation of a renewed sinner. It is an act of that faculty in him which is denominated **THE JUDGMENT**. It is an act of his judgment which cannot be performed without a previous operation of his faculty of perception. It is an act of his mind, in which he assents upon the ground of the divine veracity, to the truth of some proposition of God concerning Jesus Christ as a Saviour offered to sinners. God testifies, *that he sent his Son into the world to save sinners*. If any one act of his mind who is renewed, is a judgment, that this testimony is true, he believes to the saving of the soul, or has

saving faith. Before he can believe this, he must understand what is the meaning of the terms *Son of God*, *save*, and *sinners*. He must perceive that Christ is the Son of God, that sinners are persons justly condemned by the holy law, and that to save a sinner, is to deliver him from punishment and pollution. Then he must judge from a knowledge of the divine character, or believe, not only that the proposition is true, but that the thing testified in the terms which he understands, is assuredly *the fact*.

Neither the perceptions nor the judgments of the unrenewed are like those of the man whose mind has been savingly illuminated by the Holy Spirit. "For with thee," O God, "is the fountain of life : in thy light shall we see light." Psalm xxxvi. 9.

The mental operation of judging from testimony that any proposition is true, is faith; but only the mental operation of a renewed person in believing that to be a fact which is stated in some proposition which God has made concerning him who is anointed to save sinners, is *saving* faith. The unrenewed, and even the devils may believe some of the statements of God and tremble, but their faith is not a saving grace, not an effect of the Holy Ghost, designed by God to promote the salvation of one of his children. Should any one verily believe every proposition which God has made, excepting those which relate

to salvation by Jesus Christ, he would perish for want of saving faith. Thousands believe, that God created the world of nothing, and that the wicked shall be turned into hell, who will find their own portion there : but “ believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” 1 John v. 1. “ He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” “ These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” 1 John v. 10. 13.

God testifies to us, that *if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, for the sake of Christ ; that *the just by faith shall live* ; that Christ with all his benefits is offered to us ; and whosoever will may come to him for salvation ; and that the person who approaches shall in no case be rejected. Now let the regenerated man attend to any one of these propositions, understand it, and in his own mind assent to the truth, contained in it, and he will believe on Christ Jesus for salvation.

This faith is styled **SAVING**, because Christ gives it, and believers exercise it, and, are thereby united to Christ, *that they may be saved*.

It is called *justifying* faith, because it is the instrument of justification. God promises to give justifying righteousness to every

one, who shall in any one, single instance believe with this kind of faith, on the Lord Jesus Christ.

ASSURANCE is said to be of the essence of faith, because in each separate act of faith, or judgment that a proposition of God concerning the Saviour is true, there is no doubt of its truth. The next act of the mind may be that of doubting the truth of that proposition, which in the previous operation was judged to be true: but in the very act of believing, the mind cannot disbelieve, or doubt. In that act of the mind which I call believing, I can no more doubt the truth of the proposition which I believe, than I can believe, and not believe, at the same time.

Saving faith is said, in the present life, to be imperfect, because we sometimes doubt the truth of statements which we sometimes believe; and because all the operations of a sinner's mind are less vigorous, and influential, than they will be, when all the effects of sin have been exterminated from the whole constitution of man. A child may believe like a child, and a man of powerful and highly excited mind, like Paul, ready to depart; while neither the child nor the man, in the act of believing, has any doubt of the truth of what he believes. We speak of degrees in faith, because some operations of the mind in believing are more sensibly felt, that is, are accompanied by more lively *feelings* than



others. Indeed, half mankind mistake *feelings* for *judgments*; or *the sensations* which follow faith, for *the act of believing*. Let us then, turn our attention

IIIly, To *the principal operations* of saving faith. The mind of the renewed sinner which perceives spiritual things in a spiritual light, and believes every thing it knows God to have asserted concerning the Saviour, will also perform by its other faculties other operations, which are connected with faith and proceed from it. These consequent acts of the mind which God has inseparably connected with faith are what I call *the principal operations* of saving faith. The *act of believing* may be distinguished from those *holy feelings* which result from it, and which prove our faith to be that which is peculiar to sincere Christians. God, who originates faith, has also attached to it the most desirable consequences. Every believer in Jesus has emotions which in a greater or less degree correspond with his acts of believing on Christ. An established connexion is found both in natural and spiritual things between certain operations of one faculty, and certain operations of another faculty of the human mind, so that scarcely one operation is insulated. It is an established law by which God governs mind, to which there are but few exceptions, that certain perceptions should be followed by cer-

tain judgments, those judgments by certain feelings, those feelings by certain volitions, and those volitions by correspondent internal or external actions. Thus, a regenerated sinner has right perceptions of the Saviour, which lead to right judgments, or acts of faith in the statements which God has made concerning him ; these *acts of faith* are productive of *right feelings*, which are generally pleasant feelings ; and these *feelings* induce in us *volitions* to obey Christ ; which *volitions* bring forth the internal operations of pious self-government, and *the external actions* of righteousness. Such a connexion is established in God's gracious government of his people. When we *know* the true God, then we *judge* him to be faithful, and *believe* every one of his assertions to be true, because we have previously judged that he will not lie. Hence, "a Christian believeth to be true, whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein ; and acteth differently, upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth ; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are, *accepting*, *receiving*, and *resting* upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of

grace.”\* Saving faith is an operative judgment of the mind; it works by love; and particularly excites the faculties of *feeling*, and *will* to holy activity. In the natural man his judgments are followed by feelings and determinations; and in the new man Christ reigns without doing violence to the order of intellectual arrangement which was established in the formation of Adam.

Saving faith operates by all the faculties of man, but those mental acts which are produced by the influence of faith, on the faculties of **FEELING** and **WILL**, are most important. To these I shall confine your attention, during the remainder of this discourse.

In contemplating its agency on our feelings, let us remark,

First, That faith, by a divine constitution, produces **LOVE** to God and man. **LOVE** is a feeling of pleasure which can only be described to one who has experienced it. One who has never *loved* can form no just notion of *love*: but one who has loved natural good, may conceive that spiritual objects should employ the powers of another's mind. Every believer loves God and his Son, Jesus Christ; the word, the worship, and the providence of God; with all those things which he perceives, in a divine light, to be lovely. Without believing the truth concerning God

\* Confession of Faith, chap. xiv. sect. 2.

and Christ, the true God, the just God and Saviour cannot be the object loved by us. Unbelievers love false gods, and ideal saviours, but all who have *saving faith* love the only, living, and true God. They have feelings of pleasure, of satisfaction, and complacency in relation to him, which follow their belief of the testimony which he has given of himself. By faith Jesus Christ becomes the object of most tender attachment, and the soul is knit to him. Faith judges that Jesus did actually suffer and die for the end revealed in the Scriptures, and this belief of the truth is followed in the mind of a renewed person, by love to him as a prophet, priest, and king. Because we believe on him, we love him as the Redeemer of God's elect, as the only Mediator between God and man, as the Administrator of saving grace by the Holy Spirit, and as our personal righteousness, strength, purification, and salvation.

Moreover, love to man is consequent upon saving faith: for an unbeliever is dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore cannot feel one emotion in contemplating his fellow men, which God deems morally, or spiritually good. So soon, however, as one is united to Christ by faith, he is able to indulge all the holy feelings of a child. If he loves God, he will love man; for he will be like the God of love. Benevolence will be one of the characteristics of his mind; and he will rejoice in

doing good to all men, as he has opportunity ; but especially to the family of Faith. This love will, in its progress, supplant those selfish feelings which reigned in him while an unregenerate man.

Secondly. Faith produces the feeling of holy DESIRE. The objects of this desire are spiritual. He who believes, will *desire* increasing knowledge of God, an interest in the Redeemer and his benefits, holy personal enjoyment, and the advancement of the highest degree of the divine glory. Christ to every believer is the supreme object of *desire*, because he *believes* him to be not only *precious*, but the supreme good. He can say of the Intercessor, as thousands of dying believers have done, “he is *all my desire*, and all my salvation.”

Thirdly. Faith produces *hatred* of sin. This is an operation of the faculty of feeling too, which has never failed to follow the exercise of a living faith in Jesus. Let any one receive the Lord Jesus for his friend and portion, and that sin which displeases his dear Redeemer, and alienates the sinner from his Saviour, will never be contemplated without abhorrence. He will hate himself for transgressions, even while he has no apprehensions of future punishment. He will also hate the sinfulness of his fellow men while he has compassion on them, and prays for their

salvation. On account of his opposition to their moral character, he can say with David, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." Psalm cxxxix. 21. Before he believed on Jesus he loved the society, and had pleasure in the iniquity of those persons, who so soon as they were seen by the eye of faith became abominable to his soul.

Fourthly. The filial *fear* of God is an operation of the faculty of feeling, which proceeds from faith, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that *fear* him." But he takes pleasure in no unbeliever. Fear is a painful feeling, which is called a passion, and which we experience on the apprehension of future evil. It is religious fear, when the evil apprehended is the loss of God's favour, the incurring of our Heavenly Father's displeasure, or some dishonour that may accrue to the Redeemer's cause through our sin. By faith we realize that it is an evil thing to depart from him; we know that the consequences of it are dreadful; and it may be safely affirmed, that there never was a child of God who did not fear to offend him, precisely in proportion to his belief of the odious nature and horrible evil of transgression.

Fifthly. Saving faith produces the *feeling* which is called *hope*. This is a pleasurable feeling which we experience in contempla-

tion of some expected good. Hope always regards something which we do not at present possess, but believe to be not only desirable but attainable. When a sinner looks to Jesus by faith for salvation, he hopes for all which is included in the salvation which has been proffered, but not yet received. He hopes for perfect purification, a glorious resurrection, a public manifestation of his justification before the assembled universe, a mansion in heaven, and all the felicity which the Saviour promised him through endless ages.

In considering the operation of saving faith on the human WILL, we remark that it produces,

1. A volition to *accept* of Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel. When we believe through the Holy Spirit that we are accursed sinners, that Christ is offered to us for pardon and sanctification, and that he will be ours if we accept him, we shall inevitably will to accept him. "Let us have him," we shall say, "on the terms of the gospel. Lord we accept thy proposals of reconciliation and heaven with all thankfulness." Then will the sinner no longer cavil against the nature and terms of salvation by Jesus Christ; and no longer vainly wish that salvation were possible for sinners in some other way. This acceptance of Christ is made once and for ever.

2. Faith in Christ produces a voluntary *reception* of him into our bosoms. He proposes to come in to us, and take up his residence there, for our instruction, warning, comfort, and glorification. Believing on him, we will that he should abide in us, rule in us, defend us, and make us meet for his Father's house. He stands at the door of our hearts, and knocks for admission, until we accredit God's testimony concerning him, when we say, "thy servants hear, Lord; enter and take possession of our souls." *Receiving* Christ includes every voluntary effort which we make to know, enjoy, commune with, and serve the blessed Jesus.

3. Faith in Jesus produces a voluntary *resting* on him. Believing the truth concerning his great work of salvation, we perceive a sufficient motive to induce our choice of him as a refuge, a reward, an everlasting home. In trouble the believer *chooses* to make known his wants to Jesus and pour out his heart before him. He *chooses* to seek for refreshment when weary, and quiet when disturbed in mind, from the Son of Man. None of these things, however, did he do, before he believed the testimony of God concerning the salvation of sinners, and should his faith now cease, he would no longer find an ark of safety; nor the bosom of a beloved one on whom, like John, he could lean his head.



Christian brethren, you never could rest until you savingly knew Christ; and through faith in him alone can you continue to rest from unprofitable toils under the load of wrath.

Search yourselves my hearers, for if you have not these *feelings*, in your minds, and these *operations of will* which have been described, you have *no saving faith* on the Son of God. Blessed are all they who believe with the heart; whose judgments and whose emotions in relation to Christ are of the right kind, for God promises them heaven.

May we all be thus blessed, O thou Author and Finisher of saving faith. AMEN.

## SERMON III.

### THE CHARACTER AND CONFIDENCE OF A BELIEVER.

*"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."* ROMANS X. 11.

THE passion of shame is peculiarly painful to us. It causes the heart's blood to mantle the cheek; renders vision no longer

grateful; turns away the face; and depresses the head in wretchedness. We instinctively desire self-possession and approbation. Who could endure confusion of face for a single day, and be unacquainted with agony? Who of delicate sensibility could be made to suffer shame in the circle of his acquaintance for an hour and not feel constrained to pray, from some motive, with the psalmist, "O Lord, put me not to shame :"\* "let me never be put to confusion?"† The prophet Ezra couples "*confusion of face*," with the sword and captivity; and considers it a punishment procured by iniquity.

SHAME is one constituent part of the torment of hell. "The wise shall inherit glory, but *shame* shall be the promotion of fools."‡

In Daniel we read, that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to *shame and everlasting contempt*."§

Who shall escape this misery of perpetual self-condemnation? Who shall dwell at peace, when devils deride, and Jehovah laughs at the calamity, or mocks the fear, of the wicked? ||

Our text furnishes an answer. "Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed." The person referred to, as the object of faith,

\* Psalm cxix. 31.      † Psalm lxxi. 1.      ‡ Prov. iii. 35.

§ Dan. xii. 2.      || Prov. i. 26.

is our Lord Jesus Christ. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. *And* the scripture saith, 'whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.'" The believer in Jesus Christ shall never be left to confusion of face. He shall never be confounded: no, not before men: no, not before angels: no, neither in this life, nor at the judgment seat, nor in the eternal world. Instead of *confusion* the believer shall have CONFIDENCE, instead of *shame, glory*; instead of *blushes*, the *effulgence* of stars, and a participation of the splendors of the Godhead.

Who, then, is a believer? and whence his assurance against confusion and contempt? Suffer me to exhibit, I. The character of a believer; and II. His security against shame.

Faith ever produces such other mental and external actions as cannot fail to distinguish the possessor from those who are destitute of it.

THE *character of the believer* may be summarily comprehended in four particulars.

He receives the doctrines, appropriates to himself the atonement, partakes of the disposition, and imitates the example of Christ. Any one in whom these things unite may

safely be deemed a child of God, and an heir of glory.

*Every believer receives the doctrines of Jesus.* Not only does he admit them to be true, because spoken by a perfect teacher, a God of truth, but he believes with his heart ; or he receives the divine testimony with holy feelings ; while his conscience yields to it an entire approbation.

It is not enough, to believe as the devils do, and *tremble*. We must believe, and *love*. Saving faith, which constitutes a believer in Jesus, implies such an assent of the understanding, as is ever followed by the consent of the affections. When Jesus commenced public preaching, he commanded men to repent and “believe the gospel ;” or to change their minds, and receive the doctrines which he taught concerning the fall, condemnation, restoration, and salvation of man, through the wisdom and mercy of God. To call any man a Christian who refuses his assent to the fundamental doctrines of Christ, is a shameful abuse of language. “He that is of God heareth God’s words.”\* “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.”

Jesus Christ declares, (John xii. 48.) “he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him : the word

\* John viii. 47.

that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." He who denies the assertions of Christ, or feels no pleasure in them, must be called an unbeliever, an enemy of God. On the other hand, it is vain for men to boast of correct opinions, and clear discernment of the way of salvation, while they are destitute of pious affections.

Yes, in vain are we orthodox, and unjust is our favourable opinion of our own state, if our knowledge of Christ leads not to a voluntary, personal union to him ; for

*Every believer appropriates to himself the atonement.* I do not affirm, that this act is of the essence of faith ; but that he who through the Spirit assents to the truth contained in some proposition which is the object of saving faith, will, in consequence of this assent, perform that principal operation of saving faith which is called appropriation. By this act of the mind a sinner receives for himself, and sets apart for his own personal use that atonement which is proffered in the gospel. " Being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition," he "not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of HIS person

righteous in the sight of God for salvation.”\* The renewed man is sensible of many acts of faith, which are holy ; but which may be distinguished from THAT ACT of justifying faith, which, according to the purpose of God, actually completes his alliance to Jesus. Every judgment of his mind which is consequent on divine influence, that a statement of God is true, is a holy act of faith ; but the Christian’s belief that God framed the worlds by his Word, and that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, may be distinguished from that act of faith whose object is CHRIST, the *End of the Law for righteousness*. If, however, any one truly believes the testimony of God, that He so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life, he will subsequently accept of a personal interest in this Son, and voluntarily take Jesus for all his own strength and salvation.

“It is not sufficient for me,” says the believer in his own mind, “to believe that others are in a state of sin, and guilt, and actual misery : I believe that this is my own native state. I judge from the revelation of God to man, that he has made provision for the complete salvation of sinners by the Redeemer ; and I have come to this judgment

\* Larger Cat. Quest, 72.

through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This is saving faith ; but I rest not here : for I believe that eternal life is offered in the gospel to me, individually, as well as to all sinners who hear the word of life. Of this offered salvation I feel *a desire* to accept. *I will* to accept it ; my faculty of agency obeys my will, and I actually take hold of Jesus for righteousness, strength, and life. Henceforth he is mine, and I am his. To him I confide the body and spirit which he has created, and hope for the salvation which he has promised. This is not an unfounded persuasion that Christ died for me in particular ; but such a compliance with the terms of the gospel as evinces the gift of faith ; whence I conclude that the Giver of Faith has chosen me to obtain salvation." The man who thus appropriates to himself the active and passive obedience of Jesus, which constitute the atonement, will also

*Partake of the disposition of Christ.* "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his : " but if he has this Spirit, his mind will be kept in such a state as gives a tendency to right operations. This is what we mean by disposition ; and every believer finds, that the Sanctifier so arranges his thoughts, and disposes of events in relation to him, as to produce a strong similarity between his mental state and that which his Master manifested. The guidance of this Spirit he

implores, his counsel loves, and nothing so much as his absence fears. A most fervent amen he subjoins to the exhortation, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."\* Such passages, one would think sufficient to cut off the hope of the antinomian and hypocrite. Do you understand the whole system of scriptural doctrine? It is nothing if you are destitute of the Spirit of Christ, who alone can keep you in the love of God. Do you believe the truth? The Spirit that was in Christ, was a Spirit of obedience to the truth, and if you have received it, you will be liberated from the bondage of sin. Does your hope of free justification, through the blood of Christ, make you lightly esteem the moral law? Such, then, as your disposition is, was not the disposition of Christ. His sufferings as well as obedience show how much he regarded the duties of morality. He died that sinners might be pardoned, and sanctified, and thus brought back, ultimately, to the obedience of that code, which is of perpetual obligation, and to the happiness which it affords. When, being saved through the blood of THE LAMB, they shall perfectly keep the divine commandments, they will find, that obedience is heaven.

The mind of Christ was *opposed to sin*: and consequently every believer hates sin in

\* Philippians ii. 5.



himself and his fellow-men. The Spirit of Jesus was disposed to *humility*; and of course, he is a believer *who walks humbly before his God*. The mind of Jesus was inclined to constant *meekness*. He was silent under slander and persecution. He suffered long, was kind to his enemies when they spit upon him their blackest venom; and never reviled any one. As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth in vengeance, reproach, or complaint; no, not when his murderers led him to crucifixion. In every believer the Spirit of Jesus, produces a disposition to forbearance, gentleness, kindness, love, self-denial, devotion, and universal obedience.

To complete the representation of the believer's character, I have only to add, that he acts out his disposition of mind, that

*He imitates the example of Jesus.* To this he is naturally induced, by the doctrines he receives, and the temper which he cultivates.

Like Christ, the believer makes it the business of his life, to do good unto all, considering himself the servant of all for the Redeemer's sake. His example, reflecting the glory of God, shines upon all around, constraining them to take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus, and to glorify his Father in heaven. Every believer is an imitator of God in Christ, as a dear child; because he is born of God and led by the Spirit

of God. He is willingly under law to Christ, and vigorously strives to perform his whole duty, from love to the covenant of Jehovah.

This is the person, who, though evil angels hide themselves in darkness, and wicked men call to the mountains to fall on them and crush them, that they may be hidden from the presence of the Lord, before whom they are ashamed to appear, shall never, never become an object of contempt.

Methinks, my hearers, you call upon me to prove this. You require me, therefore, IN THE SECOND PLACE,

*To shew what security the believer has against shame.*

What shall prevent him from being confounded?

Shame is effectually precluded from the Christian's mind, FIRST, by the wisdom of his conduct in believing. All shame arises either from folly or guilt, from weakness or wickedness. But in believing the truth as it is in Jesus, there is neither folly nor subjection to guilt. Doth not wisdom cry, believe? Doth not understanding instruct us to embrace the Lord Jesus by faith? Who is a fool, but he, who rejects the truth to believe damning lies? Who is wise, that despises *the one thing needful*, and gathers wood, hay, and stubble for the flames, to the neglect of the pearl of great price?

Every one, who believes, acts the part of that wisdom, which causeth the face to shine. If God is good, it is wisdom to love him : if just, to fear him : if holy, to forsake sin : if an adversary to the wicked, to be at peace with him : and these things can we only do by faith.

If heaven be a place of happiness, it is wisdom to seek it : if hell a place of misery, to avoid it : and each of these we do, by believing on the Son of God.

If Christ is the only way of escape from wrath, it is wise to escape by him ; if he is the only refuge of sinners, to fly to him : if he is the mighty Saviour, to trust in his strength : and these things can be done only by faith.

If self-denial is necessary to salvation, it is wise to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, which causes us to offend ; that thus we may be purified through faith.

If the impenitent person dwells in Sodom, and a storm of fire and brimstone is about to destroy the city, it is wise in him to awake from his false security, and, by believing, make haste to Zoar. If our friends linger in a state of condemnation, it is wise in all the zeal of living faith, to take them by the hand, and hurry them away from impending wrath. If Lot's wife perished for looking back, no one will be ashamed of pressing forward in the paths of peace. If the con-

tempt of divine mercy will produce aggravated condemnation, no one will be ashamed of gratitude for that pardoning love which is received alone by faith. If by momentary sadness of countenance the heart is made better, no one will be ashamed of penitential tears. Who should blush to run from a devouring lion, from a raging tempest, from a consuming fire? Who should be ashamed to fight spiritual foes, and obtain a crown of immortal glory?

Who shall be ashamed of trials, when they brighten his graces? Certainly, it is the part of wisdom to *suffer* with Christ, that we may *reign* with him; to *die* for him, that we may *live* in his blissful presence for ever.

Believers often feel unpleasantly, when reproached for their remaining sin, when reviled for their faith: but a believer never wished himself an unbeliever; and one washed from the pollutions of the world never desired to return to his wallowing in the mire.

For you, who laugh at piety, Christians mourn. When they blush, they are ashamed, not of their confidence, but of you. They do mourn, and blush *for their sins*, and they are in bitterness at the reflection, that they were formerly as foolish as those who now insult them, but who more insult the believer's God. Irreligious persons imagine that they should be ashamed were they Christians; and when their consciences begin to produce

compunction are really unwilling to be thought serious; but when they actually become believers they say, "God forbid we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus." Then they discover that nothing but wickedness ought to make them ashamed. Satan they know to be a murderer, and therefore resist him. God they discover to be a FATHER, FRIEND, and HOLY SOVEREIGN, and therefore glory in their confidence, attachment, and obedience, because they constitute the highest interest of a rational creature.

Since there is no honour in self-destruction, they are not ashamed of an interest by faith in the atonement of the Son of God. Since the gospel is truth and the power of God unto salvation, they exult in that grace which has disposed and enabled them to embrace it with the heart. Since they believe that Christians are the sons of the Highest, and heirs of eternal felicity, they think it no disgrace to be their cordial friends.

Since faith brings them joys, with which the wicked are unacquainted, they cannot think it necessary to love supremely the pleasures of this life. Since they have spiritual delights in retirement, and in meditation about everlasting things hoped for, they judge it to be no disgrace not to find heaven in a promiscuous, noisy, worldly party.

You do not blame the man of science for loving philosophy more than romance : nor the man of taste for being better pleased with a master-piece in painting, than with the coarse daubings of a painter's boy.

You never consider the man who prefers the sweet fountain to the bitter ; nor the connoisseur, who distinguishes the good wine from the bad, an object of contemptuous merriment. Why then should any one ridicule the taste of the Christian in his selection of religious books, of pious associates, of spiritual enjoyments ; and for his sweet communion, by faith, with the living God ? Why should he be thought to dishonour himself by disregarding former pursuits, which have ceased to afford delight ? Had I been fond of eating dust, methinks I should not blush to lose my appetite for serpent's food, and become more fond of delicious viands.

Who of this audience, had he been feeding upon husks, which swine had left, would be ashamed to come to himself, and return to the delicacies of a father's table ? Prodigality is disgraceful : but reformation is honourable in a rational being. Through faith in Christ, let the old transgressor turn to God ; let the unkind become kind ; the unjust, just ; the morose man, affectionate ; the drunkard, sober ; the libertine chaste ; the profane person, devout ; the infidel, a humble believer ; and not one of these will be degraded by con-

version from sin. They have sinned ; there was the disgrace : they have turned to God by faith, and it is commendable in them, for when they were the slaves of sin, they had no good fruit from those things whereof they are now ashamed. Being made free from sin, they have fruit unto holiness, and in the end shall receive eternal life.

SECONDLY, the believer in Jesus is effectually secured from shame by the character of the person in whom he believes. Should he trust in a weak, unfaithful, unmerciful being, he would expose himself to disappointment and ignominy. But Jesus, the sinner's FRIEND and CONFIDENCE, is no impostor. Believers in him shall not be ashamed, because

*He is the mighty God.*

“ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Consellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” We believe then, in the mighty God, and cannot *make haste*, to hide ourselves, because he is able to fulfil his promises, and accomplish his purposes. It is the decree of Heaven, that his friends should be glorified. The mighty Jesus has uttered his promise by Isaiah, and repeated it by Paul, that “ he that believeth shall not make haste,”\* like one overwhelmed ; that is, he shall not be ashamed.

\* Isaiah xxviii, 16.

The Son of God declares, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself : but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

The believer in Jesus, therefore, has all the security against shame which omnipotence can give. One higher than the highest has said, "if ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

"O Lord let me not be put to shame."

Who shall condemn and confound the believer? Jesus has prepared heavenly mansions, and he will introduce us to them. The malice of hell must rage in vain against the child to whom Christ promises protection. He is omnipresent to defend : he endureth for ever, to make the happiness of believers as permanent as the throne of God.

Wicked men may make the believer "an offender for a word ;" may "lay a snare for him that reproveth," "and turn aside the just for a thing of naught:" but "thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham," "Jacob shall not be ashamed, neither shall his face wax pale."

Additional security, that believers shall never be ashamed, results from the fact, that

*Jesus is a compassionate Saviour.*

He is not only able, but willing to save in the tenderest manner. He saith, "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden,



and I will give you rest." His tender affections induce him to speak kindly to the humble and afflicted ; and to afford such assistance as contrite sinners require.

He " can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way ; for that he himself also was compassed with infirmities." " The Lord is gracious and full of compassion."

Will he, then, expose his people to shame ? How often have we provoked him ! Yea, we have turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel ! But he, being full of compassion, forgiveth our iniquity. Yea, many a time, turned he his anger away ; and did not stir up all his wrath.

Can penitent sinners who trust in ~~such~~ a God, who remembereth that they are dust, ever sink into everlasting disgrace ? He will uphold them. They shall never find their confidence confusion. Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed, because,

*Jesus is an effectual Intercessor.*

Already has he espoused the cause of believers, and made all necessary preparation for defending his guilty clients. They have nothing to pay for his services. He pleads for the honour of his name, and the glory of his crown.

Formerly the law was an obstruction to mercy. The law was just. Sinners had vio-

lated it, and deserved to suffer its penalties. Jehovah was inclined to mercy, but could not dishonour himself, could not pardon, to the impeachment of his justice, and to the abrogation of his contemned commandments.

Then Jesus suffered the penalty of the law, to the complete satisfaction of divine justice, and by obeying its precepts brought in such a righteousness as made the law still appear to be good, and God just, even in the very act of justifying the ungodly.

Having taken away all the objections to the exercise of pardoning love, and having paid the covenanted price of redemption, CHRIST must be an effectual Intercessor.

Is that eloquent pleading, which gains the attention? Christ is an eloquent advocate, for "him the Father heareth alway." Is that effectual pleading which obtains the object sought? Christ pleads effectually; for as MEDIATOR he asks, and his requests are granted. He says, "Father forgive them," and Jehovah answers, "there is therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Should an intercessor, to be effectual, persevere? Jesus "because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Christian brethren, comfort yourselves with these things ; for “ if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous,” who will not suffer his friends to be ashamed in the judgment.

FINALLY. Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed, because

*Jesus will judge the world in righteousness.*

The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. “ He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.” “ We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” If faith is any matter of obloquy, then, it will be exposed, when the universe shall be assembled, and the secrets of every heart revealed. If it is any cause for reproach to profess faith in Christ before this assembly ; how great will be our disgrace, when we stand in the presence of God, angels, and men, and say, “ we trusted in Christ to save us ?”

Shall we, poor, despised believers, in that day, find it necessary to search for our friend ? Will Jesus be found among the tribes of Jews, despised by his countrymen, and the arch-deceiver of mankind ? Shall we say to the Deity, we hoped in Christ, but we know not where he is ? Shall we seek him in the crowd, and request, since we were his disciples on earth, that he would answer to our names ? If we have believed in an impostor, we shall

be ashamed; for he would not be able to defend himself in such a case; much less, to plead our cause.

But, we know in whom we have believed. We shall see our compassionate Saviour on the throne of judgment. We shall read our pardon in his eyes of love. His honour and the equity of law will engage him to justify us, for otherwise he would convict himself of breaking his covenant, and of rejecting a perfect righteousness, before the universe.

When he shall demand of us, "sinners what have you to plead?" we will answer, "Jesus died: we trusted in him, and had the promise of peace with God, through his precious blood."

Such an appeal to his justice, truth, and mercy he cannot disregard. If God lives, he will say, "come, ye blessed of my FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Sinners, be not deceived. Believe in Jesus, and he will never desert you. He will manifest the riches of his grace which mercifully ordered your conduct, in hating what is hateful, in loving what is lovely, and in believing the truth. You shall find him the Almighty God, the compassionate Saviour, the effectual Intercessor, the final Judge, worthy of your confidence, your exceeding joy, and everlasting salvation. AMEN.

## SERMON IV.

---

### WEAK FAITH.

*“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.”*

ROMANS XIV. 1.

THE doctrine, that there are degrees in saving faith, is not only true, but essential to the consolation of many of the pious, and to the general prosperity of the Christian Church.

Long and short, high and low, strong and weak, are relative terms, and the construction of language, therefore, leads us to believe, that if faith is ~~ever~~ strong it may also be weak. The declaration of Christ, concerning a centurion, that he had not found *so great faith* as his in Israel, proves, that he had found a less, or more feeble belief in the divine testimony.

That the minds of my hearers may be enlightened in the knowledge of that truth which is contained in the text, their attention is solicited to the following considerations.

I. *The analogy which is found to subsist between all the works of God would naturally lead us to expect that SAVING FAITH, in its incipient state, should be WEAK. By the*

things which are seen, this eternal counsel seems to be revealed, that there shall be a progression in all things but the immutable God. The holy angels advance in knowledge. When God created the world they knew something which they knew not before. When he brought his only begotten Son into the world, a flood of new light burst in upon them, and they learned a new song ; they entered on the delightful services of a new mode of worship. If they stoop down to pry into the mysteries of the incarnation, they must be excited by that desire of wisdom which has been previously indulged, and which they have reason to believe will be suitably gratified.

The work of God in forming and replenishing the earth was not immediate, but continued for six days. He causes the mighty oaks, which sustain the blasts of centuries, to rise from the shells of acorns, and the mustard plant to spring from one of the smallest of all seeds. The Father of the rain visits the soil with repeated showers, before he clothes the face of nature with verdure ; and before man reaps the fruit of his husbandry, he must beseech God to put forth the blade, the stalk, the bud, the blossom, and the unripe fruit. All the animal creation are produced in a weak state of infancy, and their strength accumulates gradually until they arrive at maturity. Even Sampson was a feeble

babe before he became a man of unparralleled strength.

The human mind is subject to the same law. The Creator of our rational faculties developes them gradually. The memory becomes tenacious only by habit, and the power of reasoning is matured by use. The greatest mathematician had once to learn that five and five equal ten; and the astronomer whose capacious intellect spans the heavens, that all the parts of a circle are equally distant from the centre. Bacon, Calvin, Addison and Johnson were once ignorant of the alphabet; and once our Washington was incapable of holding either a sword or a pen.

It is most astonishing of all, that the man Christ Jesus should not have been exempted from this rule of progression. He was once an infant, and *he grew* in stature, in knowledge, and in favour, both with God and man.

How then, can it be expected that faith should be vigorous in its commencement? Why should there not be an infancy in the divine life? We are powerfully constrained to believe, that in the production of saving knowledge and grace, God does not deviate from his accustomed mode of operation.

II. *That saving faith, in its incipient state, is commonly weak, the Scriptures plainly teach.*

Through a divine blessing on the means of grace, the seed of faith is sown in regeneration.

The first act of faith resembles the germination of the future plant ; and the progress of the grace of faith is compared to the increase of the blade until it becomes a stalk bearing a green ear, which in due time contains ripe fruit. God is the only husbandman who can raise "trees of righteousness," plants of salvation, and fruits of eternal life. His word is the seed, and by his sowers, the ministers of the word, he prepares the ground, and distributes that which his dews of grace and light of life will cause gradually to increase. This doctrine our Saviour has taught at large, in the gospel by Mark. "So is the kingdom of God," he says, "as if a man should cast seed in the ground ; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."\* The gradual advancement is denoted by his declaration that the *blade*, or tender sprout first appears, *then the ear*, and *after that, the full corn in the ear*.

The weakness of faith in its first stage could not be more happily inculcated, than by this allusion to the tender blade of corn, which imperceptibly will find its way to the surface of the soil, that it may enjoy the air and be invigorated by the sun. After germination the appearance of the plant is sooner or later, according to the state of the soil, and other

\* Mark iv, 26.



influential circumstances. I have seen the pale green germe that might be broken by the touch, issuing from the tough, unbeaten sod, after many struggles of vegetable life ; and have said, even so, with difficulty, does the divine life manifest itself in one, who is timid by nature, and whose giddy, unchristian associates seek to suppress evangelical religion. The young person who becomes pious in the gay circle, in the wordly family, without the fostering hand of pious parents or friends, is a goodly plant in an unfriendly soil, shooting from the greensward instead of the mellow ridge. If the faith of such a person should long remain weak, it would not be surprising ; and indeed, should not the divine CULTIVATOR regard it with peculiar care, it would as certainly perish as those plants which are choked by thorns.

To imprint on our minds the same truth, Jesus has said, *the kingdom of God*, or the reign of God in subduing sinners to himself, by working faith in them, “ is like to a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in earth ; but when it is sown it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches ; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

Our Lord, in all his intercourse with his Apostles, taught, that even they had *little faith*, and were *slow of heart to believe*. He

had many things to communicate, which, because of the imbecility of their faith, they were unable to bear.

The various characters under which Christians are represented denote, that many of them are weak. They are compared to sheep, of which many are feeble ; and to a flock, of which many are lambs. Believers say, "we are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture." Jesus responds, "I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I know my sheep and am known of mine." "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill ; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth." "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Ezek. xxxiv. 6, 16. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd : he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom." Isa. xlv. 11.

Paul repeatedly styles some believers *babes in Christ*, and declares, that they must be nourished with milk, the simple food of children, because they cannot bear the strong meat of those who have arrived at the stature of men. Many are the directions which he gives to the weak ; and to the strong, for the regulation of their conduct towards the weak.

Our text is an example. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye."

III. *Believers often have internal evidence of the existence of a weak faith.* Most persons of feeble confidence in Christ are disposed to think that they have never experienced saving faith; but the internal evidence of which I treat arises from retrospection. The person who has made some progress in the divine life, and has gained more accurate knowledge of evangelical religion than he formerly possessed, looks upon the past and feels the change. He contrasts his present hopes, fears, and anxieties with his former, and can say that his hopes are now more constant, his fears less slavish, and his anxieties more becoming a Christian than those which occupied his bosom when he first believed. It follows of course, that once his faith was weaker than it is at the present time.

Others are conscious, at the moment of self-examination, that their faith is weak. They would not for their lives say, that they reject Christ and have no desire to be saved by his atonement. They would lie were they to affirm, that they were conscious of hating Jesus, and of delighting in rebellion. Consequently since all who are not against Christ are for him, they have a correct persuasion that they have some faith, while they feel constrained to cry out, "Lord pardon our remaining unbelief." When a believer

finds that his heart is often and easily seduced to sin, his thoughts within say, that he is but a child in spiritual things. The world he knows, from the word of God, could not so easily gain the ascendancy over a strong believer. Christians should be brave soldiers. This feeble youth has taken the whole armour of God, but he marches like a reluctant conscript, without much regard to time; he wears his christian uniform like a novice, and handles his sword like one unskilful either in the art of attack or defence. He feels that his enemy often gains the advantage against him; and it is difficult to summon courage for resistance. Many wounds has he received because he knew not how practically to apply the word of God. A pious soldier was in the habit of carrying his Bible in his bosom. It happened that in an engagement, an opponent thrust the bayonet of his gun through the pious warrior's vest, but the book prevented it from entering his heart. If young believers spiritually bound the word of God to their hearts it would often save them from grievous wounds, from many fiery darts of the adversary. Believers may sometimes search the scriptures, find nothing there which seems designed for them, and be in bitterness, without relinquishing the eager hope of eternal life. They have faith; but their disquiet evinces feeble confidence in the word of Jehovah.

Is it impossible for one to discover his own bodily weakness? Let him walk, and if he totters, or is soon weary, he may know himself to be weak. In like manner, let a Christian attempt to perform religious duty, and if duty seems difficult, if he pants in the path, feels faint at heart, is strongly tempted to desist from walking in the ways of holiness, and requires the arm of a fellow-traveller to sustain his weight, he may know, that his faith languishes. Mark the little child, who totters on the pavements, who is soon fatigued and must be carried, or will fall down and cry, and then say, such is the description of an infant believer. He commenced his walk with alacrity and all the gay smiles of a little child, who is permitted for the first time to try his strength in the street. But he soon found that he could go neither fast, nor far. ~~He~~ you cannot live without prayer, and still often feel it a burden to pray; if you are unwilling to transgress, but still find much difficulty, and even some reluctance in obeying; then know that ye have faith; but it is the feeble faith of children. Peter was desirous of walking on the water: "come," said Jesus, and he walked on the surface without difficulty. Turning his attention away from Jesus, however, to the boisterous waves, his soul began to tremble, and at that same moment Jesus suffered him to sink. He ex-

claims, "Lord help me, or I perish." Jesus supported him again, but not without the reproof, "why didst thou doubt: O thou of little faith?"

IV. *Believers often give external evidence of weak faith.* Where the works of faith are manifest, it is scriptural to form the opinion, that faith lives in the heart. It would be difficult for any one to shew his faith to man, who looketh on the outward appearance alone, without works; and those same actions must indicate the degree of confidence which any one reposes in the testimony of grace. If the general conduct of any person is such as to warrant the persuasion that he is pious, while he is erroneous in many opinions, and inconstant in the performance of many duties, we have external evidence that he is a babe in Christ. This was precisely the case of those weak believers to whom the apostle Paul devotes the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. They had made a public profession of Christianity, and were attentive to its peculiar ordinances; but having been educated Jews, it was difficult for them to admit, that all meats were clean to him that conscientiously believed, what was the truth, that the Jewish distinction of days and meats was abolished, by the sacrifice which Jesus made for sin, when he offered himself. The Apostle affirms, that these Jews were believers, but they were weak;

and in the Epistle to the Hebrews he tells the same sort of persons, that they have need to be taught again *the first principles of the oracles of God*.

A person may trust in Jesus Christ for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul, who, from ignorance, is poorly qualified to show unto sinners the way of salvation, or even to state correctly the doctrine of reconciliation, by a substitution of the active and passive obedience of Christ, in the place of the sinner's unrighteousness. It is upon this principle that we believe many persons justified by the decree of the eternal Judge, who have yet to learn most of the principles upon which will proceed the retributions of the last day.

Some have thought it strange, that any should be deemed Christians, who are occasionally chargeable with great and glaring inconsistencies in their religious life ; but let it be remembered, that perfect faith alone will secure perfect consistency of religious character. Every action of disobedience proves imperfection in the faith of a friend of Jesus ; and hence it is, that about many who discover bigotry, censoriousness, selfishness, and immorality ; and again something of faith, penitence, and new obedience, our opinion is compelled to fluctuate. If multitudes were not weak in faith, we should no longer be necessitated to doubt concerning them, whether

they be in Christ or not, for then, even the world would take "knowledge of them that they *have* been with Jesus."

V. *It is of importance that all should form a correct estimate of* WEAK FAITH. If we degrade it, we shall dishonour the work of God, and cast many sincere believers into a state of despondency. If we unsuitably exalt it, we shall tempt men to negligence.

In commendation of the weakest saving faith we must remark, *that it unites the person who possesses it to the Lord Jesus Christ.* Saving faith is such a belief of the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ as is invariably followed by the acceptance of him for our personal Saviour. Nothing less is an act of saving faith; and the person who thus believes, is united to Christ by the eternal counsels of God. He who has the least degree of this faith becomes a member of the body of Jesus. In one body are many members, and the least honourable is as truly connected with the head, as the hand, or the eye. The whole company of believers are compared to a temple, of which Jesus is the Chief Corner Stone. The most minute ornament is a part of the whole. That believer, therefore, who has the least true faith is a constituent member of the body, or part of the superb edifice. The fact of our union to Christ depends not on the degree of our faith, but on the certainty of the existence of the least genuine faith. He who



has no faith is not of Christ ; but he who has some saving apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ is united to the Saviour by indissoluble bonds. It is not our FATHER's good pleasure that any one who believes in his only begotten SON should be considered as an alien.

*God favourably regards the weakest faith.* He asks, "who hath despised the day of small things?" *He* has not, and *we* should be criminal in deviating from his example. The diseased sheep he will not destroy ; the lame he will not reject ; but will bind up the broken, and give strength to the feeble. The bruised reed he will not break ; and if the grace of any one should resemble a spark in smoking flax, instead of the brightness of a lamp trimmed and burning, he will not extinguish it.

We should not despise weak faith, *because it will become stronger.* The little infant will become a man : the trembling steps will become firm ; the soft hand will be taught to fight ; the awkward soldier will become an experienced veteran, and he who "stumbled over a wrinkle in the carpet"\* will surmount the hill of difficulty. Where faith has been communicated, it shall in due season be perfected. The progress may be imperceptible and irregular, but he will give more grace. The rivulet shall become a river ; and the

\* Rev. William Jay.

dawning of the morning proves the approach of noon.

*By the weakest faith a sinner shall live, and inherit everlasting glory.* The life is not supported by the hand which serves the mouth, but by the necessary nutriment which the hand conveys. The hand of a feeble person may tremble while performing its office, but by his proper food man shall live. Faith is merely the hand by which the soul is fed with the bread of life. The palsied hand of a beggar may receive a gift, and secure it for his personal advantage; and the woman who tremblingly touched the hem of Christ's garment, was as truly saved as the Syrophœnician, to whom he said, "great is thy faith." It is said, "he that believeth shall be saved," and of course, since there is no limitation, he who has faith as a grain of mustard seed shall not fail of entering the kingdom of heaven. Beware then, of contemning feeble faith. If God has wrought it in you, honour his work by publicly confessing it; for you would enjoy no Christian grace, even in its lowest degree without *the washing of regeneration*, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

That men may not abuse the doctrine of weak faith, let it be remembered, that the person who is contented with his present attainments is deluded, and knoweth nothing as he ought. It is not in the nature of the weakest faith to render any believer satisfied with

himself. If you have a little faith you will earnestly desire more. If you have tasted of the good word of grace, the delicious morsel will make you hunger and thirst after righteousness. Although a weak faith assures us of salvation, yet it is not to be disguised, that if it continue long, it will cause distressing doubts, fears, and perplexities. Who would not prefer strong confidence to doubt in matters of immortal concern? Who would not prefer a firm to a palsied body? Who would willingly be a babe in form and strength, while a man in years? Who that loves Christ and can honour him a little, would not wish to honour him much?

Men of faith must ascend the mount, and conquer their enemies. The man of weak faith, like one in the consumption, ascends slowly with much pain and difficulty, while the vigour of the strong man makes toil a pleasure, and his rest sweet.

VI. *The text teaches believers in what manner they are to treat their weak brethren.* They must receive them as brethren, and seek to promote their increase in strength. Because the youngest child of the family has the understanding, the knowledge and the strength of an infant, is he, therefore, not of our kindred, when it is ascertained that we were born of the same parents? Because a little child, who is led by the hand, does not make equal strides with his leader, does it fol-

low, that both do not walk in the same direction? If we have brethren in the Lord who are not so intelligent, and orthodox, and consistent, as we might wish them to be, still we must receive them to our fellowship.

The weak are to be fed, lead, and regarded as children. If they have any degree of precious faith they have a right to a seat at our Father's table; and if our eating meat cause them, through their weak consciences, to offend, we are not to eat meat in their presence, while the world stands. "Ye that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak."

If that God, who cannot lie, can say no more, O may he say to each one of us, "I know thy works; behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, *for thou hast a little strength*, and hast not denied my name." AMEN.

## SERMON V.

THOSE PERSONS DESCRIBED WHO HAVE NO  
SAVING FAITH.

*“All men have not faith.”* 2 THESS. III. 2.

ONE who should speculatively consider the force of truth would be disposed to think, that the evidence of any divine oracle, clearly presented to the mind, must produce faith. When the sun shines on any man, who has eyes, can he help believing in the existence and influence of that glorious orb, which rules the day? When the truth beams on his immortal faculties, with rays of clearest light, can he remain in unbelief?

Alas! “all men have not faith.” They have eyes, but they are closed; the light of the glorious gospel is reflected from the face of Jesus Christ, but they turn away from it, and love darkness, because their deeds are evil. In every land, whether it is visited by the Sun of Righteousness, or remains under the obscurity of the shadow of death, there are many persons “without Christ, being aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Ephesians ii. 12. Even in this assembly there

may be hearers of the words of life, who have never been renewed in their minds ; for “ all men,” to whom the gospel comes, “ have not faith.” Who are the unhappy individuals ? Lord, am I one ?

It is the design of this discourse to describe all those persons who dwell in Christian lands, without possessing the least degree of saving faith. With the poor pagans we have, at present, no concern. All who hear the gospel do not believe ; and to-day the question to be agitated, respects neither *a weak faith*, nor *a strong faith*, but those persons who have *no faith*. Those unhappy children of the curse, who are not delivered from a state of condemnation, by the Redeemer, may be reduced to SIX CLASSES.

THE FIRST comprehends all those persons who discard divine revelation. Not every one who says, “ I have no saving faith,” is without it ; for the tender conscience, from fear of fatal delusion, may judge uncandidly ; but every one who openly avows his rejection of the Holy Scriptures is an enemy to Jesus, and is convicted of infidelity by his own lips.

Christ said to the unbelieving Jews, “ ye are of your father, the devil ;” “ because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” “ He that is of God heareth God’s words : ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God.” John viii. 44, 45, 47. To Pilate the Son of God said, “ every one that is of the

truth heareth my voice." John xviii. 37. The apostle John testifies, saying, "he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." 1 John iv. 6.

Those who profess to consider the Bible a fictitious revelation of the divine will, who say that the facts recorded never took place, and that such a person as Jesus is represented to be never lived, never died, never offered himself to take away sin, plainly declare that they have neither fled to Christ for a refuge, nor accepted him for their personal Deliverer. They despise his righteousness, or believe that it could avail, only for himself. No man will rely upon testimony which he thinks false, and no man will ask of Christ that salvation, which the unbelieving heart deems him unable to give.

On this subject be not deceived. Many wish to pass for very good men, and demand that you should account them to be heirs of salvation, when they give the clearest proof of dishonesty, by resisting the amplest evidence of the authenticity of divine revelation. God declares that they are not his friends; Christ disowns them; and why should we receive them, with the acknowledgment, that they are lovers of the truth? They say concerning themselves, that they have no faith, and the Spirit of the Lord affirms the same.

IN THE SECOND class of men who have no saving faith, are comprehended all persons who are habitually immoral in their conduct. There is a world, which lieth in wickedness ; which is governed by wicked motives, which disregards the authority of God ; and which is full of sinful practices. “ Whosoever is born of God overcometh *this* world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? ” 1 John v. 4, 5. If any one has not brought his body and spirit in some measure into subjection to Christ, he has no faith ; for every one that is a believer is delivered from the unrestrained reign of sin. Lusts operate within the unbeliever, and he *consents* to obey them. *Never* has he made any serious determination to deny ungodliness ; *never* has he prayed for assistance to subdue his sinful passions ; and his appetites, like the wind, take him away. Those who have faith may occasionally, through the force of great temptations, commit heinous offences, but if any one is notoriously vicious, it is written with sunbeams, in characters which all may read, that the fear of God is not before his eyes, and that the desire of deliverance from sin by Christ, is not in his heart. Those who deliberately consult to perform the works of the devil, are of the devil ; and by their fruits we know them to be children



of wrath. No liar, no thief, no drunkard, no gluttonous person, no adulterer, no lascivious person of any description, no covetous being, no profane swearer, no murderer; no person that habitually disregards the Sabbath, the word, and ordinances of God; no child of malice, envy, slander and revenge; has eternal life abiding in him. Not one person who deliberately consents, before the time of transgression, to do wickedly, and plots mischief on his bed, is a new creature. Do you contrive to be unjust, that you may inherit unlawful gain; or do you allow yourself in unkind actions? You are immoral in your determinations and actions; you have no faith in that God, who is the Rewarder of all that diligently seek him, who bloteth out the iniquities of his people, but is the avenger of every wrong. The external actions of men are regulated by their internal thoughts, feelings and volitions. Were the openly vicious to receive the gift of faith, they would perceive that sin is death; that the way of transgressors is hard, that the paths of wisdom alone are amiable; and would instantaneously cease from doing evil.

When I speak of open immorality, let it be understood, that the crimes of slander, needless contention, consoriosis, and churlishness of deportment, when commonly indulged, constitute as satisfactory evidence of the

destitution of faith, as profane discourse, or lasciviousness. Show me a man, woman, or child, who daily discovers dissatisfaction with the prosperity of others, who delights to expose faults, who always imputes the worst of motives, who is gratified with the degradation of the useful, who has the tongue of Potiphar's wife, and I will prove that such a creature's character has been formed by the corruptions of human nature, and the influence of the devil; yea, I will prove, that the Spirit of God has never communicated the principle of saving faith, has never implanted the smallest seed of holiness. We do not wish that any should think the malignant, the wrathful, the allowedly envious, and the self-approving churl, pious. Of Nabal it was said, "he is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him." If any man's character resembles that of Nabal, if he is a morose, unkind, unmerciful, unthankful being, say, and God will support the declaration, that all such offenders are destitute of faith in the meek, compassionate, affectionate, and courteous Man of Sorrows.

THE THIRD class comprehends all those who are merely moral persons. If men possess not something more than the exterior of Christianity, they are of the people, who have not faith. The body without the Spirit, the form of Godliness without the power, is dead. Various things may combine to produce what

the world calls "a good moral character." A pious education, bestowed on one of native suavity and mildness of temper, when united with that state of society, which makes honesty evidently the best policy, rarely fails to restrain from disgraceful courses.

That on which man looks, the outward appearance, may be commendable, while the heart retains its bitterness against the divine authority, and while the merely moral person, being destitute of piety towards God, disregards every secret duty of the first table. He is just to man, in all those actions which man can scrutinize, but at the same time robs God without compunction.

If the *principal* motive for external morality is the favour of man, the opinion of the world, or the solicitude of friends, and NOT a sense of obligation to God, not a love to Christ, let it be remembered that such goodness would change with the times, and will not prove the fact of union to the Lord of life. Could men prove this morality, they would not find it consistent; and He who searcheth the heart will not approve of any services which are performed without regard to his authority.

One of you may come to this house of prayer, as God's people come, so far as the human eye can discern, but if the practice of others is your law, if you have no pleasure in the holy Sabbath, if you have no love to

the gospel, no satisfaction in the ordinances of religion, no desire to be made acquainted with your duty, and to be strengthened in your performance of it, know assuredly, that your religious observances are formality, and are perfectly consistent with enmity to God. Many who are regular in their attendance on public worship, think of the world, while they appear to hear of Christ, and devise mischief, when they seem to pray. If your minds commune not with God, if they inhale none of the consolations which flow from Jesus, the solemnity of face which I often see is mockery, and God says, "ye have not given me the heart." Morality of life is productive of much good to society, but that faith alone, which makes us desirous of pleasing God in all things, embraces the inheritance among all them who are justified by the blood of atonement.

The amiable young ruler, who could say, "the whole of the moral law have I observed, in the view of men, from my childhood; what lack I yet?" turned away from Christ, because he had great possessions, which he regarded more than eternal life. To another moral person it was said, "thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven;" but we have no pleasing intelligence that he ever entered it by faith in the Son of God.

Every person, who is not more anxious to please God than man; who is satisfied with himself, when he feels that he has no love to

that pure and undefiled religion, which God alone can duly appreciate, may know, that he was intended, as well as the habitual drunkard and thief, when the Apostle said, "all men have not faith."

Some of these moral persons I have seen, who despise the contrite suppliant for mercy, who think that the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which tend to humble man, are unreasonable, and that the free proffer of pardon to the chief of sinners is an encouragement to licentiousness. I have known them wrangle with the word of God, because it does not teach, that such beings as themselves shall be saved for their morality; and that the offender, whom they condemn although he confesses his iniquities, shall be damned, past redemption.

THEY are worthy of salvation, they suppose, because their lives have fewer perceptible blemishes, than the lives of many, who, like the publicans and harlots of old, press into the kingdom of heaven.

Oh! "that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men;" who will not themselves enter heaven by the Saviour of sinners, and are unwilling that others should; "for all men have not faith."

THE FOURTH class of persons, who are destitute of saving faith, includes all hypocrites.

Sinners who really misapprehend their own character and situation ought not to be stigmatized as *hypocrites*.

Those persons, and those only, who for the imagined advantages of deception profess to be what *they know* they are not, deserve this odious epithet. Such persons exist; yea such persons are exalted to honour. They declare that they believe the Scriptures, that they are convinced of sin, that they trust in Christ, that they have been converted, that they love the Lord's people, and that they esteem the Sabbath honourable, when they know, in their minds, that it is not thus with them; and when their consciences accuse them of publishing lies for their personal aggrandizement. These deceivers discover more turpitude of disposition than avowed infidels; and since the gospel is truth, they, being enemies of the truth, cannot receive it.

Should any of you profess an attachment to Jesus, which you know does not exist; should you submit to some of the visible ordinances of Christianity to make others believe you good, or to obtain some place of power; should you be more anxious to seem Christians, than to be Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile, you would, by such artifices, make yourselves two-fold more the children of the devil than you were before. To make a show of piety, while we feel that we love not the Son of God, is a painful and unpro-

fitable task, is a fraud which may elude the vigilance of man for a time, but for which God will bestow no reward, except that of stripping off the mask, to present the fiend's countenance, a proper object of everlasting contempt. You may fear that you are hypocrites, as pious people of the greatest candour frequently do; but if you defraud men, and even wish to elude the vigilance of the omniscient God, it will prove that you are without the root of piety. "Be not as the hypocrites are of a dismal countenance; for they disfigure their faces," and imprison a smile, which would escape them, that they may be *thought* devout. They have their reward. Men, who are more of idiots than themselves, think well of their religious character; but he who feels that all things are naked before the eyes of him with whom we have to do, prefers the righteousness of Christ, to their whole wardrobe of dusty cobwebs, pities their duplicity, and prays that God would give them repentance.

Instead of confessing his sins, and humbly looking for a pardon from Christ, sufficiently broad to cover them all, the hypocrite cloaks them with lies. "He that covereth his sins," in this manner, "shall not prosper."

THE FIFTH class of persons who have no faith includes all who are fatally deluded. Undoubtedly some are abandoned to believe a lie, that they might be damned, because they

have pleasure in unrighteousness. That delusion I call *fatal*, which, if continued until death, must present the miserable man before the door of heaven to cry, "Lord, Lord, open to me;" and to hear the Lord from within say, "I know you not, depart from me." The charms of the adversary are sometimes broken, before the time of grace has elapsed; but he who is under their influence cannot be savingly united to the Head of the church.

Fatal delusions not unfrequently arise from *the pride of reasoning*. The unsanctified mind may give rational assent to the truth, that the scriptures were given by inspiration of God; it may, at the same time, so pervert the testimony of the Most High, as to account Jesus a man, or something less than God, mighty to save, by rendering that obedience to the law, which he did not owe for himself. One who is under this delusion cannot look to Jesus as the author and finisher of faith. If you believe that the Son of God was incapable of "bringing in everlasting righteousness," you cannot receive him as the Lord your righteousness, your strength, and all your salvation. Men who cannot comprehend their own being, reject the Anointed of the Lord, because they cannot fathom the mysteries of God manifest in the flesh.

To them no less than to the Jews and Greeks, is HE a *Rock of offence*, which they



strive to remove, or undermine and bury by criticism, because they have *stumbled on it, and are broken*, but it returns upon them in their works, *to grind them to powder*.

Another fatal delusion is that of supposing our own personal righteousness sufficient for our acceptance in the day of judgment. If any one thinks to plead what he has done, or what he has not done, as the ground of his acceptance, or the reason for the remission of his sins, he attempts to establish his own righteousness, and does not submit to the righteousness of God. While a man's pride, or ignorance of the spirituality of the law, allows him to think that he has done his duty, or by some meritorious actions has made satisfaction for his deficiencies, he will never resort to the Saviour of sinners. If one can save himself by prudence, benevolence, or reformation, what need has he of redemption by another? No delusion is more common than this. If you do not feel, that you have no goodness of heart, no excellence of character, which can save you from hell, you are without the least degree of saving faith.

Another delusion, not less fatal, is that of trusting to a crucifix, to an image of Christ, to ceremonies of human invention, instead of reposing the guilty soul upon the merits of the Saviour. The delusion, which those are under, who expect to be saved through the merit of their convictions, terrors, and devotional

exercises, is of the same family, and effectually excludes him who died for sinners, from the office of meritorious Deliverer. Of other errors, which frequently destroy the souls of infatuated men, I have time only to say, "beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

THE SIXTH class of persons, who have no saving faith, comprehends all those, who are absolutely destitute of all the other Christian graces. Faith never exists alone. It is the most luminous star in a vast constellation. All the graces may not be discovered at the same moment, but they all exist together in the renewed mind. Some cloud may cover a part of the "milky way" from the naked eye, but the stars which compose it are not blotted out of existence. The man, however, who has not faith, has NOT ONE of the graces of the Spirit; he is "free from righteousness;" and there cannot be *found in him ONE good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.*

Where you find one truly pious affection, you may expect more, and will not be deceived; but where some one beside faith manifests not itself, conclude that faith itself is wanting. It is the nature of faith to produce HOPE; for if any one believes that all good things are treasured in Jesus, and that he shall become a partaker of them, he will hope,

until the actual possession comes. We always hope for that which we believe to be both desirable and obtainable. The existence of hope, therefore, will frequently prove that faith previously existed; even as fruit presents to the mind evidence that the tree which produced it must have had a previous being.

Examine your own minds, my hearers, and if you find *no hope* that eternal life, the love of God, and the friendship of Jesus, shall be your portion, you may positively decide that you are destitute of faith.

Search, also, for the grace of EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE, and if you find within yourselves *no regret* that you have sinned against your merciful God and Redeemer, *no desire* to abstain from ungrateful conduct in future, *no feeling* of displeasure at yourselves for vileness, NO hatred of transgression which does not arise from fear of punishment, you must come to the same melancholy conclusion.

LOVE has no existence in the man who is destitute of faith. He cannot affirm, with truth, that he ever felt his affections drawn forth towards his God. He *never* felt himself pleased, when God is honoured. From attachment to Jesus, he was *never* grieved at the dishonour done to Christ's cause. Should any man abuse the character of an earthly friend whom he loves, he would be indignant;

but he knows nothing of holy displeasure with sin, because he is not a friend of God.

Love induces us to please the object of that passion, even at the expense of many personal gratifications, but the man without faith, *never* makes it his business to please God, by imitating the example of his Son.

Love to mankind is inseparably connected with devotion to God. If we take pleasure in our Creator, we shall in his creatures ; and if we love the Redeemer, we shall love his redeemed ones. If then you have no sincere desire of doing good, as you have opportunity ; if you do not wish to be useful in the world ; if you are without compassion for the abandoned ; if you feel no complacency in the good ; if you are destitute, entirely, of meekness, forbearance, patience, and beneficence, you are separated from Christ, you are "none of his." Where there is no active goodness, there is no efficient faith. Would you be satisfied, were you to do no good ? Then you have not the spirit of Christ.

To enumerate all the Christian graces, which, under different forms, present themselves, would require volumes. It is enough for us to know, that the pious person is a follower of Jesus, and will, in the changing scenes of life, exemplify, with different degrees of light, all the shades of the Christian character. Where this is wholly wanting there is not the feeblest faith in Jesus Christ.

The subject, which has been considered, may, by serious, personal APPLICATION, be useful to all my hearers. It may ultimately be of benefit to them, if they should come to opposite conclusions. Some of you should reason thus, with yourselves: "We do *not* reject the scriptures; we do *not* consent to immorality of life; we do not belong to the class of merely moral persons; we are not hypocrites; we are not fatally deluded with the belief that any thing but the blood of Christ can save us; we are not completely destitute of hope, evangelical repentance, and love; therefore, we are NOT of the number of persons who have NO FAITH. We must take our place with those WHO HAVE NO faith, or with those WHO HAVE SOME faith. Since, then, we are not of the first class, we are of the second, and must cherish the persuasion that we are believers." In this manner some timid souls may be brought to the admission of the truth concerning themselves, and may be induced to give God thanks for the inestimable gift of saving faith.

The other conclusion, to which the personal application of our discourse must bring persons, is an alarming one; but the conviction that we are lost, must precede the reception of a Saviour.

Some of you should reason thus:

“ We reject the Holy Scriptures ; or, live in the allowed practice of some known sins ; or, have nothing but the show of morality ; or, make professions of religion which we know to be false ; or, lightly esteem Christ, rest satisfied with our own obedience, and are well pleased with our own hearts : or, we possess no hope of heaven, no desire to be holy, no regret for past offences, no love which binds our affections to Jesus, no love to mankind ; and therefore have not faith.” This reasoning must be true ; and either the first or the second course of reasoning is applicable to every hearer. If you have no faith, consider your situation. You have no promise of pardon, no present peace of conscience, no prospect of heaven. God is not your friend, but your unreconciled enemy. Jesus Christ does not acknowledge you. The pious cannot account you joint-heirs with themselves to the blessed world. You have no warrant to believe that God will prolong your day of grace ; and you may die, immediately. Should you be taken away, in your present state, the devil would claim you as his subjects, and you would enter into that world, where hope, peace, friendship and consolation never enter. The gate to hell opens only inward, and none can return. Between the state of misery and happiness there is no communication. Not one angel of light, not one saint in glory can fly across the horrible gulf which lies between.

Before Jehovah shall say, \* I am weary with repenting," and seal your doom, O consider, be wise, believe, accept of salvation, anticipate heaven, be prepared for death, and when death shall come, enter into glory. AMEN.

---

## SERMON VI.

---

### THE INCREASE OF FAITH.

*"Increase our faith."* LUKE XVII. 5.

THE Pharisees, "who were covetous," when they heard our Saviour's parable of the unjust steward, and felt the pangs of self-condemnation, vented their malignant emotions in ridicule. "They derided him," they attempted to banter the Lord of Glory.

Christ was a man, and could feel when insulted: he was God, and had a right to take vengeance; but instead of resenting the affront, he continued to teach the perverse, by repeating the affecting story of the rich man and Lazarus.

When he had concluded his discourse to the Pharisees, he turned *to his disciples*, with

such salutary instruction as this: "offences will occur, but beware of giving needless offence; beware of exposing others to fall; and if others trespass against you, and profess repentance, forgive them. Yea, if thy brother trespass against thee, my disciple, seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn to thee, saying, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him."

The twelve Apostles had expected their Lord to punish his enemies, and could scarcely believe that this meek Jesus was the King of Zion. They felt too, that his lesson of mercy and forbearance was hard for human nature to learn. Under these circumstances they "said unto the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'"

This was a prayer for the increase of faith, which proceeded from faith, for had the apostles been destitute of the saving belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, they would have deserted their Master. Their petition implied a persuasion that Jesus is "the author and finisher of faith," that he had bestowed on them *a weak faith*, and that he could increase it in vigour. Men do not ask for that which they know cannot be given; they do not pray for faith, without believing, in some feeble manner at least, that God is able and willing to confer on them the mercy which they seek. This prayer of the apostles, who were then



children in divine things, has been adopted by sincere believers in every age.

It pleases the Spirit of God to open the eyes of the blind, so that they see divine things in a new light. They discover, what they could not discern before, that they are lost sinners, who stand in need of a Saviour to deliver them from hell. They perceive that God would be just in punishing them for their ingratitude, their want of love to him, and their neglect of duty, as well as for their positive transgressions. It is then discovered to them, that they who have "come short of the glory of God," and cannot save themselves, may find salvation in Jesus Christ. They believe that Christ has actually lived on the earth, and died for sinners; are firmly persuaded that God intends to save men by the Redeemer; and do actually *desire* to be delivered from sin and the punishment of it, by the Son of God. They see that it is an evil thing to sin against the just and merciful Jehovah, and desire to be made holy. In the very act of *desiring* to be saved by Christ, and to be made holy through the Spirit, the sinner evinces the existence of saving faith. He had no power to ~~desire~~ sanctification, salvation, and the enjoyment of the divine favour, before he was renewed in the spirit of his mind: but when God had made him a new creature, he had such spiritual

views and desires as were unknown to him before ; and then was begun the work of faith, which God will carry on to perfection. Regeneration puts every faculty of the human mind into the state which is requisite for the performance of right actions.

The renewed person, however, does not always think that his conviction of his own helplessness and depravity, his discovery of Christ's character, and his desire of deliverance by him alone, imply faith in the Lord Jesus. Yet, to desire Christ for a Saviour, to confide in him as such, and will to be saved by him, are the same, as *fleeing to him for help*, as *receiving him*, *looking to him*, *going to him*, and *trusting in him* ; which are some of the principal acts of saving faith, and always proceed from the spiritual belief of the fact, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

In the infancy of faith, the young Christian desires to be converted, and wonders how regenerated hearts feel. He prays that God would convince him of sin, make him feel his own misery, and give him a new heart. God answered him before he asked assistance, or the sinner would never have received this Spirit of prayer. God has given him a new heart, and it is that new heart which cries for the graces of the Spirit, humiliation, penitence, and faith. Without admitting that they have any effectual belief of the truth, the

language of those who have lately passed from death to life is, "O Lord, increase our faith; make us believe firmly thy word; make us rely on the promises of thy grace."

Believers, who have grown in the knowledge of God, and know that they have some faith, frequently address the same petition to heaven. They can say, "Lord, we believe; pardon our remaining unbelief, and make us strong in faith, giving glory to God." Such prayers are inspired by the Holy Spirit, who teaches us to pray, and makes intercession for every believer. Such prayers will assuredly be answered; for He is faithful who has said, "ask and it shall be given you;" "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you;" "they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, 'It is my people,' and they shall say, 'The Lord is my God.'"\* Yes, "every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

No prayer, which came from a new heart, and which was excited by the Holy Spirit, was ever disregarded. Those who pray for grace have some grace already, and shall have more. The petition "Lord, increase our faith," never proceeded from the heart in vain. God does give grace for grace, and faith for faith. He honours the work of the

\* Matt. vii. 7, 8. James iv. 8. Zech. xiii. 9.

Spirit, who makes the heirs of glory cry, "Abba, Father."

In what manner God will answer the supplication for faith cannot be previously determined by any Christian, because the divine resources are inexhaustible, and his application of them various. The means, however, by which God commonly increases faith, are described in the holy Scriptures, and are well known to skilful Christians. They have sought to know them as the benevolent physician seeks for healing plants, or the miser for hidden treasure, and having found them, are desirous of imparting their information for the benefit of others.

Let the weak in faith know, then, that God is able to make them stand ; that if they pray, "increase our faith," he will make them flourish, ultimately, in every grace. They are "trees of righteousness," whose leaves shall never fade, whose branches shall never wither, whose fruits shall ripen and endure for ever. To accomplish this the suitable means are made effectual. Christ usually increases the faith of his people,

I. *By training them to devotional habits.*

No sooner is a sinner renewed than he feels a disposition to pray, from a knowledge of his own wants, and of the divine fulness. He is persuaded that he wants much, and that God has much to give ; for he hears the commandment and promise, "open thy mouth

wide, and I will fill it." He wants pardon, peace, joy in the Holy One, and all the blessings of heaven. These God has to bestow. The first petition usually offered, is similar to that of the contrite publican, who, standing afar off, smote upon his breast, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Before conviction and regeneration this same sinner may have repeated the words of supplication, and may have desired natural good ; but he never desired spiritual blessings before God made him a spiritual person. Once, praying was mere formality, the result of fear, or of a pious education ; but now, the youth who formerly *said prayers* to please an earthly parent, *prays* from a desire to please our Heavenly Father. He who had no desires after God, now wishes God to be his friend and Christ his Saviour. The soul is constrained to cry unto God, from a sensation of need, and a belief that he can supply all our wants. It is Jesus who gives such convictions and such feelings, and by continuing them, causes us to acquire the habit of prayer.

HABIT is formed by repeated use ; and because God convinces his children that they ought always to pray, and causes them to experience satisfaction and profit in praying, they continue in supplications till they form the habit of drawing near to him. The young Christian *resolves*, that by divine assistance he will be devout, will

call on God, and will make prayer a part of the business of every day. Some are induced to form the habit of praying in particular places, and some, of addressing short petitions to God in almost every place. The regular occurrence of stated seasons for devotional exercises has a very desirable effect; and I may venture to affirm, that almost every believer, acquires the habit of calling on his God, at least, in the morning and evening.

By going to God in prayer, we at the same time obtain the habit of trusting in him; even as children acquire strong confidence in a parent by habitually presenting to him their requests. In prayer God is pleased to meet us, and make us know him more perfectly. The habit of prayer, is such a state of mind as predisposes us to thoughts of God, of his relation to us, of our necessities, of his mercies, and to suitable addresses to the throne of grace. These thoughts of God are the means of our believing more firmly his word; for the more we think of him, the more we shall know of the divine faithfulness, which is the sole foundation of faith in his testimonies. The truth of these remarks will not be doubted by any believer, who seriously looks back upon the time when he began to learn how to pray in sincerity. Then he felt as a child, he thought and spake like a child; but now he has more freedom in prayer, because God answered his infant cries, by increasing

his faith. When he first prayed to God, he could scarcely believe that God would hear and answer; but now, through the habit of trusting his Father, he has become so strong as to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. Young believers tremble when they begin to commune with Jehovah, feel some reluctance to bend their knees before the Father, and almost think it a shame for themselves to speak to God, because they cannot easily be persuaded that they pray as sinners ought. Let them continue to pray, and God will teach them that he is no tyrant, but a covenant Father, to whom they may come with holy boldness, and frankly confess all their transgressions.

II. Christ frequently increases the faith of his people *by giving them some evident answer to their intercessions.*

It is not the unhappy lot of believers at all times, to "ask and receive not, because they ask amiss." They frequently pray for things which are pleasing to God, and can say with the psalmist, "I love the Lord, for he hath heard my cry." In the present life, believers are well assured, that God does hear his children, for they have waited for him, and have seen the salvation of God.

The immediate effect of a sensible answer to prayer is such as we might expect. It

makes the person, who has evidence of being heard, more strong in his confidence, and more ready to believe in future, because each answer to prayer affords new evidence of the divine veracity. "Has God promised?" the believer will say. "He has also performed, for I made supplication, and he has granted my request, according to his word." If any one frequently grants me favours, and promises to grant me more, his past kindness to me is a pledge that I shall not be disappointed.

That prayer which is commonly answered, to the increase of our faith, is fervent, but humble, is anxious but not desponding, and usually is persisted in, until the desired object be obtained. Jacob wrestled with the angel Jehovah, and obtained a blessing. Was he not, think you, more firmly persuaded of God's mercy, after he was answered, than before he made supplication? Would he not, from a firmer belief that God hears prayer, than he formerly possessed, intercede with the Lord more fervently than others; who had enjoyed less evident tokens of grace? Moses prayed; God granted his request, and it made him more confident in the God of his salvation. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life." Prov. xiii. 12. The answer of prayer gives rise to new hopes, new desires,



new prayers, and a strong belief, that if we ask aright, we shall receive.

Young Christians are prone to address a God, afar off; and rarely take the pains to examine, at any future time, whether they have been heard. If some answer is granted too palpable to be mistaken, they are astonished that God should have heard; astonished that God should have performed his gracious promises. Such an unexpected answer makes them believe more firmly in God's words, in future, and they learn that he is a God nigh them, who is more ready to give spiritual blessings than any of his people to ask them.

Perhaps there are no favours which the believer supplicates, after the pardon of his own sins, with more ardour, than the graces of faith, repentance, hope, and love, for his friends and relatives. When God sends his Holy Spirit to convince and convert one, who is near and dear to us, whose salvation has long been the desire of our hearts, then we can rejoice exceedingly, and take courage. Then we believe more readily than before, that wrestling Jacobs shall prevail with God; and that the Great Head of the Church is mighty to save. Has the husband long interceded with God for his wife, or the wife for her husband? And has the prayer of faith been graciously rewarded? How sweet is the consolation; how great the gratitude of

the person who is heard ; how firm his future trust in God ! If any thing will tend to increase our faith in God, surely, next to our own conversion, the regeneration of those for whom our souls " travail until Christ be formed in them," will produce that effect.

Souls are given in answer to prayer, to be seals of faith, as well as seals of evangelical preaching ; and I doubt not some present can affirm, " if we have desired our own salvation, we have fervently prayed for some to whom our souls have been knit by an invisible hand. We have sighed for them, while they were thoughtless, we have wet our couch with tears, while they refused to pray for themselves ; and thanks be unto God, he has not suffered us to plead in vain." The wife has been the means of saving her husband, the husband his wife, parents their children, children their parents, the friend his associate ; and all have been made stronger in faith, by the enjoyment of the mercies which they sought.

III. Christ increases the faith of his people, *by promoting their doctrinal knowledge*. Much knowledge of revealed truth may exist where there is no faith, but faith cannot exist and become strong without the increase of scriptural information. When any person has been taught so much of divine truth as is absolutely essential to his believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, he becomes anxious to

know more than will barely suffice for spiritual existence. He desires "the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby." This holy desire is a prayer, which God answers. It is so ordered in infinite goodness, that those who have begun to know the Lord, by the hearing of the word, may go on, until they arrive at the stature of perfect men in Jesus. When any, who enjoy the common means of religious information, believe to the saving of the soul, they begin to search the Scriptures, and behold what they never could discover before. Many passages, which were enigmatical, become plain; and ~~that~~ which was shrouded in darkness becomes luminous as the sun. It shines upon them, displaying its own splendour, and assisting them to discover the glories of contiguous parts of the system. Let the sinner learn by spiritual perception, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and this glorious truth will chase away the shades which in his mind overcast many of the glorious doctrines of the Gospel.

In proportion as a believer's knowledge increases so will his faith increase, for faith is an eye, and truth is the light which is congenial to its nature. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that he who is not an idiot, cannot help believing, that all the parts are equal to the whole, so soon as the proposition is fairly explained to him; and such also is

the frame of the renewed mind, that when divine truth is presented plainly it will perceive and believe it.

When any one is renewed by the Spirit of God, he will listen to the preaching of the gospel, be thankful for the institution of the ministry of reconciliation, and feel as he never felt before, that he has an immense, personal interest in it. He will become fond of the conversation of the pious, and from them derive explanations of dark passages. Religious books, judiciously selected, and carefully perused, will add to his stock of saving knowledge. Meditation will enable him to digest what he has gathered from various sources, and when he can combine many doctrines in their natural connexion, that will appear order which once was confusion. The weak believer looks upon the fragments of a temple; but when he shall have a more extensive view of the whole, his belief of the wisdom of the architect will become unwavering.

IV. Christ increases the faith of his people *by communion with one another, upon practical subjects.* So soon as a person is born of God, he wishes to know something more perfectly about the work of the Spirit on the human mind. He may have this desire, and may be anxious on this subject, without knowing that he believes; but the Spirit of God has taken of some of the things of Christ, and has show-

ed them unto him, or he would not have this spiritual thirst for practical knowledge. This natural desire of social intercourse, and of knowing how believers feel, God has made provision to gratify in ordinary cases, by making it pleasant to all Christians to communicate in divine things. How often have pious young persons wished others to converse with them about the things of Jesus; and how often have the hearts of older Christians burned within them, while they kept silence on the subject of personal religion, from fear of disgusting the youthful mind, which might not have a taste for divine mercies! When this mutual desire is known, it produces the commingling of congenial souls. The tongues of both are loosed, and Christ meets them in their conversation, while at home, and when abroad.

Then one of little faith, who does not know that he has been born of God, learns how other Christians have reasoned, believed, felt, and chosen, and is instructed to bring the experience of every heart to the test of the word of God. Then the young learn not to graduate their views and feelings by those of their fellow-men, but by the perfect standard; for each may have experienced the communications of grace, in a different manner, and in different degrees. Ye who were before me in Christ, tell me what you know

of Christ; tell me what you have seen, and felt, and tasted, of the divine mercy, but do not attempt to make me believe that all the children of the same family have precisely the same face. They all have ears to hear, eyes to see, and tongues to speak; they all have the same parts of the frame divine, but no two of them are perfectly similar. Even so is it in the household of faith. Our religious experiences may be alike in many respects, but one may not say, "because I have not had such deep conviction, such dreadful fears, such lively joy, such serenity of soul, such sudden transports, such an evident change, as others, therefore I am not a Christian," for no two precious stones in the spiritual temple have the same location, or were designed, in the system of grace, to have precisely the same use.

V. Christ increases the faith of his people *by communing with them in the sealing ordinances of the New Testament.* If any have believed with the heart, and professed faith with the mouth, the Great Head of the Church will come in to them, when they are seated at his feast, and sup with them, and they with him. He will be with them, when they receive the ordinance of baptism for themselves, or for their children, and give them the prayer of faith for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and the washing of regeneration. Christians have found these ordi-

nances of use to them, and will attest that they have been instructed by those objects of sense which were set apart from a common to a sacramental use. If ever Jesus presented himself to the soul, and made the sinner feel that a Saviour is precious, he has frequently done it in the Lord's Supper. Reflect, believers on the past, and you will say, "in those ordinances, we have made and renewed vows, which have had a benign effect on our life; and if ever we solemnly covenanted with Christ for our eternal life, we did it, when we partook of his body, which was broken, and of his blood which was shed for the remission of sins." The frequent recurrence of these ordinances, more than any thing else, except the preaching of the word, induces serious self-examination, and instigates the child of God to dedicate his soul and body, renewedly, to him who died for sinners, that they might live unto God.

VI. Christ increases the faith of his people *by sanctifying to their souls the various dispensations of his providence.* It is Christ who governs the world, and disposes of all events. He sends his children *prosperity*, and causes it to make them strong in his grace. When some temporal or spiritual mercy is granted, for which they have long sought, they have clear evidence that God careth for them; and firmly believe that he openeth his hand to supply their wants. By

merciful visitations God excites their gratitude and inspires them with confidence. In the hour of sanctified prosperity they can sing with David, "because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness: and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee." Ps. lxxiii.

So long, however, as sin has any influence over the believer, he will be liable to insensibility from a long continued series of prosperous events. No Christian, while any part of his fallen nature remains, could bear uninterrupted gratification. The most distinguished favours, if not accompanied by some trials, would be soon lightly esteemed. What fallen man is habitually thankful for the light, air, water, and heat, which are essential to his animal life? They are common blessings, and are therefore disregarded. Alas! we are such sinful beings, that we must be afflicted; and Christ in his great mercy sanctifies *tribulation* to our increase in faith.

He sends sickness to make us grateful to him for health, and takes away our enjoyments for a time, that we may believe in him,



and look to him for every perfect gift. Many are chosen, and many refined, in all their Christian graces, in the furnace of affliction.

Do you behold a Christian whom prosperity has rendered careless? His faith is on the wane. That smiling face shall be changed to sadness, for a little time, and he shall find it good for God's children to be afflicted. Mark the uplifted hand! It falls upon a child; and the language of our Heavenly Parent to the bereaved is, "little children keep yourselves from idols." When we are made to feel our desert of punishment, when we thus judge, that if we were not sinners we should not be thus troubled, then we return unto God, from whom we have wandered; then we contemplate his covenant faithfulness, which is displayed in our chastisement, and believe anew, that Jesus Christ died for sinners, and that God will not leave his people to destroy themselves.

In the course of divine providence, believers are allowed to suffer from strong temptations. This method of increasing faith may seem severe; but it is effectual. When any one has become remiss, and thinks little of his Redeemer, Satan is allowed to come with insinuations and accusations, and Satan, who will be blind to the power of Christ, and who cannot search the Christian's inmost soul, brandishes his scorpion in confidence of victory. If there is any devil, (and the word of

God assures us that he goeth about, seeking whom he may devour,) the impious thoughts which, uncalled, obtrude into the believer's mind, are his work. Many believers in Jesus, sometimes have thoughts which they hate, that the word of God is all a fiction, and that faith in Christ is useless. The preacher, and many of his hearers are not strangers to such devils. Some eminently pious persons have been troubled with suggestions which make them shudder, when they recollect them; but God grants deliverance, and then the happy soul trusts, more firmly than ever, in him, who delivers the bird from the snare of the fowler. Satan desired to have Peter, that he might sift him like wheat. He did sift him, and after his shameful fall, Peter was a more grateful and exemplary believer than he would have been, had not Jesus looked him into bitter repentance for temporary apostacy. Job was tempted by the devil, and the most patient of men cursed his birth-day. The trial, nevertheless, was so ordered, that Job saw more of his own wicked heart, and hated sin, while he loved his REDEEMER, more than ever. If any Christian, through his own negligence, is allowed to fall into great sin, and the Lord is pleased to recover him, he will know more of the remission of sins, more highly prize the doctrine of substitution, and cleave to the Saviour with a more

humble and adhesive faith in his sufficiency to save the chief of sinners.

O my God, be pleased to increase our faith in some other way than this ; but if we shamefully backslide, enable us to say, "he has brought us out of deep waters, and firey trials : he has brought us to his fold again." May each sinner of us, when reclaimed, declare, with the psalmist, "thou tellest my wanderings ; put thou my tears into thy bottle : are they not in thy book ?" "Thou hast delivered my soul from death ; wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living ?" Ps. lvi.

The whole of this discourse is practical, and you will anticipate the exhortation. Say unto the Lord, "increase our faith." At the same time make use of all the proper means for securing the object for which you supplicate at the throne of grace. Form the habit of prayer ; acquire doctrinal and practical information, on all religious subjects, by searching the Scriptures, by communing with the saints, and by a diligent attention to all divine ordinances.

Wait patiently, and look attentively for an answer to your prayers. In the day of prosperity, rejoice with pious exultation in the divine goodness. In adversity consider. Seek to gain advantage from every temptation, which you experience ; and when you are delivered, acknowledge God your Deliverer.

When you overcome Satan in any contest, shout, "it is Christ who gives us the victory: it is the Author of our faith, who increases it, and will perfect it." Even so do, Lord Jesus.  
**AMEN.**

---

## SERMON VII.

---

THE OBJECT, MEANS, AND USE OF FAITH.

*"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name."* JOHN XX. 31.

THE author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks "of them that believe to the saving of the soul."\* This act of believing we call *saving faith*. Any other act of faith, however holy, because the act of a renewed man, is not thus distinguished: for as Jesus is superior to all other objects contemplated by the mind in believing, so is faith in Him more excellent than any other belief concerning any other subject; and that particular act

\* Hebrews x. 39.

of faith by which we are united to Him ought to be known by a discriminating epithet.

The words which have been selected for the foundation of the present discourse, naturally lead to a consideration of THE OBJECT, MEANS, AND USE OF FAITH.

I. Every act of the mind in believing must have an OBJECT ; for he who believes, must believe something. That upon which any particular act of faith terminates is its object. Hence there may be as many objects as there are acts of believing, unless two or more acts of faith regard one object. This however is the fact, and the testimony of God, *that he made the world*, may be to ten thousand impenitent sinners the object of an indefinite number of acts of *historical faith*.

But inquiry is made concerning *the object of SAVING faith*, whether it be one truth, or one class of propositions, or the whole testimony contained in the Bible, or the record in particular which God has given of his Son? If we affirm that it is one truth, it will be demanded of us, "is it not a gracious act to believe, as every child of God does, the truth concerning many subjects?" If we say, that it is the whole testimony of God contained in the Bible, we shall be met by the exclamation, "who, then, can be saved!"

Here it seems necessary to fix in our minds a distinction between that act of believing by

which we are actively united to Christ, by which "the Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ," and by which we are justified, from every other act of faith which is performed in the Spirit of holiness. Before the act of which I speak is performed by the human mind, the sinner is not a member of Christ's mystical body, has no actual interest in the purchased redemption, and is not justified, but condemned; whereas the moment after it is performed, and before any other act of believing has existence, the same sinner is a member of the Redeemer's body, has an interest in the redemption by his blood, and is as completely justified as he will be in the day of judgment. By the covenant engagement of God, the person thus believing, should he not live to perform any other mental operation, shall be saved. This, I repeat it, is the act of saving, of justifying faith; and any other mental operation which is of the same nature and terminates on the same object, bears the same name. Let however the object be changed, and any act of believing performed subsequently to our actual union to Jesus Christ, and performed through the influence of the Holy Spirit, I would denominate *holy faith*, or *the faith of God's people*. Of this last description of faith, the divine testimony that God will never leave his children, or that all things work together for good to them that love Him, or any other

common statement of the Bible, may be the object; and if the child of God believes in the wisdom of Providence, the excellence of the divine character, or the equity of the counsels of Jehovah, let him know that he is the agent of a holy act through the Spirit.

There is however a specially important and glorious class of statements, contained in the volume of the Redeemer's biography, which is exalted above all other propositions; and on the necessity of giving our assent to some one of this class Jehovah repeatedly insists. Not to believe a proposition of this description is considered by the God of heaven as the highest affront to himself, and as the exciter of all sin. "He shall reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." You cannot be ignorant of the class to which I refer; for Jesus Christ is the substance of them. You must all have perceived that the scriptures insist on the belief of *the truth as it is in Jesus*, more frequently, and by urging more powerful inducements than in any other portion of the word of God. One part of the Bible is indeed as true, and as worthy of credit as another; but all the truth contained in it is not so important, for the sinner's welfare, and the glory of God as this, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*; or this, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;" and that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The text

proves that some such proposition as one of these is the object of saving faith ; for the sole object of the apostle John in writing his gospel, so far as man was regarded, was this, *that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and enjoy that eternal life which is presented to faith in this statement. Every thing else which he had asserted, he considered to be of little importance in comparison with this truth. To faith in some divine testimony respecting JESUS CHRIST is salvation uniformly promised. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth IN HIM should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth IN HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth ON HIM is not condemned : but he that believeth not is condemned already ; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Hence faith *in Christ* is always called, in distinction from every other act of the mind in believing, saving faith. Of the origin and nature of this act of faith which has for its object some testimony of God about him whose name signifies, that he is *anointed of God to save his people from their sins*, I have treated in the second discourse of this



series ; and therefore proceed to a consideration of

## II. The MEANS of saving faith.

That there are means of faith is evident from the text, for "*these are written, that ye might believe.*" The record which John had made, he deemed one of those means by which men should be enabled to exercise faith on the Son of God. When he conveyed this opinion he was under the guidance of the Spirit who endited the Scriptures ; and therefore we may safely conclude that there are means of faith. This conclusion is fortified by the assertion that *faith cometh by hearing* ; and by the interrogation, "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Rom. x. 14, 17.

Because the gospel is the grand instrument by which *it is given unto us to believe on the Lord Jesus*, it is called, "the word of faith." Rom. x. 8. "Unto us was the gospel preached," saith Paul to the Hebrews, (ch. iv. ver. 2.) "as well as unto them : but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Of course the word preached *did* profit all who believed.

Let us endeavour now, beginning at the act of faith itself, to trace the means to their commencement and source.

Faith is an operation of the human mind. To the existence of this operation an inherent

constitution of the mind by which it is adapted to the performance of this operation is requisite. This is called *the faculty* of judgment, by which we give our assent to any proposition, or else dissent from it. If the proposition be a matter of testimony, and we judge that it is true, we are said, *to believe the proposition*: if we understand the truth contained in the proposition, and assent to it, we are said to believe *IN* the proposition. Had not the Deity in the formation of our minds given us this faculty, neither the *act of believing*, nor the *word, faith*, would ever have engaged the attention of mankind. This faculty is common to the whole human family. It is possessed by the unregenerate as well as the children of God. Something more, therefore, than this faculty by which we believe is indispensable; and to this must be added other means of faith. There must be a publication of the object of saving faith, or a statement of the truth about which the faculty of believing is employed. In other words, the glad tidings of great joy must be published, because we cannot believe *IN* a proposition without knowing what we are to believe. “He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who, is he Lord, that I might helieve on him? And Jesus said unto him thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe.” John ix. 35—39.

Had not Jehovah informed us that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, we could never have assented to this glorious truth. Hence the promulgation of the gospel is ever represented as one of the principal means of faith. The assertions of God concerning salvation by Christ were written, and directed to be read, and repeated, that by hearing and contemplating them, we might have faith. Hence Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy say to the Thessalonians, "our testimony among you was believed ;"\* and Paul with others, were "ministers by whom" the Corinthians "believed, even as the Lord gave, to every man." "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house ; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed." Acts xviii. 8. Concerning his disciples the Redeemer saith, "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." John xvii. 20.

To these means must be added others, for when Jesus and his ministers preached, "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Acts xxviii. 24.

It is requisite that those persons to whom the truth as it is in Jesus is proclaimed should have *spiritual perceptions* of the truth contained in those propositions which are the object

\* 2 Thessalonians i. 10.

of saving faith. The "Larger Catechism" correctly states, that God "only can enable us to understand the Scriptures;" for the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them. Before we can believe on Christ Jesus we must see him in some measure as he is; must have a correct view of him as the Anointed of God, a person set up in the mediatorial office, sent into the world, and obedient to the precept and penalty of the law, that he might save sinners. We must understand what it is *to be a sinner*, and *to be saved* by Christ. Although from regard to the veracity of God I may believe a proposition *to be true* which I do not understand; yet it is nevertheless necessary for me to understand the truth contained in a proposition before I can believe *the truth of* that proposition to the saving of the soul. We must perceive who that Jesus is, in whom we have faith, and what that salvation of a sinner is, which we believe Jesus to effect.

We now advance another step, and say, that before a fallen man can have these right perceptions, he must be regenerated, for no man ever had spiritual discernment before he became spiritual, through the agency of the Holy Ghost. Before the washing of regeneration the eyes of man are blinded, and he is without the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.

We have now traced the sinner's act of believing on the great object of saving faith, up to an act of God ; and because all the means which have been enumerated depend ultimately on this, it has been said that *Regeneration stands at the head of the means of faith.*

You see, my hearers, how the human mind comes to believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Should you here demand, "are there no other means of faith?" I should answer, that, strictly speaking, there are none. There are, however, means by which the Lord ordinarily performs *his work* of regeneration ; for it is no less true that he operates by an instrumental agency and by systems of secondary causes, than that mankind have means of action.

Should any one choose to consider the means by which the Supreme Agent in regeneration produces the effect, which we call a new heart, as belonging to *the means of faith*, I shall not contend with him, but think that he rejects a valuable distinction. Some of the means by which we are regenerated are of the same nature with those by which, being already regenerated, we are enabled to believe. We have an instance in the preaching of the gospel ; for when the ministry of reconciliation state, to one whom Jehovah has in regeneration just given ability to believe, *that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins*, he may assent to this evangelical doc-

trine ; and in another case it may please our Father to employ the same preaching for the purpose of *quicken*ing one who is dead in sins. By the reading and hearing of the Bible, by the preaching of the gospel, by the prayers of his people, and even by the prayers of the impenitent ; by the instructions of parents ; by miracles, by dreams and visions, by the Sabbath and its ordinances, by the law, both ceremonial and moral ; by the conversion of others, and by numerous dispensations of his providence, has the Author of supernatural life in sinners made them new creatures.

The Holy Spirit makes any means effectual, which infinite Wisdom selects as suitable for his purpose. Had I not treated of this subject in another place,\* I should be desirous of enlarging here ; but at present shall be satisfied with the citation of a few appropriate passages of the Bible, which shew, that the Holy Ghost enters into a sinner's mind by the agency of the word, and having entered, enlightens the understanding, changes the will, and so disposes all the faculties in their relation to each other and to God, that they perform right operations ; which is regeneration.

“ The Spirit of truth—will guide you into all truth.” “ He shall receive of mine, and

\* See a Dissertation on the Means of Grace in “ Ely's Contrast.”

shall shew it unto you." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God "hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit:—the Spirit giveth life." "Now the Lord is that Spirit;" and "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 6, 17, 18.

"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe:" (1 Thess. i. 13.) "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth, and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. i. 23.

"The gospel of Christ,"—"is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." Rom 16. "God"—"hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. i. 13. "In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel." 1 Cor. iv. 15. "The holy Scriptures"—"are able to make thee wise through faith." 2 Tim. iii. 15.

From these quotations we learn what are the principal means by which our minds are brought into such a state that we have power

to become children of God; and what the means are through which faith is exercised, by those who are born of God. Let us hasten to contemplate

### III. The Use of Faith.

Many are ready to ask, "does faith answer the demands of the moral law? Does it contain in itself such a righteousness as will satisfy Justice? Does it render Jehovah propitious? If not, what purpose does it answer? What is its use?" The text answers, that ye are to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, for this purpose, *that believing ye might have life through his name. Faith, therefore, is of use in the communication and reception of that life which we enjoy through the name of Christ, or which is bestowed on us from regard to his character and merits.*

This life is *supernatural*; for it is something *above*, and added to; that which is *natural*. It does not result from our birth as men, but from the work of the Spirit, acting in subordination to the covenant of redemption.

This life is also *spiritual*. It is A STATE, in which our faculties are employed about *spiritual things*; and in which, of course, much of our happiness or unhappiness, and all our holy activity, must proceed from spiritual discernment.

This life is commenced by justification, and continued by sanctification: and one who



is without these blessings has never seen life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. By that act of our Maker in which he accounts us just we are justified ; and our state is instantaneously changed ; so that from being, the moment before, *dead*, we become *alive*, in law. The sentence of death is by justification removed, and we are accepted as righteous in the sight of our Judge. He accounts us righteous because we are legally righteous : and he imputes a righteousness to us, because it is “our righteousness.” If it were not ours, it would not be accounted so ; neither should we be judicially pronounced just, had we not perfectly satisfied the claims of Justice upon us.

“Our righteousness,” however, is not of our own performing ; and in our own persons we neither have satisfied the divine law, nor ever should answer all its demands. Our righteousness was wrought by Christ ; and the satisfaction given to Justice for our numerous crimes was rendered by him. How, then, does the righteousness which is legally reckoned to us, become ours, that it may be thus reckoned ? And how do the sufferings of Jesus become the punishment of our sins ?

The answer is at hand. By our becoming united to the Saviour as the bride to her husband, as the branch to the vine, and as the members of the body to their Head. We

must become in such a manner one with Christ, and he in such a manner our Representative and Substitute, that his actions, performed for us, shall be legally ours; and his endurance of the penalty of the law, our satisfaction to Justice. We must be so united, that Jesus dying, we in law die with him; and he rising from the stroke of holy Vengeance which laid him low in the dust, and being accepted, we arise from the state in which we were fallen with him, to be accepted too.

This union is effected by faith. We do not affirm that this grace has in itself any tendency or power to promote such a connection between us and the Redeemer. But the counsel, the promise, and oath of Jehovah have rendered the union certain between the Lord Jesus Christ and all who shall obtain precious faith. You may dispute against the propriety of this arrangement if you please: I will not. You may assert, that some other grace, and particularly love, is a more suitable instrument by which the sinner should be brought into a covenant relation to the Surety of the "better covenant;" but I have only to answer, that the immutable King has decreed that a sinner shall be united to Christ by faith alone. "The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ." "That Christ may dwell in your

hearts by faith," said Paul to the Ephesians, "I bow my knees unto the Father." Ephes. iii. 14, 17. Conceive, my hearers, of the Father as administering the solemn, mystical marriage covenant. The sinners who constitute the invisible church, represented as a bride, and the Saviour, appear before the Majesty of Heaven, who asks of the parties, "is it your pleasure to be indissolubly connected, so that ye twain shall hereafter be one in law?"

The Redeemer answers, "I have loved this sinner with an everlasting love: therefore have drawn her, and courted her love: let us become one in law."

The Church for herself says, "Ah! me! I am a sinful mortal, O Lord; unworthy of such an alliance; but I desire it."

"Now the terms of the covenant are such," saith the Administrator, "that the Redeemer having died for this sinner, and the sinner believing on this Redeemer, they shall become legally united."

"I have died," saith the Bridegroom, "and offer her life."

"I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," saith the blushing sinner, "and thankfully accept of his proffered hand."

"And now," saith the Eternal Father, "I pronounce you husband and wife, according to the counsels of the Godhead. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no

one put asunder. Hereafter shall the husband be bound for the debts of his wife ; and shall rule, and defend, and cherish her ; and let the wife see that she reverence her husband."

It is obvious, that the terms of the contract require nothing on the part of the Church, or any sinner composing a portion of it, but faith ; and equally plain, that by believing the sinner merits no tender alliance, while God is pleased to make faith the instrument of union. By the will of Him who has provided, and accepted, the Substitute of the rebel, the believing sinner has a covenant right to the vicarious sufferings and obedience of "the Lord our righteousness," and by faith may plead them, so that the life which is consequent upon justification is obtained by faith alone. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. v. 1, 2.

So soon as we are justified we are in a state in which we may serve the Lord acceptably ; and in which we begin to live. The progress and felicity of the divine life require the work of sanctification. He who has changed our state must give us views, feelings, employment, and society, suited to the station which we are designed to occupy. Were I in hea-

ven, for ever free from condemnation, and not holy, it would be no joy to me. If I did not love the place, the inhabitants of it, and the God who is sensibly present there, methinks I should ask leave to come away.

This sanctification which is essential to the enjoyment of life everlasting, is effected through faith : for the influences of the purifying Spirit are given only in consideration of his union to Christ, who receives them ; and this union we have already seen is accomplished by means of faith alone.

In this view of the subject, the whole work of sanctification is dependent on that one act of believing in Jesus by which we are made members of his body. The Apostle had our view of justification, sanctification, and life, when he said of Christ to the Ephesians, (chap. i. ver. 13, 14.) “in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : *in whom also, AFTER THAT YE BELIEVED, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.*”

There is another, and a very extensive sense in which faith is of use in our sanctification, which is our life. Whether our faith be saving, or merely holy ; whether we repeatedly believe, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, or assent as renewed men to any other revealed truth, it tends to

advance our purity of heart, our love of the best things, and our universal obedience. It is by saving faith that we acquire power to serve the Lord ; for some said to Jesus, “ what shall we do, that we might work the works of God ? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” John vi. 28. But having received the ability from above, the most important, ordinary means of sanctification are repeated acts of a spiritual faith, which is usually called a *saving* grace. We must believe again and again those doctrines which are designed to promote our personal conformity to the law ; and in bringing us to this belief the Father will answer the prayer of his Son, “ sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth.” John xvii. 17. Peter informs us, that God “ put no difference between “ Jews and Gentiles, but gave them the Holy Ghost, thereby “ PURIFYING THEIR HEARTS BY FAITH.”

To illustrate this use of faith, let us reflect, that by it the renewed mind realizes its accountability to the Almighty. Our pious conduct must depend in a great measure on our knowledge of the relation which subsists between us and our Creator, and of the rule of action by which he designs to judge us. These things are neither to be discovered nor invented by our faculties ; for no man saw God create a finite, dependent being, nor did

he by investigation ascertain that Jehovah sustains the character of Maker, Preserver, Benefactor, Redeemer, and Judge. But God has revealed these things; and if our judgment assents to the testimony of our Father, about himself, about his rational offspring, about our obligations and accountability, we shall live under the influence of our belief. It is by faith alone that we understand that the Lord will bring us into judgment; and every one may know that this knowledge excites Christians to duty. Faith here is *the evidence of things not seen*; and so far as we believe in our subjection to Jehovah's government, it will affect us as evidence would, and make the things for which we hope appear to be substantial. It makes us feel that our Judge is present, to record our transactions; and induces us to think, speak, and act, with a wise regard to eternity. Without faith, we might speculate about the Deity, but we should never live under the impression that we must stand at his tribunal.

Let us reflect again, that by faith we have the greater part of our knowledge of the evil nature of sin, and are thereby induced to avoid it. We experience something indeed upon this subject; but we must accredit the testimony of the Most High, or we cannot know, that one sin introduced all subsequent sin and misery, to the ruin of a world.

By faith we understand, that God will by no means clear the guilty; and, that it was sin which brought the flood upon the old world, produced the confusion of languages at Babel, consumed the cities of the plain, overthrew the Egyptians in the sea, exterminated the idolatrous Canaanites, subjected the children of Israel to fiery serpents in the wilderness, carried the people of the Lord repeatedly into captivity, and caused the incessant revolution of empires. By faith we learn, that sin is such an accursed evil as rendered the incarnation, the humiliation, labours, sorrows, tears, bloody sweat, and ignominious death of the Son of the Highest necessary. Without faith in the divine declarations on this subject, we should never look to him whom we have pierced, and feel such hatred of transgression springing from the cross, as presents to the Christian his most powerful inducement to crucify his vile affections, to live soberly, and piously in this present evil world, and to seek after perfect conformity to the blessed Jesus. We might *imagine*, but should never *know*, without believing in God's word, that the Just One is so opposed to sin as not to *spare* his Beloved Son, while representing sinners. We might *conjecture*, but should not be *certain*, that sin has opened the gates of hell to our rebellious race, and is urging them to the pit; nor should we be encouraged, without faith, to seek after those man-



sions which Jesus has prepared for them that love Him. What influence the knowledge of the existence of such a place as hell has on mankind, I need not say ; nor is it requisite to trace the steps of him, who longs and hopes for that heaven which is revealed from faith to faith. Every motive to obedience, taken from the world to come, is dependent on a spiritual belief of the truth for its salutary impression on the human mind. Take away this, and man would have no other motives to holiness than the natural fears, hopes, pains, and pleasures which are experienced by an unenlightened, unrenewed man. Well, then, did the Apostle speak of purifying their hearts by faith, and Jesus of sanctifying them through the truth? Verily it was heavenly wisdom which moved John to write of these things, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God ; and that believing we might have life through his name.

Can I CONCLUDE this discourse, without exhorting all to contemplate earnestly, and repeatedly, the necessity, and superlative excellence of faith?

My Dear Friends, you must believe on him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, or you cannot be united to the life-giving Head of the Church. If you live, and die, out of Christ, you will experimentally know what is meant by "the damnation of hell." None but those who die *IN the Lord*

are blessed ; and none are IN HIM but those who receive the gospel with the simplicity and meekness of little children. You must be justified, or you can never be received to the blissful presence of God ; and you can only obtain an interest in the sufferings and obedience of the Messiah by such a faith as works by love, induces confidence in God, and inclines your hearts to rest wholly in the mercy, the covenanted, and not the indefinite, deistical, imaginary mercy of Jehovah, flowing to sinners through the pierced heart of the Mediator. You must also be conformed to the divine image, you must be sanctified throughout, in body, soul, and spirit, or heaven would prove a prison, the employments of the saints in glory, drudgery ; and the everlasting rest of the people of the Lord, like the ceaseless wearisomeness of a long sermon, and the Christian sabbath. You can be purified from all your dross in no other way than by believing with the heart on Jesus Christ.

Faith, therefore, is as indispensable to everlasting life, as union to our Hope, acceptance with God, pardon, and holiness.

And consider too, the excellence of this grace. It is the only one among all the gifts of the Spirit by which the sinner receives and rests upon the Brightness of the Father's glory. It is an act by which you can honour the veracity and mercy of the Lord more

than by any other. It is in itself most reasonable, and becoming an intellectual, and social being. It is an act by the instrumentality of which you may pass from the kingdom and slavery of Satan into the kingdom and society of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It brings the Son and Spirit into your bosoms, entertains the God there who deigns to sup with you, and after you shall have been supported by it through all the trials of a changeful, dying world, wafts you to thrones in paradise, beside the throne of God.

Believe, and be for ever blest. AMEN.

## SERMON VIII.

### STRONG FAITH.

*“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.”* ROM. IV. 20.

ALTHOUGH the weakest saving faith unites the sinner to Christ, so as to secure his eternal salvation, “yet show I unto you a more excellent way.” “Stand fast in the

*faith, quit you like men, be strong," "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* 1 Cor. xvi. 13, and 1 Tim. ii. 1.

Some shall *scarcely be saved*, even so as by running through a fire, kindled in the wood, hay and stubble, which they have built upon the Rock of Ages; but to others shall be administered *an abundant entrance* into the kingdom of heaven. The facility or the difficulty with which believers enter the New Jerusalem depends on the degree of their faith. *The feeble* march up the heavenly hill of Zion, with staggering steps, and with the painful sensations of lassitude and fear. *The strong* can cheer themselves with songs in their pilgrimage.

Would my hearers enjoy great peace in believing? Would they be strong in faith, giving glory to God? Let them attend,

I. *To a description of* STRONG FAITH: II. *To the evidence of the fact that such faith is attainable:* and III. *To the pre-eminent advantages of it.*

I. Without an accurate description of the grace which is to be commended, the minds of men would be subject to perpetual impositions. We might commend strong confidence in Christ, and the bigot, the enthusiast, the presumptuous person might imagine, that a minister of Jesus approved of his absurdities. Let us distinguish then,

1. Between strong faith and presumption. Unbelief and presumption are two extremes. The first refuses the testimony of God, the second believes without evidence, and builds without a foundation. When any one is firmly persuaded that he is a child of God, and cannot tell the reason of his persuasion, he must be rash, and censurable for his belief. *Rational* beings ought not to have opinions without being able to assign *some reason* for them. *Faith* is a reception of testimony, and SAVING FAITH the reception of that testimony of God which relates to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. The Christian believes because God, who cannot lie, has given him an assurance, that he has sent his Son to be a Saviour, and he thinks himself a believer because he finds in himself scriptural evidence of faith. Ask the man who rejects divine revelation if he expects the pardon of his sins, and the future felicity which immortal souls can enjoy? If he answers affirmatively he is presumptuous, for who has intimated that his offences shall be blotted out? Reason furnishes him with no evidence on this subject. Man can give him no intelligence, and he must exalt himself to the throne of God, there to decree eternal destinies, or he can have not the shadow of a warrant to believe that he shall be happy in futurity. Yet many, who reject divine revelation, have

the arrogance to pretend that sinners may expect to obtain heaven.

This subject is so important that reasonable beings ought to know why they believe in the remission of sins. Reason and revelation both make the *faithfulness* of God, and the fact of his having revealed his will on this subject, *the sole ground of faith* in man. You may have an unshaken belief that you shall ultimately be happy; but if the reason why you believe this, is not the declaration of God, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and consciousness of having received the atonement, your faith is presumption: for *there is salvation in none else*; and of course, there is no good reason to expect it from any other person. Let us distinguish,

2. Between faith and the fancies of superstition. The person who is tinctured with superstition, attaches a religious veneration to things which God has not consecrated. He fancies that he can please God by ordinances of his own invention. He makes new sacraments, signs himself with the cross, anoints himself with oil, bends before images, prays to the Virgin Mary, implores the intercession of exalted saints, and binds wafers, which he deems a part of the actual body of Christ, to his dying limbs. The man who does these things may be confident of heaven, but instead of having strong faith, is full of superstition. Strong faith is founded on noth-

ing but the truths of the gospel, and leads a person confidently to expect salvation because Jesus died ; not because the sinner has invented a splendid ritual of "voluntary humility," or unrequired penance. External signs which powerfully affect the senses may excite a very strong false confidence : yea, the "shew of wisdom in will worship" may be substituted for faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We should distinguish,

3. Between faith and the ardent emotions of fanaticism. Some have been deeply affected by the anxiety of their friends, (and I wish to God that all would ask with deep concern, "what shall I do to be saved?") but sympathy, terror, swoonings, tears, convulsions, dreams, visions, and miraculous impressions are essentially distinct from saving faith in every degree. If all these things were necessary preparatives, they would constitute no part of the essence of strong confidence in Jesus Christ. It is one thing to believe, that I shall be saved, because the Spirit has enabled me to accept of the Son of God as my personal Saviour ; and a very different thing to believe, that I shall be saved, because nature was weary, my fears were alive, my nervous system was deranged, and the terrific sounds and gestures of many teachers were too much for my frail constitution to endure. Far be it from me to affirm, that some who faint in religious meetings, have not obtained some

knowledge, or even some grace to believe, before nature sunk under the ponderous sounds and the mighty agitations of a multitude ; but when in the state of insensibility, much desired by many, the sinner is no more capable of faith than a person in a sound sleep, or a fit of insanity. Saving faith, when strong, consists in the intelligent belief of so much of gospel truth as is essential to, inseparably connected with, and followed by, the solemn and known acceptance of Jesus Christ, for the very purpose of being saved from sin and hell by his mediatorial work. The faith of Abraham, which is commended in the text, did not consist in *a staggering through bodily weakness*, or mental horrors. The sight of others in distress, which ought *suitably* to affect the human heart, did not contribute to his strength in the faith, or to his ascriptions of glory to God. How unlike the faith of the "father of the faithful," is that persuasion of conversion which is generated by human passions ! Yet no persons are more confident of a strong faith, than those who are persuaded to believe, that they were born of God, when they thought of nothing, and knew not a single article of the testimony of God, which should be accredited by a sinner for his life.

4. Let us distinguish between a strong and a weak faith. Knowledge is necessary to faith ; and the person who has little knowledge of the way of salvation must from necessity



have a weak faith. Some who are ignorant on most subjects, have much knowledge of the word of God, and may have an enlightened and firm apprehension of the Saviour. The least degree of saving faith presupposes the knowledge of this fact, "that with God there is mercy that he may be feared." This the person of weak faith has been taught of God; and therefore believing that God can save him, by Jesus Christ, he has some feeble hope that he shall be delivered from wrath through him. At the time of believing, the person of weak faith is commonly so ignorant of the nature of this saving grace, that he does not consider himself to be a believer. He trusts in Christ, without reflecting that he actually trusts in him; and believes in him, without believing that he is a believer.

On the contrary, he who has strong faith, has more knowledge of the operations of the human mind, and of scriptural doctrines. He examines the nature of his thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and other mental actions. Christ he clearly perceives to be offered to him for his acceptance, and he is as conscious of accepting him for the very purpose of being saved by him, as he could be of his own consent to any human agreement.

He takes hold of God's covenant; says within his soul, "I need, and therefore accept this Redeemer," and in reflecting upon

what he has done, is assured that he has submitted himself to the righteousness of God, from a divinely inspired belief of the gospel.

The weak believer mingles things which should be considered distinctly. He considers the work of sanctification as some ground of faith in divine promises, and when he feels his own imperfection, thinks that a reason for distrusting his Saviour. He who is strong in the faith knows, that the sole ground of faith remains immutable ; for God's faithfulness never changes. He expects to be saved for no other reason than this, that God has covenanted to pardon all those, who shall so believe in the truth of this covenant as to accept of Christ, God's free, UNSPEAKABLE GIFT, for their individual redemption.

Abraham did not accredit any one promise of God, because he thought himself a good man, but because " he judged him to be faithful who had promised."

Weak faith is partial and inconstant in the reception of truth ; it believes those promises most firmly, which seem most probable, and which little exceed human expectation. Strong faith is more universal and uniform in its assent to divine propositions. The faith of Abraham in the veracity of God did not waver, when a most improbable thing was promised. Weak faith would have expected a son, if promised at a proper season of life,

but Abraham thought no circumstances could militate against the divine faithfulness.

Weak faith would have offered a lamb in sacrifice, but the strong faith of Abraham induced him to stretch forth his hand against Isaac. One of weak faith would have thought, that if Isaac was slain, the promise, "that *in Isaac* shall the SEED be called," would have failed of its accomplishment, but Abraham judged, that if his son was sacrificed, God would restore him to life, or in some way cause, that from the same Isaac the promised Messiah should descend.

Natural affection might have overcome a weak faith in Abraham, but could not gain the advantage against his strong confidence. He must have been a strong man in Christ, who would not have said, "how can I obey this rigorous command? Shall a father sacrifice his son? Shall this right hand destroy my only child, the only hope of my old age, and the delight of his aged mother?" Abraham had the feelings of a father, and the faith of one, who could account God immutably true.

Strong faith rests on the *same foundation of faithfulness*, which supports the weak; but the former receives more truth than the latter, covers a wider part of the foundation, and rests in it more confidently. Weak faith desires some assistance from contingent circumstances, from frames of mind, from wonderful

communications, but strong faith wants no other reason for assent than this, "thus saith the Lord, the God who will not lie."

Men and brethren, do you desire to be strong in faith, giving glory to God? Attend then,

II. To the evidence of the fact that a strong faith is attainable. It is a correct principle, that what has been may exist again. It is only necessary, therefore, to show that some have been strong in faith, in order to establish the conclusion that a strong faith is attainable. God testified to Noah that he would bring a flood of water on the ungodly; Noah had never seen, nor had any other person ever witnessed, an universal deluge; but the patriarch so firmly believed the divine declaration, that he prepared an ark, at great expense, and was a preacher of righteousness to a scoffing world for one hundred and twenty years. The sole ground of that faith, which enabled him to endure, as seeing the invisible God, was a divine declaration concerning a thing not seen. Great was his faith.

We have already spoken of our father Abraham. God appeared to him in the country of his idolatrous ancestry, and promised to give his posterity the land of Canaan, to be his covenant Father, and to multiply his seed as the stars of heaven. Yea, Jehovah engaged to make him the believing father of many nations, and from him to raise up the Messiah,

in whom countless multitudes should be blessed. So strong was the patriarch's faith in the word of God, that he forsook his home and kindred, at the command of the Lord, without knowing whither he went. His obedience proved the strength of his faith. The promised blessing of a son was long delayed, but "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." Even when commanded to do a thing which seemed likely to make void the promise, he went forward in the path of duty with a firm step; ascended the mount, and bound the victim to the altar.

From the firm belief that they should inherit a heavenly country, which was promised, Isaac and Jacob were contented to be pilgrims on the earth.

Because Joseph had a strong faith in God, when dying he commanded that his bones should be carried up out of Egypt, into the resting place of the ark of God. Although his brethren were settled in Goshen, and prosperous there, yet he was firmly persuaded, that before his frame should be completely dissolved Jehovah would fulfil his covenant with Abraham.

The parents of Moses had so strong a faith that God would protect them in the performance of duty, that they preserved their son alive in defiance of the king's commandment, and at the imminent hazard of their own lives. So strong was the belief of Moses, that the

Lord's people alone are safe and happy, that he preferred a share in their afflictions to all the pleasures of sin. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and heir apparent to the throne of Egypt. Should the second person in any kingdom renounce his title to a throne, and relinquish the pleasures of a luxurious court, that he might please God, he would evince that he was strong in the Lord ; for a feeble faith will scarcely separate its possessor from the allurements of pleasure.

Such was the faith of many of the prophets, that they would not deny the Lord to save their persons from being afflicted, tormented, stoned, and sawn asunder. Their faith preferred goat-skins to the purple robes of iniquity, and the caves of the earth to the abodes of the ungodly. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is a history of strong faith, which was written for our example.

In two cases we have the direct testimony of Jesus on this subject. A centurion came to Jesus, and humbly implored assistance for his servant who was grievously tormented with the palsy. The centurion had heard of our Saviour's doctrines, had seen some of his miracles, and was persuaded of his divinity. Jesus said unto him, "I will come and heal him." Being deeply convinced of his own insignificance and vileness as a sinner, "the centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my

roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.'” He assured his own heart, that Jesus could command, and accomplish his own pleasure in any place. “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, ‘Verily I say unto you, *I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*’” Matt. viii. 10.

The other case is that of the woman of Canaan, a Greek, whose child was possessed by a devil. She followed Jesus in his journey, and besought him, because she believed in his power and grace, and expected that he would cast out the foul spirit. For a time he answered her not a word. How distressing is the silence of one in whom we have trusted! He could speak and comfort her: he had never rejected any similar application; but now he is unmoved by her distress. Will not the afflicted woman despair?

No, she cries after Jesus, “have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.” The disciples were troubled by her importunity and said, “send her away.” This was a new trial; for now the disciples, who had wrought many miracles, instead of encouraging, opposed her suit. Mark informs us that Jesus “entered into a house,” but the woman would not be excluded. “I am not sent,” said the Son of God, “but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” To this she did not know what to answer, but still she approached him,

fell down at his feet, worshipped him, and lifting up her tearful countenance, prayed, "Lord, help me!" Matt. xv. 25.

Will Jesus any longer delay? My God, help her! help the poor Greek! "But he answered and said, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.'" This was the last trial. It would have discomfited any person of common faith; but her humility, her spiritual belief of her own sinful estate, and of Christ's mercy dictated her effectual intercession. "And she said, 'truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus answered and said unto her, '*O woman, GREAT IS THY FAITH!* be it unto thee even as thou wilt. For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.'" Mark vii. 29.

Those persons, who, like this woman, under great discouragements continue to cry for mercy, have a strong faith, or they would be silent in despair. The children of men at the present day have as good reason to repose strong confidence in Jesus, as had the centurion, the importunate Greek, the apostles and martyrs. I may add, that in these latter ages of the church we have had many instances of a strong faith.

From a feeble belief in the truth some have proceeded in the divine life to exemplary excellence. Multitudes, since the days of the



apostles have been so firm in their faith, that they could march without “staggering at the promise of God,” to prison and to death. Even a timid female, with all the retiring loveliness of a daughter of believing Sarah, has said to those who thought to starve her into a rejection of Jesus, “*if you take away my food, God will take away my hunger.*”\*

The nature of strong faith, and the fact that it is attainable, will both appear more evident, when we attend

### III. To the pre-eminent advantages of it.

Some may ask, “if *weak* faith will save us, what advantage has the *strong*?” “Much every way, but chiefly because,”

1. *It enables the possessor to STAND where the feeble FALL.* The path of virtue is difficult, has many ascents as well as descents, contains many obstacles for his trial who walks in it, and affords great pleasure to such as are able to advance in the strength of the Lord. Let one in good health take a friend whose vitals have been touched by the consumption, into the street, and what is exercise to the strong is labour to the weak; where the sick man would fall in spite of the staff, which assists his trembling steps, the well person would stand, or walk, or run, without difficulty. A little unevenness of way will cause the little child to stumble, while the

\* Elizabeth Young.

elder brother, who leads him, scarcely thinks the path rough.

One of little faith will fall into sin, in instances in which the stronger would resist ; and thereby gain evidence of his good estate. Depend upon it, that those Christians who are most easily overcome by temptation, are of few days, and yet full of trouble. They must grow before they can march without staggering at the promises ; which declare that he who walketh uprightly shall walk securely.

2. Strong faith enables its possessor to rejoice when the weak would mourn. The strong only *can count it*, at the time, *all joy when they fall into divers temptations*, (OR TRIALS,) *knowing that the trial of their faith worketh patience, and experience, and hope, and assurance.* When the strong are tempted they can often thank God for giving them the victory ; but the weak would have to regret that Satan gained the advantage against them. Paul says, *when I am weak, then am I strong.* It is an admirable description, for the strong, from the very fact of feeling most deeply their own weakness, repose more securely on God, and he is pleased to honour their confidence. In the hour of calamity the weak mourn ; but the strong are afflicted only by sin. The horizon may gather blackness, and storms may impend ; but the firm can say, “our Father rides on the storm, and directs the tempest.” The lightnings may af-

fright the timid, but he who is strong can say, "this awful God is ours." Paul was an example to believers, for he rejoiced in tribulation, because he knew that his labour was not in vain in the Lord. Yea, being strong in faith, he gloried in bonds, imprisonment, perils, shipwreck, cruel scourging, weariness, and death.

3. The strongest faith gives the most glory to God, and receives in return the highest honour here. No greater dishonour can be done Jehovah than to treat him like a liar. This every unbeliever does. Yes, yes, "he has made God a liar!" He who believes, honours the God of truth; and he who believes most firmly, honours him most. Jehovah has pledged himself to honour those who honour him, according to the degrees of their new obedience, and of course the strongest faith will meet with the highest reward. In this present life, those who cultivate heavenly graces most assiduously reap the fruit of their labours in peace of conscience, cheerfulness, the enjoyment of temporal good, and the earnest expectation of everlasting glory.

It was strong faith which enabled Job to say, "though HE slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and the pious psalmist, "the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life of whom should I be afraid?" "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." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Such honour have all they who are strong in faith.

4. Faith when strong not only affords the highest satisfaction in this life, but secures the most glorious death, and the happiest immortality. In death all believers are safe; but while one shakes at the King of terrors in his mildest form, another can bid him welcome, when he comes with instruments of torture. A babe must have the fears of infancy, but a strong man having fed upon the food which his soul desired, without dismay, could affirm, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give to me in that day."

My brethren, *covet earnestly* a strong faith. It will enable you, under the deepest impressions of guilt and wretchedness, to fly to a pardoning God with the confidence that your iniquities shall be blotted out. It will render you consistent in conduct, firm in every good purpose, zealously affected always in a good thing, and abundant in consolation, as well as in the work of the Lord. Be strong in the Lord, and when Satan attacks, he shall re-

ceive wounds ; when he would pursue, he shall flee. Be strong in faith, giving glory to God, and he will smile on you when the world frowns. He will look down from heaven, and call you his, when friends forsake you, when lover dies, and when children are blasted by the withering winds of death.

Be strong in the Lord, and prosperity shall be welcome, while adversity cannot deject you. Faith can add new charms to youth, new vigour to manhood, and new supports in decrepitude. He who is strong in faith can put off the frail covering of the flesh, plunge into the Jordan of death, and buoyant with hope, swim to the Canaan of rest. Angels shall meet him on the shores of the blissful country, and unwearied by the struggles of his passage, his soul, ethereal from the moment of arrival in the better country, shall clap its pinions amidst the cloud of ministering spirits, shall be escorted by golden harps and shouts of triumph, and soaring around the throne of the Lamb, unite in the universal chorus of

“ ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA ; GLORY, HONOUR, DOMINION AND POWER BE UNTO HIM THAT LIVETH FOR EVER, AND EVER.” AMEN.

## SERMON IX.

---

### ASSURANCE OF FAITH AND SALVATION.

*“ These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”*

1 JOHN V. 13.

THE beloved disciple seems never to have imagined that he could too frequently exhibit the object of saving faith. He wrote the gospel which is ascribed to him, that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through his name. He wrote also his first Epistle he informs us for two reasons ; that sinners *may believe on the name of the Son of God*: and that all who thus believe *may know that they have eternal life*.

To believe *on the name* of the Son of God, is to accredit that testimony which distinguishes him from every other person. His name was given to him, that by it his glorious person, character, and offices might be publicly known. The belief spoken of in the text, is an assent of the renewed mind, given through the supernatural agency of the Holy Ghost, to the statement of God, that the glo-

rious person called his Son, is anointed, or set apart, by the Lord, to the work of saving his people from their sins. To all who have this faith John has written his first Epistle, for the purpose of enabling them *to know* that they have eternal life. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” This knowledge that we have eternal life must proceed from knowing that we have faith, for John strenuously insists on this truth, *that he who believeth on the Son, and he alone, hath eternal life.* He considers, therefore, the knowledge of our having faith, and of our having eternal life, so inseparably connected, that we can have no assurance of salvation without a previous assurance of our believing on the Saviour: but if we know that we have faith, we may be certain that we shall be saved.

By an *assurance* of faith and eternal life, I would be understood to mean knowledge of the fact that we possess faith, and have a title to eternal life. Let any one know, or have such a persuasion of mind as excludes all doubt upon the subject, for the time, that he is a believer and shall be saved, and he will possess the ASSURANCE OF FAITH AND SALVATION.

The assurance that we have faith, is distinct from that assurance of the truth of the proposition believed, which is of the essence

of faith ; for in these two different articles the mind is assured of separate things, and is employed about objects which are so far from being the same, that they have no necessary connection. When I believe, *that Jehovah can speak nothing but the truth*, I am in that individual act of faith assured of his veracity ; for it would be absurd to affirm that my mind had any doubt of his veracity in the very moment in which I assented to a proposition, the tenor of which is, “ I am fully persuaded of Jehovah’s perfect veracity.” When I believe, *Jesus is the Christ*, my mind entertains at the time of believing, no doubt of the fact stated ; and the same is true of every other act of faith, whether it be denominated, temporary, historical, or saving.

The assurance, or the certain knowledge of our own minds that we do believe on Christ, seems not to have been the thing intended by the Apostle, when he said, “ let us draw near with a true heart, *in full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience ;” \* but a full assurance of the truth of the things believed, and of which he was speaking ; that Christ offered himself a sacrifice for sins, that he will apply the redemption which is by his blood, and that he has entered into the holiest house of God, to be an High Priest for ever. “ With sin-

\* Hebrews x. 22.



cere affection, and unwavering belief of these things which are stated about Jesus," said the Apostle, "let us draw near to him." Elsewhere this same divinely inspired writer speaks of what has since been commonly denominated, very improperly, *the faith of assurance*; and expressing the unhesitating judgment of his own mind, that he exercised faith and should be saved, says, "I KNOW whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2Tim i. 12.

Having offered these preliminary considerations about the doctrine of assurance, I shall attempt to convince my hearers,

Ist. Of the Duty,

IIly. Of the practicability, and

IIIly. Of the Means, of a Christian's knowing that he has faith and eternal life.

I. *It is the duty of a Christian to know that he believes on Christ Jesus, and has eternal life.*

The Christian of whom I now speak has some other religion than that which consists in baptism, profession, and form; for he actually assents to the testimony of God concerning the way of salvation with all his heart. He believes through the Spirit, and he ought to know that he believes.

This may be proved from the infallible oracles of wisdom. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except

ye be reprobates." 2 Cor. xiii. 5. In this passage it is strictly enjoined as a duty incumbent on us to know whether we are in the faith, or are still reprobates. You may object, that man is prone to deceive himself, that the heart is deceitful, and that many Christian graces are counterfeited in such a manner that it is difficult to distinguish the genuine from the false: but still the Lord *requires us to know* what our state is, and be assured that we have some faith, or no faith in Jesus.

"Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Gal. vi. 4. The import of this injunction undoubtedly is, that every man should fully know the nature of his own work, whether of faith, patience, or love, that from his own consciousness, and assurance arising from it, and not from the opinions of his fellow-men about his piety, he might have holy joy.

By the apostle Peter we are commanded to add *to our virtue knowledge*, which is a requisition to know ourselves, and the operations of our own minds, as well as the character and word of God. 2 Pet. i. 5. He saith also, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." 2 Pet. i. 10. This is generally understood to be a command to make our calling and election certain, or clearly known, both to ourselves and others. Of

course it is our duty to make it evident to ourselves that we have faith, which is the best evidence of our being effectually called and elected.

“As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Colos. ii. 6, 7.

Believers are required to have an assurance *of their salvation* in many passages of the Bible. “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. vi. 11. Paul exhorts the Collossians to perform every duty heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men; *knowing, that of the Lord they shall receive the reward of the inheritance.* Colossians iii. 23, 24.

By the apostle Peter, the saints are commanded to “be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh” of them, “a reason of the hope that is in” them. 1 Pet. iii. 15. It follows of course, that it is the duty of the saints to know what this reason of their hope of eternal life is; for otherwise they could not give it. If every one ought to be *fully persuaded in his own mind*, about the lawfulness of eating meats, surely he ought to be fully persuaded, either that he is a child of the devil, or a child of God; and that he is exposed to everlasting punishment, or that

he has passed from a state of condemnation to acceptance with God.

Should one say to a minister of the gospel, "Sir, *I do not know* that I am impenitent and without faith ; *neither do I know* that I believe on Christ and have a title to glory, and therefore cannot apply any part of your discourse to myself ;" would not the preacher justly exclaim ? "you *ought* to know what you are !" Does not every address to believers and unbelievers in the holy scriptures imply, that Jehovah considers it the duty of his rational creatures to know whether they are children or reprobates, and consequently whether they are accosted by him or not ?

Let God say, "ye wicked men, forsake your ways ; ye impenitent sinners, return unto the Lord ; and ye believers, be comforted." Now, if it is not the duty of the wicked, the impenitent, and believers, to know individually their state, then no duty is violated if all treat God's message with neglect and contempt ; for each one might say, "I did not know, nor was I bound to know, that my Maker addressed his discourse to me."

Admitting, then, the obligation, you will ask if any fallen man can ascertain whether he is a believer or not. I answer,

II. That to arrive at an assurance of our own faith and salvation is a practicable Christian duty. You *ought to know*, and you *may*

know, friends of Jesus, that you have believed to eternal life.

This is evinced from the fact that many have attained to assurance. Among the earliest friends of the promised Messiah, Jacob could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," "whom I shall see for myself." James ix. 25. He could not have used this language of appropriating faith, without assurance of a personal interest in the Salvation of sinners.

Abraham was *strong in faith, giving to God*; and *fully persuaded that what he promised he was able to perform.*

Jacob, Joseph and Moses, by all the circumstances narrated concerning their deaths are exhibited as having no more doubt of things which they believed, and of their interest in the promised SEED, than of their own existence or personal identity.

David attained to the assurance of faith and a more beautiful expression of this gratitude than the one contained in the twenty-third Psalm, cannot be found. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.—Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Without ostentation, the pious minstrel of Israel could tune his harp and sing, "The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is t

strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident; one thing have I desired of the Lord: that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to hold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire his temple." Psalm xxvii.

Paul enjoyed a certain knowledge of his rest in Christ, when he said to Agrippa, "I would to God that not only thou, but also they that hear me this day, were both almost altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Acts xxvi. 29. In language of still more glorious exultation we hear him saying, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me in that day." 2 Tim. iv. 6.

Of all the inspired writers John insists most largely on the duty and possibility of obtaining an assurance of faith and salvation.

He teaches us, that we may "know that we know him," and be confident on scriptural grounds, that "our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ;" and that the blood of the Redeemer "cleanseth us from all sin." "I have not written unto you," he says, "because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." "*We know* that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "*Ye know* that he was manifested to take away our sins." "We know that we have passed from death unto life." "We know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." "We know that he abideth in us." "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

For the acquisition of this assurance of faith and salvation, it does not appear that any other influences of the Holy Spirit than those which are enjoyed by believers in common are requisite; and since many have known that they are believers and have eternal life, other believers who actually have the same faith and the same inheritance, may be assured of their high and holy calling.

From a part of the design of faith, we may infer the practicability of the duty which I am proving. The ultimate design of faith is the glorifying of Jehovah in the salvation of our souls; but an inferior object is intended, even our present peace and felicity. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Rom. xv. 4. But could we draw any comfort and motives to patience from the things which are written, if we did not know that we believe them?

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Rom. v. 1. But if we do not know that we have faith, we cannot know that we are justified, and thence derive the pleasures of *peace*, and of *hope* that *maketh not ashamed*. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace IN BELIEVING, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13.

Let us, then, proceed to consider,

III. THE MEANS by which a Christian may attain to an assurance that he has faith, and eternal life.

The text is a sufficient warrant for the assertion, that there are means of arriving at certain knowledge on this subject, for John says, "*these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, THAT YE MAY KNOW that ye have eternal life.*"



The writings of this apostle, however, would be of no value to beings who should be destitute of those faculties and powers which are requisite for making a right use of them.

The believer's assurance that he has faith may be obtained either by consciousness or by reasoning, assisted by spiritual conception and the word of God.

We have a mental faculty called *conception*, by which we may form a correct notion of the act of saving faith. The scriptures describe this act, and make its nature manifest to those persons whose understandings have been enlightened. They distinguish it from other mental operations, as clearly as they discriminate between any spiritual and any merely natural act of the mind. This operation is really performed by the child of the skies; for he believes to the saving of the soul.

Now the human mind is furnished with another faculty, which is called *consciousness*, by which it takes cognizance of all its own acts, whether they proceed from natural causes alone, or from the influence of the Spirit on our inherent mental constitution. We are conscious that we judge, reason, remember, feel, and act. Should a witness testify, that he remembers to have heard words spoken, the judge might ask, "do you know that you remember to have heard those words which you repeat?" and he might answer, "*I am*

*conscious* that I remember." In like manner, should any one assert that he *believes* a statement to be true, and be questioned concerning his belief, he might say, "*I am conscious* that I believe." Every such answer evinces the existence of the faculty of consciousness, and points out its particular office. It is no less employed about spiritual and holy acts of the mind, than about those which are common to the children of darkness.

By this faculty any one who *conceives* what it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and actually believes, may affirm, *I am conscious* of performing that very mental operation which the scriptures represent to be saving faith. This consciousness is the highest kind of knowledge: and that this mental faculty might be employed in giving the believer assurance of his actually believing, John and others *have written* to us a faithful description of all the Christian graces. That man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells may be as truly and infallibly conscious of exercising faith, as any natural man of accrediting the testimony of his neighbour about some worldly transaction. "But 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."

Another method of knowing that we believe is by the faculty of *reasoning*, operating

in conjunction with other faculties directed by the words of life.

We may form a correct notion from the sacred oracles, of the grace of *love*, whether it be exercised in relation to man, or the blessed Saviour, or the Eternal Father. We may be *conscious* of an act of holy love ; we may *remember* that we were conscious of having loved, and then we may *believe* that every person who loves is born of God, and has faith in the Redeemer. Then we may reason thus ; every one that loveth God is regenerated : I am conscious of loving God ; therefore I am regenerated. And again ; every regenerated person has faith ; I am a regenerated person ; and therefore I have faith. In this way believers may by inference arrive at an assurance that they are believers.

The apostle John makes no formal syllogism, but the substance of all which he offers concerning the undoubting confidence of a believer, may be reduced to one. " My little children," he says, " let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed and in truth. And HEREBY WE KNOW that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." Our assurance that we are of the truth is ascertained by the fact that we sincerely love our brethren. He supposes that we must have intuitive knowledge of our affections ; or that the mind is conscious of the feeling of

love. He informs us that love is an inseparable concomitant of faith on the Son of God; and then we are left to draw the conclusion, that we are of the truth, because we know that we love the saints. We must either dispute that love proves the existence of faith, or be without consciousness of loving, or else, knowing the certainty of these things, conclude that we have saving faith. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."

The scriptures teach us, that *none* of the holy fruits of the Spirit are found in him who is not united to Jesus Christ, by a living faith; and that evangelical repentance, fear, hope, desire, approbation, and love, singly and collectively, prove the fact of regeneration, or of our being *quickened together with Christ*. After we have been taught to discern the nature of any one of these graces of the Spirit, we may be conscious of exercising it, and hence may argue thus:

The man who has any one saving grace is united to Christ by faith:

Now I am conscious that I have some one saving grace:

Therefore, I am united to Christ by faith.

In this manner the knowledge that any one fruit of the Spirit is found in our minds may lead to the assurance that we believe on the Son of God.

*Concerning eternal life*, we remark, that a believer may have intuitive knowledge that he enjoys something of that spiritual activity and felicity which appertains to one whose eternal life is commenced in regeneration ; but the assurance that any one shall be finally saved from hell and brought to heaven must always be a matter of inference. Of now embracing Christ, who is called eternal life, and which we are said to have, we may be conscious ; but we can know that we shall always abide in him only by a train of reasoning.

This is eternal life to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.\* “ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”† His commandments are summarily comprehended in love to God and man. If then we have holy love, we know that we have the experimental knowledge of God, which proves us to be heirs of eternal life.

It is of the consciousness of love that John says, “ if our heart condemn us ;” if our mind pass sentence upon us, that we are destitute of holy love to our brethren, then “ God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things ;” and of course must condemn us, as being destitute of that which we know we do not possess. But “ beloved, if our heart condemn us not,” as it must do if we are not in-

\* John xvii. 3.

† I John ii. 3.

ternally persuaded that we love God and man, "then have we confidence towards God." 1 John iii. 20, 21. John could not intend that he whose blinded and callous mind condemns him not of being a sinner, should have confidence before God; much less could he have insinuated, that every one whose heart condemns him for being by nature a child of wrath, remains under sentence of death, and destitute of Christian assurance. Indeed the connection of the words requires us to give some such paraphrase as this: "if you know that you have no love, God must know it; and if you condemn yourselves for being without it, God must be as equitable as your conscience, and condemn you too; but if your consciousness of having love, will not permit you to condemn yourselves as being wholly without it, then you may assure your heart before him; for every one that loveth, is born of God."

We may infer our final salvation from the existence of faith thus:

He who believeth on Jesus Christ shall be saved:

I am conscious, that I believe on Jesus Christ:

Therefore I shall be saved.

Of the truth of the first proposition the Scriptures leave no doubt; for the promises and assurances that every believer shall be saved, are spread over the whole word of God.

How any one may be conscious, or may legitimately conclude, that he believes, has been shown ; and the consequence follows as necessarily as any truth which results from any course of reasoning.

Here I desire that it may be forever settled in your minds, that no person has any better reason to judge, that he shall be saved from hell, than he has to conclude that he has faith in Christ: and every person's evidence that he shall enter heaven, is just as bright as the evidence of his believing on the Son of God. "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." 1 John ii. 5. and iii. 23.

To leave us without any excuse for not being assured of our state, the apostle John gives us another, and yet another mode of trial to which we shall do well to yield our serious attention.

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." 1 John iv. 13. In the first discourse of this series you have been taught how any one may ascertain that the Holy Spirit is in him : here therefore, I merely remark, that to confess that Jesus is the Son of God, to believe the love which God hath to us, to love our brother man, and to be free from slavish

fear, are enumerated as proof of the inhabitation of the Spirit. Now the believer may thus reason : every one to whom God has given the Spirit is united to Christ for salvation : but God has given me the Spirit : therefore I am united to Christ for salvation. It is as certain that this person will be saved, as that God has given him the Spirit of truth, of consolation, of union, and purification.

In the last course of reasoning which I shall adduce, from this Apostle of love, the major proposition is a more extensive and general one than any which has been considered.

“ There are,” he says, “ three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood : and these three agree in one.” 1 John v. 8. Concerning this passage I think with the venerable Newton, that “ *the Spirit* denotes a divine light in the understanding, communicated by the Spirit of God, enabling the soul to perceive and approve the truth. *The water* seems to intend the powerful influence of this knowledge and light in the work of sanctification, and *the blood*, the application of the blood of Jesus to the conscience, relieving it from guilt and fear, and imparting a ‘ peace which passeth all understanding.’ And he that believeth hath this united testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, not by hearsay only, but in himself.”\*

\* Rev. J. Newton's Works : Letter viii. of Vol. I.



The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost bear record in heaven, not merely to the sonship of Christ, as most commentators seem to suppose, but to the general and particular truths of the gospel, and especially to the fact that all who believe on the Mediator are born of God, are united to Jesus Christ, shall overcome the world by faith, and have eternal life. To these things they bear witness before the inhabitants of heaven, and without this record the angels could not know that they are sent forth to minister to such as shall inherit everlasting glory; nor could they rejoice over a sinner repenting, as over a member of the mystical body of the Lamb.

Now there are three that bear witness on earth, and their testimony is borne to the mind of every believer; and is received by him, that he who believeth that Jesus is the Christ overcometh the world, and hath eternal life. We admit the testimony of men, and much more ought we to admit the testimony of God the Spirit in our hearts. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," and "this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son;" "that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness," the witness which the Spirit, the water, and the blood bear, "in himself."

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life ;” by attending, as we think, to *the witness* which each believer has in himself.

The argument by which any one should prove, from these passages of scripture, that he shall assuredly be saved, would stand thus :

Any one who has the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood in himself, is united to Christ by faith :

But I know that I have in myself the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood :

Therefore, I am united to Christ by faith. Another chain connected with this, will bring him to assurance of his own salvation : for, to all who are united to Christ by faith, Jehovah has promised salvation ; but he is united to Christ by faith : and therefore Jehovah has promised to him salvation.

The only difficulty in arriving at the certainty of our own salvation in this way, lies in knowing that we have the joint witness of the three in ourselves. But that we may know that the Spirit of God is in us has been proved ; and it would be easy to show, that we may be sensible of experiencing his purifying influences, and of feeling the happiness which springs from pardoning blood.

The child of the Highest may know, and often does know, that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, feels poor in spirit, is

meek, mourns for sin and sinners, is merciful, cultivates peace, and suffers willingly for the Redeemer's sake. He may say unto the Lord, "whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." Being conscious of these things, he hears the true God say, that they are the fruits of the Spirit; and then he judges, without any doubt entering his mind on the subject, for the present, that his spirit, winging its way on pinions of faith and love to the mountain of the Lord, has lighted at the fountain of the waters of sanctification. Then he knows that he is actually experiencing the thing represented by water in baptism, even the fidelity of the covenant, triune Sanctifier, and the cleansing efficacy of the grace of the gospel. Then, the Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.

He may be conscious of feeling too, a lively application of the atonement made by Jesus, and of spiritually eating his flesh and drinking his blood, so as thence to derive the life of his spiritual activity and of all his joys. He is conscious that Christ is precious to him, and that the cross, in his sight more beautiful and desirable than the fairest tree of knowledge in paradise, flourishes with fruits that are ripening for eternity. He knows that he cleaves to Christ as his dearest brother, as the partner of his bosom, as his righteousness, strength, and salvation. He may, therefore,

without presumption say, "I know that I have in myself the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood;" and thence draw the happy conclusion, "I shall be saved from Satan, sin, death, and hell."

Thrice blessed assurance! Happy are all they who know that they have eternal life! They shall still seek thy favour, and "rejoice ever more" in thee, blessed Saviour of sinners!

Reluctantly, when I think of our duty, but with some satisfaction, when I know it may encourage some of the friends of Immanuel, do I acknowledge, that all believers have not an assurance of their own faith and future salvation. Some have been born, who have not reflected upon their birth; and love Jesus, while they would think it presumption, or want of humility, to say with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!"

What can be offered as a suitable address to these timid disciples? Surely I may not account them enemies of the Lord; nor yet may I justify their want of assurance.

Dear friends, your God and Saviour commands you to know that you are in the faith, and are not reprobates. Your felicity and growth in grace demand that you should diligently examine the operations of your own minds, and compare them with the inspired descriptions of faith, love, repentance, and

the spirit of new obedience. Can you sit still; can you slumber quietly on your beds, while it is to your own minds uncertain what your state is? What! do you not know that you believe on Christ to the saving of the soul? Then you do not know but you are unbelievers, the foes of the Friend of sinners, the slaves of the devil, the deluded ones of the deceiver, and the persons on whom the wrath of God abides, and shall abide for ever! If you are not assured of entering heaven, you cannot know that you shall not lie down in everlasting burnings. How can you remain in distressing uncertainty? How can you endure the thought that your portion may possibly, and perhaps probably, be in hell, with damned spirits, the abominable, the devil and his imps of darkness?

This state of doubting is a sinful state; and by it, every one who is an Israelite indeed, dishonours Him who gave him the faculty of knowing what his own mental operations are, while he practically impeaches the veracity of God, and suggests that the divinely prescribed rules for attaining to assurance of a personal interest in Jesus are insufficient, or useless.

Awake then, ye heirs of celestial bliss, pray fervently for clear conceptions of the truth, for candour in judging of yourselves, for a vigorous exercise of the faculty of conscious-

ness, and by these means for ability to discern, and acknowledge, and magnify, the work of the Holy Spirit on your minds. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord," saith Jehovah; and I pray you, Christians, not to treat the Holy Ghost as if he were incapable of manifesting his work, and making himself known to you.

It will be no less conducive to your happiness than to the advancement of the divine glory, for you to know, that you have eternal life: for, without this knowledge, how can you apply the great and precious promises to yourselves, and drink of the full streams of consolation? You have heard, that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" but if you know not that you love God, you cannot judge, and have no reason to hope, that all things will work together for your good.

You have learned that "the just by faith shall live;" but you know not that you have *faith*; of course you know not that you are accounted *just* by your Judge; nor can you know that you shall *live*, the everlasting life of fulness of joy at His right hand.

"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers;" but you know not that you are righteous by receiving the unspeakable gift of God, and therefore you cannot know, that Jehovah

favourably regards you, and your addresses to his throne.

How much more desirable would it be, on sufficient and scriptural ground to stand, and say, "*I was* guilty ; but my guilt has been removed : *I was* far from righteousness ; but it has been brought nigh to me : *I was* an unclean thing ; but I have begun to be holy : *I was* dead in trespasses and sins ; but I have become alive to God : *I was* subject to all the curses of the Bible ; but now I have an assured interest in all the promises it contains : *I was* in the road to hell ; but now my steps take hold on heaven ?"

If any of you, my brethren, have obtained an assurance of faith and salvation, be careful that you do not lose it, through negligence, and the deceitfulness of sin.

We have divine security that all the redeemed shall be kept, by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation ; but we have no authority of God for saying, that the person who is once assured of his interest in Christ and the life everlasting, shall constantly retain this assurance. Nor does the experience of the pious lead us to conclude that a well grounded assurance once obtained must always remain.

When we become too much devoted to the world, and engaged in its pleasures ; when strong temptations assail, and in some instances gain the victory ; when we have no sen-

sible, present love, faith, repentance and hope ; when our Father hides his face in displeasure ; then we must doubt whether we ever believed ; shall say, O ! that it were with us as in days that are past ! and shall have many inducements to think, that we have laboured under a delusion when we thought favourably of our spiritual condition.

If we would always be assured, and enjoy the delights which flow from such high confidence, we must always believe, and be obedient to the commandments.

“ Beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” AMEN.



## SERMON X.

---

### THE END OF FAITH.

*“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”* 1 PETER I. 9.

MANY who wear the badges of Christianity, and many public teachers too, have advised us to preach less about faith, and more about moral duties. The reason which they assign for such counsel is, that the doctrine of the justification of the ungodly through faith alone must render mankind remiss in the performance of duty, if it does not even promote licentiousness.

It is the glorious truth of the ever blessed God, that the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer is imputed to the vilest sinner who believes on Christ Jesus, and that so soon as he receives the gift of saving faith, being united to the Saviour of sinners, he is accounted legally holy. The objection made to this doctrine of faith is founded in ignorance of *the nature of that salvation which is the end of faith.*

It is proposed as the object of this discourse to state *in the first place*, the scriptural doc-

trine of salvation ; to show, *in the second place*, that this salvation is the end of faith ; and to consider, *in the third place*, the time of the reception of this salvation. A brief application of the subject will then be attempted ; and may the God of truth bestow his blessing on the words of our mouth, and the meditation of your hearts. Amen.

I. The scriptural doctrine of salvation necessarily implies the truth, that mankind are in a fallen condition, and liable to endure the wrath and curse of God for ever ; for you would not speak of *saving* that which was in no danger of being *lost* ; nor would you speak of an *everlasting salvation* of any thing which was not lost *for eternity*. We might speak of the *preservation* of man in innocence, but *salvation* was a thing unknown before the fall.

The Son of man came to seek and *to save that which was lost*. If men, therefore, deny the doctrine of the apostacy, they are very consistent with themselves in opposing also the doctrine of salvation by the Redeemer ; and the notions which men entertain of their need of salvation will be commensurate with their notions of human depravity. If men are not entirely ruined, they need not an entire salvation ; if they have any strength, it is not necessary that Christ should become their whole strength ; and if they have any inherent righteousness, it is superfluous that Jesus should become their only righteousness.

If men can perform any thing in the work of salvation, Christ need not perform the whole, and thus become the Lord our Righteousness, Strength, and Salvation.

Hence, if it be discovered to be a certain truth that man, in his natural estate, is not wholly an unclean thing, it will also be manifest, that a partial Saviour, a Redeemer in part, and a Sanctifier in part, or a Socinian God and Saviour will answer the purpose of effecting our restoration. But the word of God assures us, that in due time, when we were without strength, and righteousness, when we were ungodly and condemned, Christ died for us, that he might redeem us, sanctify us, and introduce us to heaven. Salvation consists in the restoration of man from that estate into which he has fallen by disobedience, to that everlasting felicity which was promised in the covenant of works. He was just with God, and enjoyed his immediate friendship : he was like his God in knowledge, and true holiness, and had he continued upright during the time of probation would have been rendered perfectly blessed in the celestial paradise.

By sin man became *guilty* and *miserable*. The scriptural salvation is a complete deliverance from guilt and misery. With, or without man's consent, he is under obligations to obey God, and is the subject of his government. Jehovah exercises discipline over our

animal and moral nature. We are born under law to Him. Sin is both a transgression of this law, and a want of conformity to it, for "all unrighteousness is sin;"\* and the Lawgiver has pronounced all sinful persons obnoxious to the penalties which are incurred by disobedience. All have sinned, and God holds all men, in their natural estate, under obligation to suffer that punishment which his law denounces. *This is GUILT.* From this we must be delivered; and from this all shall be delivered, who through precious faith obtain an interest in the common salvation.

The scriptures teach, that the saved sinner is made free from all obligations to suffer the penalty of the broken law, by the death of Christ. Through the righteousness of his Surety, which God has accepted in favour of the sinner, he is judicially accounted holy, and divine Justice no longer cries, "let him be accursed, because he hath not continued in all things, written in the book of the law, to do them." Instead of exclaiming "vengeance! vengeance! on his guilty head," the Judge is satisfied, and the law finds no fault with him. Sinner as he is in himself, yet in

\* Many of late have rejected the Assembly's definition of sin, and say it consists exclusively in *positive exercises*. They adduce, as proof of their doctrine, John's declaration, that "sin is a transgression of the law;" but the same Apostle also says, "all unrighteousness," which is a want of righteousness, or of conformity to law, "is sin."

his favour the law has accepted that perfect righteousness which it demanded for his justification. After this he is *guiltless*, and he is not required to perform any single action with the expectation, or desire, of being acquitted by it, before the tribunal of Heaven. It only remains that the sinner should be delivered from THE MISERY of the apostacy, and then his salvation will be complete. When justified through faith *his guilt* no longer exists; but alas! much *misery* remains. This comprehends all those consequences of sin, which are not included in guilt.

Unbelief, rejection from the favour of our God, blindness of understanding, perverse affections, a wounded spirit, the depravement of all our mental faculties, a degraded and mortal body, the unhappiness of the present life, death, progressive wickedness, increasing anguish through eternity, and the loss of a covenant title to the felicity of heaven, constitute *the misery of sin*.

By giving God the lie Adam fell, and by the fall all men became subject to unbelief. Discredit of the divine testimony is the prolific source of all our woe. Such a deterioration of our faculties has taken place, and in such a degree has God withdrawn the illumination of his Spirit, that all natural men are ignorant, and incapable of spiritual conception or discernment. Hence salvation consists in

part, in having the eyes of our mind opened, and in being made, through the rectification of our faculties, to know God and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal. No man is completely saved until his mental constitution is so changed as to exclude false perceptions, erroneous imaginations, perverse reasonings, stupidity of conscience, slothfulness of memory, and all rebellious activity.

Adam in innocence, it is true, did not know all things ; but his finite intellectual faculties ever obtained their proper object. There were no clouds, fogs, vapours, and illusions hovering around his mind. Neither was his will perverse. It ever chose such things as pleased God. Never, then, can any son of Adam be said to be effectually saved, until his heart has been purified from every corrupt bias, until it loves supremely and constantly what God loves, and hates what God hates. When you are saved, you will be delivered from all inordinate affections, and passions of mind, which here dishonour and vex us ; so that chagrin, disappointment, vexation, malice, envy, revenge, pride, scorn, distrust, unkindness, hatred, slander, injustice, fear, grief, sorrow, and despair, will find no place.

And thou frail body too, partner of the soul in sin, shall have thy part in this great salvation, for thou shalt be raised incorruptible and æthereal from the dust ; to be afflicted with deformity, excrescences, pains, disease, and

lust no more. Thou shalt, when saved, always be obedient to the transformed spirit, and subserve the interests of reason, goodness, and grace alone.

The saved sinner, thus changed and perfected in the component parts of his nature, shall stand before his Judge, that his salvation may be publicly manifested to all accountable beings. Then shall the King Eternal say, to all in whom this glorious work has been commenced, and carried on thus far, "come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." These shall sit down in the enlivening and happy society of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Paul and John: "neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." These shall ascend into heaven, with the Redeemer, to be employed in his holy service unceasingly; to hold the most familiar communion with him; to behold his glories; to review the triumphs of his cross; to witness the future developement of the counsels of the Godhead, in respect to other systems of worlds; and to have all that intel-

lectual, moral, social, and spiritual happiness of which their still finite, but perfect faculties are capable. Jehovah shall diffuse around them all, the light of his reconciled countenance, and cause them to shine in their respective spheres, as the luminaries of heaven, for ever and ever.

Let a sinner be justified, and perfectly changed in his character and circumstances ; let him be like the ascended Jesus in body, and in spirit ; let him associate with the inhabitants of heaven, to love them, and be loved by them all ; let him meet his most esteemed relatives and acquaintance, ransomed from earth and hell ; let him cast his eye across the gulph, to see the smoke ascending from the pit which he has escaped ; let him take his place among the millions of sinners made perfect by the Lamb ; let him receive a golden harp, and, while he sings with all his soul, hear the softest, sweetest symphonies from the innumerable choirs that chaunt the praises of redeeming love ; and then, because he experiences, will he understand the nature of everlasting salvation.

II. This perfect salvation from the guilt and misery of sin, is the end of faith. This will appear from three considerations.

1. Our personal salvation is the end which God proposes to accomplish by working faith in us.



The object of saving faith, Christ Jesus *the Saviour*, was given to be the propitiation for our sins, to purchase our deliverance from the guilt and misery of them. To effect the salvation, in all its parts, which has been exhibited to you, was the design of God, when he laid help on one mighty *to save*. He sent not his Son to condemn the world. Christ came not to be the minister of sin, the pander to sensuality. It was no object which the DERRY has proposed in his word, as the end of sending a Saviour, that the children of men might *not* be saved from sin, as well as hell.

The plan was perfected in heaven ; the decree went forth, the Son of God descended, and was clothed with human nature. He came, to accomplish the divine purpose of justifying, sanctifying, and restoring a peculiar people, who should be zealous of good works. He came, that we might be holy, for God is holy ; and that being sanctified throughout, in body, soul, and spirit, we might glorify our Father, who is in heaven, and enjoy him for ever. Nothing but salvation from guilt and misery has God ever promised to effect by the grace of faith. It is not written, "this is the end of your faith, to remain unholy and be alienated from God," but, "*he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*"

All the promises, commands, and exhortations of the sacred scriptures on this subject,

prove, that the end which in the eternal counsels was proposed to be accomplished by faith, is the recovery of fallen man to the condition of a just, holy, and happy child of the skies. To fulfil these decrees the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts, by the word of God.

2. The salvation of the soul is the end which the believer proposes to himself to be obtained in the exercise of saving faith.

Here it is necessary for Christians to examine the operations of their own minds, and recur to the experience of their own hearts. Believers in Jesus, I appeal to your own personal knowledge. When the Spirit of God gave you saving perceptions of your own guilt and misery, and of the offices of Christ, by which he is constituted a Deliverer, did you desire Christ for any other purpose, of a legal nature, than justification? Did you ever propose to accept of him, that you might be left in the state of condemnation? I know that you could not have desired a Saviour, that you might be damned by him.

Moreover, when you were convinced of the degradation of your natures, of the deceitfulness of your hearts, of the rebellion of your wills, and the darkness of your understandings; when you felt that sin is a deadly plague, that it separated you from God, and made you wretched, did you think of receiving a Saviour, that you might retain that which you most deeply abhorred? Did you ac-

cept of Christ, that you might continue in sin? You knew, I am confident, that Jesus saves his people from their sins, and that he is a holy Saviour. For this end, that you might become holy, and happy too, you prayed, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on us, miserable sinners."

We are not of the number who suppose, (to use the expression of an old divine,) "that the Christian must carry fire in one hand to burn up heaven, and water in the other to quench hell, before he can truly love." By faith we saw the abode of misery, moving to meet us at our coming down, and accepted of Christ, that he might deliver us from the bottomless pit. We had a glimpse of heaven, and desired that our Redeemer would introduce us to its felicities.

Sanctification we saw to be necessary, and Christ was presented to us as a Refiner. We accepted of him for the sole purpose for which he is proffered to us in the gospel, that he might instruct us in the knowledge of God, that he might make atonement for our sins, and rule us with the sceptre of justice and mercy.

You never proposed to commit yourselves to Jesus, that he might leave you to perish in pollution, to sink into hell; but when you were in anguish, deliverance was promised, and you believed; help was offered, and you accepted: you fled to the REFUGE from the storm, to the COVERT from the tempest, of

divine indignation. The fervent, personal petition of every one of you was,

“ Jesus, lover of my soul,  
 Let me to thy bosom fly,  
 While the billows near me roll,  
 While the tempest still is high :

“ Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
 Till the storm of life be past ;  
 Safe into the haven guide,  
 Oh ! receive my soul at last.”

3. The salvation of our souls is the end which is actually obtained by evangelical faith.

Examine the records of the Church, the statements of the Holy Scriptures, and the hearts of all the saints, and you will find, that faith never failed to unite its possessor to Christ, to deliver him from condemnation, to purify his whole nature, to make him like his Maker, and to introduce him, finally, to the full enjoyment of God in heaven. If any deny this, we state as an incontrovertible fact, that whatever infidels and mere moralists have said in commendation of good works, the men of evangelical faith have actually performed them. No men are more abundant in all the works of benevolence ; no men are more diligent in the pursuit of whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, than those very persons who cling for their lives to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. We see their salvation

actually begun here, and may expect it will be perfected hereafter.

III. This sentiment will be confirmed by the consideration of *the time of receiving* this great salvation from sin and hell.

The apostle Peter was very far from believing, that salvation commenced with our introduction to heaven, for he represents Christians as loving God in this life; as persons who believing, rejoice, even now, with joy unspeakable and full of glory; yea, as persons who are **EVEN NOW RECEIVING** the end of their faith, in justification, and sanctification. This is the fact; for in the moment in which a person believes on the Son of God, a perfect righteousness is imputed to him, so that there is now no longer any condemnation to him. Even in this life he is pardoned, and God accounts him a restored son and fellow-heir with Jesus, instead of a rebel. He is justified, by a single act of that God and Father who has accepted him, in **THE BE-LOVED**.

The other part of salvation, which consists in the washing of regeneration, and the progressive purification of his nature, is also commenced, at the moment of believing on Christ; but it will not be perfected until the body shall have been refined in the grave.

It is not more certain, that believers are to be finally rescued from all sin, and from hell, than that they are saved in part in this world.

Sin is exterminated in exact proportion to the grace which is communicated. If any man is a believer, he is daily receiving the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul. In this life he is kept back from many iniquities, which unbelievers perpetrate, and he subdues, by divine assistance, many of those enemies of his peace which formerly led him captive. He grows in grace; his faith is increased; his benevolence expands; his knowledge is augmented; he enjoys God; he waxes valiant in resisting the devil, and learns to overcome the world. He feeds on angel's food; and while he dwells below, in peace of conscience, love to Christ, and the anticipation of the future, finds heaven begun.

Such, then, being the scriptural doctrine of the end of faith, let us make some personal application of the discourse. It is profitable for *instruction, examination, reproof, and consolation.*

The INSTRUCTION deducible is principally this: that faith regards a rational object of pursuit; that we are not only presented with evidence, but are urged to believe by the most powerful motives; and that Saving Faith does not imply, as some assert, a willingness to be eternally miserable for the glory of God. Were we to cherish the gospel with any design to obtain a resignation of heart to the damnation of hell, the end of *our* faith would not be the end which God proposes, even the

salvation of the soul. In such a case we should frustrate the purposes of divine grace by the exercise of faith.

If then my hearers, any one should ask of you this question, "is your love to God so disinterested that you would be willing to perish for his glory?" give the answer, "if you are willing to be a guilty, polluted, miserable being for ever, I am not; neither have I so learned Christ; for the end of faith is the salvation of the soul; and the end of salvation is the glorification of our covenant God."

The EXAMINATION, to which the discourse should lead each one of us, is of this kind. Have I contemplated deliverance from punishment and pollution, and the everlasting service of Jehovah in heaven, as the good to be obtained by committing my soul to Jesus Christ? Do I as sincerely wish purification as pardon? Do I feel that my salvation would be incomplete without the rectification of all the faculties of the mind? Do I desire, not merely a change of volitions, but to be "*renewed in the WHOLE MAN* after the image of God," and TO BE ENABLED to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness? Do I confide in the Saviour, that he may save me from myself, the world; the flesh, and the devil?

If I have saving faith I have already received in part that salvation for which I fled to Jesus. Have I then the evidence within myself that I am partially saved already? Do

I rejoice in liberation from the curse ; and do I also experience power operating to the subjugation of those sins which formerly had dominion over me ? Am I already saved from habitual insensibility to the gospel and its glorious Author ? Am I delivered from reigning unbelief ? Has God saved me, through faith, from habitual distrust of his providence ; from indifference to his glory ; from the supreme love of myself ; and from a prayerless, thankless, Christless spirit ? Has God saved me from the unbridled controul of the god of this world, so that I can now resist the wicked one ? Has God delivered me from the dominance of the maxims and fashions of the world which lieth in sin ? Have I fortitude to abstain from following a multitude to do evil ?

If you can answer truly, that God has already saved you in part, rest assured of the possession of saving faith here, and of eternal life hereafter, for he who has begun a good work in you will perfect it in the day of his power.

The REPROOF suggested by the discourse is directed to those who affirm that they have faith, but have not ; and to all who make no pretensions to this inestimable grace. You say, sinners, that you believe. Where is the evidence of the truth of your assertion ? You have not received, either in whole, or in part, that salvation which is the end of faith. You are utterly in fault. Why do ye lie unto your



own souls, unto men, and to God? Prove by a partial sanctification at least, that you believe in the Saviour; bring forth some of the fruits of saving faith, or else confess that you have no present interest in Jesus Christ. Faith which does not save a man is not saving faith: and faith which has not begun to effect a man's salvation is dead. It is the faith of the devils; or a faith not so good as theirs. Those Christians, who are unsocial, morose, unchaste, and unfeeling, who are men of the world, who fear to do their duty; who had rather displease God than a party, a friend, or the people; who do nothing more for Christ's kingdom than the unbelieving, who profane the Sabbath, and grudge any support given to the gospel, are a burlesque upon the Christian name. Either class yourselves with those who reject Christ, or bring forth some of the fruits of union to the True Vine; for God abhors lukewarm disciples, and withered branches. They are in his esteem fit only for the flames. Repent, or he will cast you into the unquenchable lake.

Here one introduces himself, at the head of a large company, to say, "thanks be to God we never pretended to have faith." It is so much the worse for you! What! can you despise the salvation of your immortal souls? Are you innocent when you condemn the Son of God?

“But we are no hypocrites : we assume not the garb of Christianity to deceive.” You make no pretensions to faith, for this good reason, you have none. According to your own testimony you are separated from God, are under the curse, and might be instantly banished to hell. Is this a matter for boasting? “He that believeth not is condemned already,” and “shall be damned,” even if he is a downright, unpretending, fashionable, hospitable man, who is chargeable with nothing more than NOT RECEIVING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The CONSOLATION which believers might educe from the discourse is ample. Be of good courage, afflicted, tossed, tempted child of God; for this salvation is nearer perfection now, than in the moment of thy espousals to the Redeemer. Thou hast received something of salvation already. Larger portions shall in future be communicated, until it shall please thy Deliverer to grant a full, a final release from the workings of error, from depravity of affection, from the pangs of conscience, from bodily and mental lassitude; from all pain; from the wicked of the human family; from the temptations of the devil; from the fear of apostacy; from the power of the grave; from the everlasting agonies of the second death. Every natural and moral evil shall hide itself from thy presence. Thou shalt appear before God, to call him Father,

and to hear him acknowledge thee for his child.

Yes ; blessed be God, all who are now receiving the end of their faith in the salvation of their souls from sin, shall soon awake from the sleep of the grave to immortal beauty and vigour. They shall awake to perfect righteousness ; to the full enjoyment of God, and all his holy company, through eternity.

Grant, O God, that this may be the portion of every one of us, for Christ's sake. AMEN.

THE END.