

The Lord's Prayer
for His People

The Lord's Prayer for His People

Robert Traill

Edited by Don Kistler



Soli Deo Gloria Publications

. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .

The Lord's Prayer for His People

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Soli Deo Gloria Publications

An imprint of Reformation Heritage Books

2965 Leonard St., NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889 / Fax 616-285-3246

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

Originally published as *The Lord's Prayer, in John XVII.24. Discoursed on, in XVI. Sermons* (London, 1705).

Printed in the United States of America

16 17 18 19 20 21/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Traill, Robert, 1642-1716, author. | Kistler, Don, editor.

Title: The Lord's Prayer for his people / Robert Traill ; edited by Don Kistler.

Description: Grand Rapids, Michigan : Soli Deo Gloria, 2016. |

Originally published under title: The Lord's Prayer, in John XVII.24 discoursed on, in XVI sermons : London, 1705.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015048151 | ISBN 9781601784490 (hardcover : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible. John, XVII, 24—Sermons. | Presbyterian Church—Sermons. | Sermons, English—18th century.

Classification: LCC BS2615.54 .T73 2016 | DDC 226.506—dc23 LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015048151>

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Publisher's Preface

Robert Traill (or Trail, 1642–1716) was a significant Christian pastor and theologian, notable for his courage under persecution and warm, evangelical sermons.¹ He was born in May 1642 in Elie in Fife, Scotland, where his father, also Robert Traill (1603–1678), had served as pastor since 1639.² By parenting and personal choice, Traill was committed to the Covenanter cause, a heartfelt allegiance to advancing Reformed experiential Christianity as the established religion of Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland. The Scottish Covenanters suffered greatly when the monarchy and the Episcopal Church were restored to Britain in 1660.

During Traill's childhood and early adulthood, he saw the travails of war and persecution. In the Civil War, his father

1. On Traill's biography, see "An Account of the Life and Character of the Author," in *The Works of Robert Traill* (1810; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 1:iii–viii; Samuel Dunn, *Memoirs of the Seventy-Five Eminent Divines: Whose Discourses Form the Morning Exercises* (London: John Snow, 1844), 164–67; "Traill and His Writings," in Robert Traill, *Select Practical Writings* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1852), v–xii; D. B. Calhoun, "Traill (Trail), Robert," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron et al (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 827; A. S. Wayne Pearce, "Trail, Robert (1642–1716)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 55:211–12.

2. On the life of Traill's father, see Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, new ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1915), 1:38.

enlisted as chaplain with the Scottish army, attending the soldiers at the Battle of Marston Moor (July 2, 1644). He was transferred in 1648 to the Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh. Oliver Cromwell appointed him in 1654 to be a member of the board that certified qualified ministers for the Scottish Lowlands. During this period, the younger Traill studied at the University of Edinburgh, where he was a good scholar, graduating in the late 1650s. William Guthrie (1620–1665) of Fenwick, author of *The Christian's Great Interest*, became his mentor and close friend.³

When Charles II was restored to the British throne (1660), the elder Traill joined eleven other ministers in writing him a letter in which they welcomed him home but pressed him to keep the Solemn League and Covenant that he had vowed to uphold in the Treaty of Breda (1650). For this, the Protesters were arrested. Traill's father was imprisoned for ten months in Edinburgh Castle. Samuel Rutherford, himself no stranger to persecution, wrote to the imprisoned ministers, "Fear not ye. Ye are not, ye shall not be, alone: the Father is with you.... Fear Him who is sovereign."⁴ Traill was nineteen when he bravely walked with one of the Protesters, James Guthrie of Stirling, to the scaffold where Guthrie was executed. Traill's father fell ill in prison and was granted some freedom, but then was charged with high treason on December 11, 1662, and banished.⁵ He fled to the Netherlands, leaving behind his wife, Jean, and six children. One of his letters to his wife was

3. Robert Traill, preface to *The Christians Great Interest*, by William Guthrie (Philadelphia: W. Young, 1789), 8–11. Traill's preface is dated 1705.

4. Samuel Rutherford, *Letters*, ed. Andrew A. Bonar (1891; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984), 693.

5. William Row, *The Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, ed. Thomas M'Crie (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1848), 364, 430; James King Hewison, *The Covenanters: A History of the Church in Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution* (Glasgow: John Smith and Son, 1980), 2:162–63.

published years later, revealing how he tenderly urged her to use the pain of their separation as an impetus to draw closer to Jesus Christ.⁶ The authorities imprisoned Jean also in 1665 for corresponding with her exiled husband.⁷ He later returned to Edinburgh and died on July 12, 1678, and was buried at the Greyfriars Church where he once had served.

In the 1660s, the younger Traill served briefly as chaplain to John Scot, Lord Scotstarvet. He also became connected with fellow Covenanter John Welsh of Irongray. Later, Traill and his family had to flee Edinburgh when a banned book was discovered in their home: *An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland since August 1660* by John Brown of Wamphray. In 1666, Traill was implicated in the Pentland Rising, a Covenanter rebellion against the royal and episcopal forces sparked when royalist troops abused an old man in a Scottish village. Consequently, the Privy Council condemned Traill as a traitor and rebel. Anticipating arrest, he went to his father and other British divines who were in the Netherlands, taking refuge from Stuart absolutism. Traill continued his theological studies there, assisting Matthias Nethenus, professor of divinity at Utrecht, and helping to prepare Samuel Rutherford's

6. *A Letter from the Rev. Mr Robert Traill, Late Minister at Edinburgh, To His Wife; as also One to His Children* (Edinburgh: by E. and J. Roberstons, for J. Traill, 1762). This letter is included in the younger Traill's *Works* (4:234–42), but it was written by his father. It refers to “Margaret, your youngest daughter” (4:236), and the youngest child of the elder Robert Traill and Jean was named Margaret (1648–1717); she married James Scott of Bristo. Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, 1:38. The letter to the children is from Rotterdam and is dated 1665 (*Works*, 4:238), but the younger Traill was still in Scotland at that time. Therefore, the letters are from the father, not the son. Cf. “Traill and His Writings,” in Traill, *Select Practical Writings*, vi.

7. Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1835), 1:423.

Examination of Arminianism for print. Nethenus described Traill as “a pious, prudent, learned, and industrious young man.”⁸

In 1669, Traill returned to Britain and settled in London. The following year he was installed in a Presbyterian congregation in Cranbrook, Kent. In 1677, Traill was arrested with John Welsh while visiting Edinburgh, this time for preaching in private homes and assisting in conventicles around the Scottish border. While imprisoned on Bass Rock, an island in the Firth of Forth, he met James Fraser of Brea and Alexander Peden.⁹ He was released from prison a few months later and returned to his flock at Cranbrook. In 1682, Traill preached a powerful sermon at the Morning Exercises in London on 1 Timothy 4:16, addressing the question, “By what means may ministers best win souls?”¹⁰ After the Glorious Revolution (1688), Traill served as copastor with Nathaniel Mather (1631–1697), son of Richard Mather and brother of Increase Mather of New England, in the Congregational church at Paved Alley, Lime Street.

In 1692 he published *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine of Justification*. In this short book, originally written to his oldest brother, William, minister of Borthwick, Midlothian, Traill asserted the classic Reformed view of justification with its spiritual advantages and defended it against the charge of antinomianism.

His dependence upon Christ is evident from his confession:

8. Quoted in “Account of the Life,” in *Works*, 1:v. The text says “doctus, pius, prudens et industrius juvenis vir. D. Robertus Traillus.” Samuel Rutherford, *Examen Arminianismi*, ed. Matthia Netheno (Utrecht: Antonii Smytegelt, 1668), sig. ***3r.

9. “Traill and His Writings,” in Traill, *Select Practical Writings*, viii.

10. Robert Traill, “By what means may Ministers best win souls?,” in *A Continuation of Morning-Exercise Questions and Cases of Conscience...in October, 1682*, ed. Samuel Annesley (London: by J. A. for John Dunton, 1683), 195–216. See Traill, *Works*, 1:235–51.

I have no name to come to God but in Christ. My own name is abominable to myself.... No other name is given under heaven, but that of Jesus Christ, in which a sinner may safely approach unto God. Since the Father is well pleased with this name, and the Son commands me to ask in it, and the Holy Ghost hath brought this name to me, and made it as ointment poured forth (Song 1:3), and since its savor hath reached my soul, I will try to lift it up as incense to perfume the altar enthroned above; since all that ever come in this name are made welcome, I will come also, having no plea but Christ's name, no covering but his borrowed and gifted robe of righteousness. I need nothing, I will ask nothing, but what his blood hath bought (and all that I will ask); I will expect answers of peace and acceptance only in that blessed Beloved—beloved of the Father, both as His Son and our Savior, and beloved of all that ever saw but a little of his grace and glory.¹¹

The book was occasioned by the controversy that broke out among dissenting ministers after the writings of Tobias Crisp were published. Traill opposed antinomianism on one side and Arminianism and the neonomianism of Daniel Williams and Richard Baxter on the other. "All my design in publishing this is, plainly and briefly, to give some information to ordinary plain people who lack either time or judgment to peruse large and learned tractates about this point of justification, wherein every one is equally concerned," Traill wrote.¹²

In 1696, Traill published *Thirteen Sermons on the Throne of Grace* on Hebrews 4:16. After Mather's death in 1697, Traill left the church and pastored another congregation in London.

11. Quoted in "Account of the Life," in *Works*, 1:vi.

12. Robert Traill, *A Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine of Justification*, in *Works*, 1:288.

In 1705, he published *Sixteen Sermons on the Prayer of Our Saviour* on John 17:24. Traill died in 1716 at age seventy-four. He never married.¹³

Traill's exposition of John 17:24, which is presented in this volume, is a masterpiece of Puritan experiential doctrine. The text reads, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Traill analyzes it with the following exegetical outline, with his main doctrinal topic noted for each point:

- I. The Manner of Our Lord's Asking: "I will"
—the doctrine of the intercession of Christ
- II. The Matter of Christ's Prayer
 - A. The Party He Prays For: "they whom thou hast given me"
—the doctrine of election in Christ
 - B. The Blessing He Prays for Them: "that they may be with me where I am"
—the doctrine of heaven with Christ
 - C. The End Why He Prays This for Them: "that they may behold my glory"
—the doctrine of the glory of Christ (over half the book)
 - D. The Argument that He Prays: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"
—the Father's eternal love for Christ

Each point contains many applications for life, and Traill addresses both believers and unbelievers in his exposition. His practical focus throughout the book is summed up in his statement in the original preface:

13. On the letters to wife and children attributed to him in his *Works*, see note 6 above.

Three things are simply necessary unto any man's having of true religion and godliness: sound principles of divine truth known, the savor of that knowledge in the heart, and the power of that savor in a man's worship and walk. There are no sound principles of saving truth, but in and from God's written word. There is no right savor of those principles, but in and by "faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13; cf. 3:15). It is by this savor of the knowledge of Christ, as it is called (2 Cor. 2:14), that the power of godliness is impressed on the heart, and expressed in the life of a believer.

If the principles of truth be not from God's word, there can be no true religion. If the truth professed be consonant to God's word, and faith and love be wanting, it may be a man's notion and opinion, but it is not the man's religion. And if the power of known truth be not in his walk and conversation, neither should he himself, nor ought any other think, that such a man hath any religion at all.¹⁴

This was the last work published by Traill in his lifetime, and it amply testifies to his Christ-centered, Reformed, experiential preaching.

After his death, Traill's writings continued to be published and were well received. His twenty-one sermons on Hebrews 10:20–24, originally preached in 1694, were published posthumously as *A Steadfast Adherence to the Profession of Our Faith* (1718). Traill's writings were highly valued by the defenders of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, such as Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, in the controversy that erupted in Scotland in the 1720s.¹⁵

14. Robert Traill, preface to *Sixteen Sermons on the Lord's Prayer*, in *Works*, 2:iii. The paragraph break is added.

15. John Brown, ed., *Gospel Truth Accurately Stated and Illustrated*, by the Reverend Messrs. James Hog, Thomas Boston, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Others; Occasioned by the Republication of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*

His published *Works* were printed in two volumes (Edinburgh, 1754), and then in three volumes (Glasgow, 1775). Later, other sermon manuscripts by Traill would come into print: *Eleven Sermons* on 1 Peter 1:1–4 (1778) and *Six Sermons* on Galatians 2:21 (1779). These were incorporated into a new, four-volume edition of his *Works* (Glasgow, 1795–1796). Another edition of the *Works* followed (Edinburgh, 1810), which is the basis of the 1975 reprint of *The Works of Robert Traill* by the Banner of Truth Trust, consisting of four volumes bound as two.

A volume of his *Select Practical Writings* was also published (Edinburgh, 1852), which does not contain the full selection of previously published writings, but does supplement them with ten formerly unpublished sermons on Hebrews 12:29, Isaiah 63:16, Matthew 7:13–14, Ephesians 3:8, Philippians 2:12–13, 1 Corinthians 2:10, and Hebrews 6:4–6. One wonders how many more manuscripts of Traill's valuable sermons remain hidden in libraries and personal family collections in Scotland.

God continues to use Traill's faithful witness centuries after his voice resounded on the earth. In the late nineteenth century, J. C. Ryle quoted over a dozen times from Traill's writings in his classic *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (1877/1879), using Traill's clear distinctions between justification and sanctification and insights into assurance to defend the church against the Holiness Movement led by Pearsall and Hannah Smith. However, justification by faith alone is a doctrine assaulted in every age. Traill's book on justification has also been reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust as one of their Puritan Paperbacks,¹⁶ and it remains relevant and helpful today.

(Canonsburgh: Andrew Munro, 1827), 36; Donald Fraser, *The Life and Diary of the Reverend Ebenezer Erskine* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1831), 140.

16. Robert Traill, *Justification Vindicated*, Puritan Paperback series (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002).

Traill was a great contributor to the Puritan age. His name is linked to the best in Scottish, Dutch, and English Puritan traditions. Not only Presbyterians, but Christians of various denominations “have recognized the vigour of his intellect, the conclusiveness of his reasoning, the clearness of his ideas, . . . the zeal, the sincerity, and fervent piety with which his writings are pervaded.”¹⁷ Howie said of him, “The simplicity and evangelical strain of the works of Mr. Traill have been savoury to many, and will ever be so, while religion and Scripture doctrine are in request.”¹⁸

We wish to thank Don Kistler for his editorial labors on this book, making available yet another Puritan classic. Thanks also to Ryan Hurd for his excellent copy editing skills, as well as to the effective typesetting/proofreading team we have in Linda and Gary den Hollander. May God use this rich, broad-sweeping exposition of the glorious text of John 17:24 to nourish many as much as proofreading this work has nourished us.

—Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley

17. “Traill and His Writings,” in Robert Traill, *Select Practical Writings*, x.

18. John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, ed. W. H. Carlaw (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995), 625.

CHAPTER 1

The Introduction

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

—JOHN 17:24

You have heard many a good text taken out of the Word of God. But though all are good, there is none better than this one. Love the text, and love, above all, the blessed first speaker of it—and you will be more fit to profit by what you hear spoken in His name from it.

The best of all sermons, found in chapters 14, 15, and 16, concludes with the best of all prayers in chapter 17. In this prayer, properly called the Lord's Prayer (for that one in Matthew 6 is the pattern given for our praying rather than the Lord's Prayer), there are but few petitions, but they are all great ones. He prays, first, for Himself and His own glory (vv. 1–5) and then for His people to the end of this chapter. Verse 24 contains His last petition for them. And, passing the compellation "Father," used five times in this prayer, three times singly, as in verses 1, 5, and 24, twice with an addition, "Holy Father" (v. 11) and "Righteous Father" (v. 25), I take up two things in this petition.

First, the manner of our Lord's asking: "I will," a singular way of praying.

Second, the matter of Christ's prayer. And in it are four things:

1. The party He prays for: they whom "thou hast given me." Only Jesus Christ could pray thus for the elect as elect.

2. The blessing He prays for regarding them: that they may "be with me where I am." Where was Christ when He said this? He was going to the garden, to His agony, to be taken that night to be crucified [the] next morning and laid in His grave the next evening. But here our Lord is praying as one in heaven. See verses 11 and 12: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.... While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." And He prays to have His people with Him in heaven. He loved them so well that He came to the world where they were. He loved them so well that He endured what they deserved. And here He expresses His love in desiring that they may "be with me where I am." Christ and His people must be together.

3. In the matter of this prayer of Christ, we have the end why Christ prays for this blessing on them: "that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Why would Christ have His people with Him where He is? That they may behold His glory. Are they to receive no glory of their own? Yes, a great deal, surely; yea, they have gotten some already. Verse 22: "The glory which thou gavest me [to give] I have given them." And they are to receive a great deal more in heaven, but it stands in and is advanced by their beholding Christ's glory.

Had they not beheld Christ's glory before? John 1:14: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Second Corinthians 3:18: "We all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord." Isaiah saw His glory and spoke of Him (Isa. 6; John 12:41). Why then does our

Lord speak of the necessity of His people's being with Him where He is so that they might behold His glory, since He can manifest His glory, and they, by grace, can behold it even when they are where they are and not yet where He is? The reason is this: because believers now, though by faith they can see something of Christ's glory, yet they do or can see but very little. The light is small, and their eyes are weak. But in that day that our Lord prays for, the discoveries of His glory will be greater, and the eyes of the glorified will be stronger than we can now conceive.

In the matter of this prayer, we have the argument on which our Lord prays for this blessing to His people: "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." You know that this phrase "before the foundation of the world" is a usual Scripture phrase for "eternity," for the foundation of the world and time began together. Creatures and time began together. Time is properly the measure of the duration of a creature, but God inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15). Creatures dwell or sojourn in time. So that this argument of our Lord's is "for thou lovedst me from eternity." And it has a mighty force in it. If our Lord had said, "I pray that they may be with Me where I am, for Thou lovedst them before the foundation of the world," He would have spoken what He had often told them, for they were given to Christ in love. But the argument is stronger as Christ expresses it here: "For Thou lovedst Me. I love them and would have them where I am. They love Me and would be with Me where I am. Thou lovest them and wilt have them where I am." But here is one argument more: "for thou lovedst me." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as entrusted with the office of a savior and charged with the chosen, was and is the object of the Father's eternal delight and love. And on this love the salvation of all the elect stands more firm than the pillars of heaven or earth.

So much for the words of this verse. And from this little glance I have given you of them, you may plainly perceive that here is a rich and deep mine, better than of gold that perishes. May the Lord help us to dig and find treasure and to be enriched by it.

The first thing in the text is the manner of Christ's praying here: "I will." It is a singular manner. About it, I would premise three things:

First, this is a way and manner of praying that we never read the like of used by any saint in the Word. Some of them have been very familiar with God, and the Lord has encouraged them much by His condescension to them. Yet nothing of this "I will" is to be heard or read of in their prayers. "I will" is too high for a supplicant at God's footstool. Abraham was a great intimate with God, the first believer honored with the noble name of "the friend of God." Yet this great friend who, when pleading for Sodom (Gen. 18), with what depths of humility is his confidence mixed! Again, when pleading for Ishmael in Genesis 17:18, he said, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" [This is] nothing like this "I will."

Abraham's grandson Jacob came a little nearer to this in Genesis 32:26: "Let me go," the angel says, "for the day breaks." Jacob answered, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." "Give me Thy blessing and go when Thou wilt." When he had gotten the blessing, he also got a halting thigh and a humbled heart while he lived, as he hints in Genesis 32:30: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Not a word or thought of this: "I have seen God face to face. I have wrestled with Him hand to hand, and I have prevailed." No, he rather wonders that he got out of God's hands alive.

Righteous Jacobs, true Israels, in and on their greatest prevailings with God and blessings from Him, are lowly, humble believers, yea, humbled by God's advancing them. Moses, that

great wrestler with God for Israel, though he expressed a holy resolve, yet nothing appears like this “I will.” “Let me alone,” said the Lord, “that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them” (Ex. 32:10). It is strange that one man should, as it were, hold the Lord’s hands, that one man’s faith should stop the execution of a just sentence against a sinful people. Surely, you may conclude that the Lord is easy to be entreated. Again, in Exodus 33:15, Moses said, “If thy presence go not with me [or us], carry us not up hence”—that is, “It is as good for us to die here as to go anywhere without Thy presence.” The wilderness, though waste and howling, and Canaan, though the glory of all lands, are alike to Moses without God’s presence.

Again, in Numbers 14:12, Moses had a great offer from the Lord: “I will destroy this people and make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they.” Moses, in his zeal for God’s glory, refused this offer and pleaded still and prevailed. Yet never is “I will” in all his importunity. No believer ever does or ought to speak so to God. They should all ask according to His will and forget and deny their own will. Yet Christ said, “I will,” and well might He say so.

This “I will” is not in a promise to us, but in a prayer to His Father. When the Lord promises to do or give good to His people, it is very becoming to use this style: “I will do” or “give” or “be” so and so to My people. And it is this “I will” in a promise that faith fixes on, as Jacob did. “Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good” (Gen. 32:12). But our Lord is here praying, though I own that there is a great promise implied in it, as we will hear.

There is nothing like this in all the accounts we have of Christ’s prayers at other times and on other occasions. We find that our blessed Savior was much given to prayer alone. Bless Him for it, and love secret prayer the better that He

used it Himself and thereby hallowed it to our use. How our Lord spent those nights in the mountain in prayer, and what He prayed for, and how, we cannot tell—except by Hebrews 5:7: There are “prayers and supplications” offered up “with strong crying and tears.” Believers, you, sometimes, when your hearts are full, want to be far from all company so that you may pour out your complaint to the Lord. Blessed Jesus did so in the days of His flesh, filled the silent night with His crying, and watered the cold earth with His tears, more precious than “the dew of Hermon” or any moisture (next to His blood) that ever fell on God’s earth since the creation. Never were such sinless and precious tears in God’s bottle (Ps. 56:8). Let yours drop, believers, and mix them in the same bottle with His. And on this account sow them in hope, and you will reap in joy (Ps. 126:5).

But for Christ’s prayers recorded in the gospel, we find our Lord prayed very humbly, though confidently. When He prays in His agony, there is not a word of “I will,” but, “Abba, let this cup pass from Me, if Thou wilt; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.” Christians, behold the amazing difference between Christ’s way of praying against His own hell (if I may so call it) and His praying for our heaven. When praying for Himself it is, “Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me.” And no wonder, for every drop in that cup was wrath and curse and death. One drop of it is everlasting poison to all who taste it but to Jesus, the prince of life. This cup He drank cheerfully: “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11).

But when Christ is praying for His people’s heaven, it is, “Father, I will that they may be with Me where I am.” Again, when our Lord is dying on the cross, He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And again, just at dying: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke

23:34, 46). All are humble supplications. None of them are so high and lofty (but yet it well became Him) as this “I will.” I own that Christ in one instance (on the cross) put forth His divine power and acted like a king and God (Luke 23:42–43). One of the malefactors who was crucified with Him found the happiest death man ever had—next to dying *for* Christ, was to die *with* the Savior, and to die receiving Christ’s grace and Christ’s pass to heaven. Whatever Thomas meant in his words in John 11:16, “Let us go, that we may die with him,” this happy malefactor had the best of it fulfilled on him. He died with Christ and got eternal life on the same day. Surely that word was eminently fulfilled in this man from Ecclesiastes 7:1: “Better is the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” This man prayed marvelously, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Our Lord answered more marvelously, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” It is as if Christ had said, “Can your faith take Me up as a king and the disposer of heaven, notwithstanding this thick and dark veil that is now on Me? I will act as a God and savior to you. Today you will be with Me in paradise.” These words have no small aspect on this text: “I will that they be with me where I am.”

Now let us see what may be in these two words in Christ’s prayer of “I will.” No saint ever prayed so. Christ Himself in this prayer only here uses this one word in the original. There must be some singular things that made our Lord use this word in prayer, and it is those into which I would look.

We may lawfully conceive that herein there is a breaking out of His divine glory as the Son of God, equal with the Father, as in Philippians 2:6–10, where the apostle marks three things about Christ, none of which must be forgotten by Christians: the divine dignity of His person (v. 6); the depth of His low and humbled state (vv. 7–8); and the height of His exalted

state (vv. 9–11). So does the apostle to the Hebrews (1:3). Now, though Christ's humbled and exalted states had and have their several distinct appearances, yet as His divine dignity was still the same in both states, in His lowest and at His highest, so there were now and then some beamings of His glory even in His lowest state (John 2:11) and in His triumphant entry to Jerusalem, even when He was going to be crucified. So we may think that this singular word "I will" is used by Christ to display His divine glory, for it is a word that no mere man may use.

Our Lord has promised it to His disciples in John 14:2–3 and therefore prays thus for it. And we must think that the doctrines delivered by Christ in His last sermon of consolation and this last prayer of His, though in the first place designed for His apostles, are yet the common portion of all believers on Jesus Christ. Now Christ had promised in John 14:2–3 that where He was, there His people would be also. If a poor believer has at any time a firm hold on a promise of God, how he will cleave to it, plead on it, and urge it, as in 2 Samuel 7:27–29. But who can conceive what confidence of faith Jesus Christ the Son of God had and used in pleading with His Father for the fulfilling of all His own promises to His people? Besides, all Christ's promises to His people were made by Him in His Father's name. No wonder then that our Lord says, "I will."

Christ here gives us a copy and pattern of His intercession in heaven that is so much spoken of. Christ here speaks as within the veil (vv. 4, 11–12), as if He had done all His work and were no more in the world. He had done so much, but had but a little more to do. And that also was to be speedily dispatched. Christ's intercession in heaven is a kind and powerful remembrance of His people and of all their concerns, managed with state and majesty—not as a supplicant at the footstool, but as a crowned prince on the throne at the right hand of the Father.

So is it expressed in Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1, 12–13; and 12:2. This may be one reason of this great “I will.”

Here our Lord is making His will. And therefore “I will” is fitly put in. Christ is making His last will and testament and praying it over to His Father, which He sealed the next day with His blood. And here He tells what He wills to His people, even “that they may be with me where I am.” And nothing greater or better could be willed for them. Blessed for evermore are they who have this willed and bequeathed to them. And you have a word like this in Luke 22:29: “I appoint unto you a kingdom,” that is, “I bequeath it, dispose it, and make it over to you,” as the word may be rendered.

Our Lord had the price of this glory in His hand, ready now to lay down. And therefore He demands the purchase, for Christ was taken this night and died the next day. The price of the redeemed and of their salvation, a price agreed on in the everlasting covenant, a price of infinite value in itself, a price the Father’s wisdom and justice demanded, a price the Son promised to lay down in the fullness of time, a price on the payment whereof such great things were promised to Christ and His seed—this price is now in Christ’s hand, ready to be laid down. No wonder then if Christ demands the purchase in this high word “I will.” Believers, it passes all your thoughts. It passes the highest flights of your faith to conceive that high assurance and confidence which our Lord Jesus had of the acceptance and success of the sacrifice of Himself that He was now offering to His Father. Hence comes this great “I will.”

This “I will” is but an echo to the known will of His Father. It does not become us to say in our prayers, “I will,” because we do not perfectly know God’s will. And when our desires clash with His will, we dash against a rock. But Christ knew perfectly that the thing He was praying for was the will of His Father (John 6:38–40). When a believer has a sure knowledge of God’s

will, his faith may plead boldly on it. We read of one bold word of blessed Luther. Hearing of the dangerous sickness of an eminent minister of the gospel, he prayed for him, prevailed with the Lord for his life, and wrote to him that he was assured that the Lord would restore him and preserve him to outlive Luther, which came to pass. In the close of his letter he wrote, "Let my will be done; mine, Lord, because it is Thine."

This "I will" in Christ's prayer for His people shows how much His heart was set on the eternal happiness of His people. He prays for it with all His heart. On that sweet theme, I would offer a few things:

Let us consider how Christ's love and will was the necessary price of their salvation. However dear it was to Him, whatever it cost Him, His love was in laying it down: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened [or pained] till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50). And it was a baptism in His own blood. And Luke 22:15: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." And it was His last meal. Love for His Father and love for His sheep made our Lord long greatly to pay the price of redemption.

There are several thoughts in men's hearts about Christ dying. Some think of Christ's death as being brought about by the wicked hands of sinners. This is a poor thought, if there is no more. This thought is natural to any who read the history of His death. Carnal men may hate Judas who betrayed Him, Pilate who condemned Him, the priests who cried, "Crucify Him," and the people who did it. If this is all, I may say the devils have a higher thought of Christ's death and that which comes nearer to the truth than this sorry one.

Some go further and think of Christ's death as being a fulfilling of the purpose and word of God concerning Him. This Christ teaches us in Luke 24:26, 44, 46, and the apostles frequently in their preaching of Christ.

There is a higher thought of Christ's death, namely, that Christ died by the stroke of God's law and justice for His people. Justice roused itself against our Lord: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd" (Zech. 13:7). This sword was drawn and furbished and entered into His soul: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). Better were it that a man had never heard of Christ and His death than to hear and not to know that His death was for his sins. This is the first doctrine that Paul taught. And he is an ignorant and proud preacher who does not follow this pattern: "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3).

The best thought of Christ's death is that He died out of love for His people. Love made Him come in the way of justice. Justice and the law said, as it were, "Either Thou or they must die. They have sinned. The law must be fulfilled; justice must be satisfied." But blessed Jesus answered, "I love them too well to let them die. I will die for them so that they may live." Christ's death is still laid on His love (John 10:11; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:25–26). "He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5)—that is, He loved us so that He shed His own blood for our sins. And then in the same love He washed us from our sins, in and by that blood which He shed in love. Oh, such love! Such blood! Such washing! Here is salvation, and here only. It is a damning dream to expect it anywhere else.

Consider that, as Christ's love was much set on paying the price of redemption, so His love and will were as much set on the persons of the redeemed. He laid down the price in love for the purchase. How can it enter into a man's thoughts that the Son of God should lay down so great a price and not know

what He was to take up for it? That He should die and not know for whom, nor who should be the better for it? His dying was in love. And did He not know whom He loved? His love is still spoken of as distinguishing and particular: for His body, His people, His sheep whom He knew (John 10).

The ways and means of bringing His redeemed to glory were also much in Christ's love and will. John 17:6, 26: "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.... that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." And John 10:16: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold"—that is, they are not of the Jews, but of the elect Gentiles—"them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Every means of grace, every blessing of the means, every drop of grace you receive, as Christ is the giver, so His love and will are in bestowing them on you. All things that accompany salvation are given with the love and will of Christ.

Christ's will is on the end itself, eternal glory. It is first in His design, though it is last in our enjoyment, as we see in this text. He will have His people with Him where He is.

Application: There is one thing I would exhort you to from this doctrine: Christ's love and will are fixed on the eternal glory of His people. Therefore, let believers learn to own their eternal salvation as springing from the will of Christ as well as from the blood of Christ. There was a saving will in Christ in shedding His saving blood—"by the which will we are sanctified," that is, justified and saved, in the style of that epistle, especially "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). What that will is has been declared in the previous verses to be the Father's will in commanding the true sacrifice and the Son's will in offering this commanded

sacrifice. By this will, we are saved. This will, thus fixed, is thus accomplished in Christ's death.

There are three great advantages which we will reap by this looking on heaven, the prize of our calling, as willed by Jesus Christ:

First, it will stir you up to praise and glorify Him. He who took on Himself the burden of our souls and the care of our salvation would surely be the burden of all our songs for salvation and for the hope of it. So the apostle sings in Revelation 1:5 hearty praise to Jesus Christ, for salvation can never be given unless men know that all their salvation is owing to Him alone, to His will and to His blood. If a man ascribes any bit of His salvation to anything or person besides Christ, that thing or person will bear away or rob something of the glory of salvation. But since all salvation is from Christ, all the glory of it should be given to Him.

Second, this will make your faith in Christ strong. What is strong faith? Christians usually think that strong faith has peace, joy, and comfort in it. But these are only the effects of it, and separable also, as in Psalm 22:1. Never was faith nearly so strong in any saint as it was in the man Christ on the cross. And yet no joy or comfort was tasted by Him then. But as to faith in believers, strong faith is when a believer gets far into the love and will of Jesus Christ. Now this doctrine opens up Christ's love and will about our salvation. Let us then enter into it.

Faith makes several approaches to Christ for and about salvation:

It seeks and finds and sees atoning, reconciling blood flowing from Christ's love: "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). "In whom we have redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7).

Faith sees life springing and growing out of Christ's grave. Alas! Many are busy about Moses' grave and have no business

with Christ's grave. A believer sees eternal life springing from Christ's death and grave.

Faith goes further, and through this blood of atonement and this life-giving death, it enters into Christ's love and will that were in His redeeming. As there was life to us in His death, so there was love to us in His dying for us (Rev. 1:5). But can faith go any further? Yes, only one step more, and that is to the highest fountain of all, even God's eternal purpose that He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:11). So that faith begins at Christ's death, rises with Him in His resurrection, sees the virtue and power of all in Christ's love, and then rises to the love of the Father who sent Him, to that purpose of grace from which the Savior and all salvation proceeds. Can faith go any further? No. Here faith is at a standstill. The believer is saved and yet sinks and is overwhelmed in this depth; and, like one swallowed up, he cries out, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). When faith gets a view of the unsearchable riches of God's grace in, by, and through Jesus Christ, then the believer longs to be in heaven to behold the fountainhead of all grace and glory. Faith longs to cease to be faith. This is a strange and strong act of faith, a strange desire in a believer. "Oh, when will I cease to be a believer and become a seer! Then will the glass be done away, and the full-eyed vision of glory succeed! When will both faith and hope cease, and love fill their room?" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:10–12).

Third, seeing Christ's heart and will about your salvation will enable you to pray and labor rightly for glory. What is it to do it rightly? It is to labor with courage and to labor with humility. And a Christian's work prospers when those are united, as they always should be. How boldly may a believer say, "I would be in heaven since Christ wills it!" And how humbly

should he say, "I would be there," since his own will about it signifies nothing, and Christ's will is all!

Objection: How will I know that I am in Christ's will for salvation? If I knew it, then I would give thanks. I would believe firmly and would labor hard to obtain the possession of this glory.

Answer: To this objection I offer three things:

Consider how they behaved themselves who with their own ears heard those very words from Christ's own mouth. It is a vain thought that readily rises in all our hearts that—if we had been present and had heard Christ praying thus for us in a special, particular way that we might be with Him where He is—then we would believe our salvation even if we were in the saddest distress. But now consider what great encouragement to faith Christ gave them. He told them, "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2–3). What more could they desire than to have Christ telling them to their faces, "You and I must indeed part for a little while; but you and I will quickly meet again, never to part any more"? They also heard with their own ears Christ praying His promise to them to His Father, "I will that they be with me where I am." Could such believers, under all those great and singular advantages, ever stagger again? Yes. Almost as soon as this encouraging sermon and prayer ended, their faith was almost at an end too. "Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone" (John 16:31–32).

I say this to check the vanity of this thought in Christians that if they only had sufficient ground of the assurance of Christ's love and of eternal glory, they would believe in every difficulty and trial. Yet you see how they behaved who had such

grounds of faith from Christ's own lips, while He was bodily present with them, which you cannot expect or desire. And I hope none of you will imagine that if you had been in those good men's places and had received their helps, you would have behaved better than they did. Grounds of faith, if ever so great, yet if not attended with the influence of the Spirit of faith, will never keep faith in life and vigor.

What reason have you to doubt your interest in this prayer of Christ? You may say, "I am so vile and unworthy that I cannot believe that Christ willed me to be with Him." If this is all, it is nothing, yea, worse than nothing.

Has not Christ willed eternal glory to many as bad as ever you were? Did He ever will heaven based on some worthiness in the persons who are to receive it? Is it not always willed to the praise of His own grace and love in the giver, and never as a recompense to the worth and liveliness of the receiver?

Christ will mend you before He brings you to heaven. And a great work it is to make you fit for it (Col. 1:12), a work that must be done, and that He only can do, and He can easily do.

Right preparation for glory flows from the faith of Christ's good will to give it. It is a weak and ignorant (but common) thought of Christians that they ought not to look for heaven nor trust Christ for eternal glory till they are well advanced in holiness and fitness for it. But as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and fitness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on Him. The hope of glory is purifying (1 John 3:3).

Every believer has the witness in himself that he has an interest in Christ's heart and will in this prayer: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). The apostle is speaking of the many witnesses that are given to Jesus Christ as the Savior. There are three in

heaven (v. 7) and three on earth (v. 8). All are divine witnesses and sufficient grounds of faith in Jesus Christ (v. 9). Now, says the apostle in verse 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God," who trusts his soul and its salvation to this so well-attested Savior, "hath the witness," or testimony, "in himself."

There are witnesses in heaven, witnesses on earth, and a testimony in the heart of a believer in Christ. Whoever believes on Christ, that faith is sufficient evidence (if he will require it to speak and will regard its testimony—and both of them require actings of faith) to persuade him that he has an interest in Christ's prayer here.

On this point I would glance at four things and then conclude:

Believers in Christ, what do you do when you believe? Oh, that all believers knew what they do when they believe! Do you not, in every distinct act of faith, entrust your guilty, perishing soul to the saving arm of Jesus Christ, on the warrant of all that grace, mercy, and power that belong to Christ in His office as a savior? And is not His willing eternal glory a great and glorious beam of that grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which you believe to be saved (Acts 15:11)?

How did you come by your faith? Is it not His gift? He is the author of it (Heb. 12:2). It is given on Christ's behalf (Phil. 1:29). Whenever you have an evidence in your heart (and it is your own fault if you do not have it daily) that you have true faith in Jesus Christ, even if it is only weak and cannot mount so high as it ought, raise it by this consideration: How did this spark of faith come to be kindled in my heart? Did it naturally grow in my heart? No. Time was when I was without it (Eph. 2:12) and loved to be without it. Did Satan plant it? No. I find him to be the great enemy of it, and I never felt his enmity till I began to trust Jesus Christ. And it is that in me which he mainly assaults. Did ministers and the means of grace plant

faith in me? No. I enjoyed them when no faith was wrought in me. And when it is wrought, all their power without Christ's grace and Spirit concurring cannot raise this faith to act and exercise. Therefore, surely, this faith came from Jesus Christ Himself. Was it not from the work, will, and love of Christ? How easy and natural the inference is! If faith in Christ is the work of His love, with what great warrant may I look by that faith for all the good that His love purposes, promises, and prays for to me!

Can you call Him to witness, with a good conscience, that your great desire and will is to be with Christ in heaven? If the Lord should try you with this question, "Name one thing that you would have above all," every believer has his answer ready. It is, "Lord, that I may be ever with Thee where Thou art," as David said of God's house on earth in Psalm 27:4. This I infer, if your love is set on being with Christ where He is, be assured that Christ's love is set on the same blessing for you—yea, your desire for it flows from His desire of it for you.

Are you willing, yea, pleased and delighted to hold your title to eternal glory by the will and testament of Jesus Christ? Are you willing to have and hold the crown by this tenure only, that it was bought by His blood and willed to you by His testament? Every believer would be in heaven because Christ is there and is pleased to get and keep his place there as willed to him by Jesus Christ. Heaven is a lovely name and a more lovely thing. But it is not at all known by many, and but little by the best. But yet believers look for it and expect it as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They plead for it as such. At last, they receive it as grace and eternally wear the crown as a crown of grace, as well as a crown of glory. The glorified saint, as soon as he receives this crown, casts it at Christ's feet (Rev. 4:10), or sets it on Christ's head, as if he were ashamed to wear a crown where Christ, the only worthy one, is.

On Christ's head are many crowns (Rev. 19:12). His Father puts a crown on Him. God has "crowned him with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9). The church crowns Him (Song 3:11) with a crown of salvation. And every saved person puts on Christ's head the crown of the glory of their particular salvation.

To conclude, they who are not willing to give the glory of all salvation to Jesus Christ will never receive any salvation from Him. But for you who are willing to receive all from Him and are delighted to render the glory of all to Him, His heart is toward you. His best wishes are for your good, and He will give you what He has prepared for you, which is exceedingly above all that can be told to you.

CHAPTER 2

The Matter of Christ's Prayer

Herein I will take up four things:

1. The persons He prays for: “they whom thou hast given me.”

2. The blessing He prays for them: “that they may be with me where I am.”

3. The end for which our Lord prays regarding this blessing to them: “that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.”

4. The argument our Lord presses this suit by: “for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

I would now speak to the designation and name of the persons Christ here prays for: “they whom thou hast given me.” No man but Jesus Christ, who is more than a man, dares to say in prayer, “I will,” nor pray for persons under this name as Christ did. All our prayers are to be out of one book, and we pray without the book in a bad sense when we go beyond it. The only book I mean is God’s written will in the Holy Scriptures. By this, we are taught what to pray for and how we should pray. And beyond this we cannot lawfully ask anything, neither need we more for direction but only the same Spirit who wrote them to assist us in using them (Rom. 8:26), so that we may pray in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20) and in the Spirit

(Eph. 6:18). But our Lord Jesus Christ could not only pray out of God's revealed will in the Scriptures—for He testified of the Scriptures, as they do of Him (John 5:39)—but He could and did pray out of the book of life and was acquainted with the origin of the covenant. And thus He prays here for those who were given to Him.

From this I would raise three doctrines, though I will only speak to one of them at this time:

Doctrine 1: There is a select company of the children of men given by the Father to His Son Jesus Christ to be saved by Him.

Doctrine 2: This company given by the Father to the Son was and is fully and exactly known by Jesus Christ.

Doctrine 3: Jesus Christ is nearly concerned about their eternal salvation, as His praying for it here witnesses.

This truth of the first doctrine is in several ways declared to us in the Word, and yet more by Jesus Christ Himself than by any other way, and more in this prayer than anywhere else by Him. And, if we may so conceive, this great depth of God was specially fit to be mentioned when the receiver of them is speaking His heart about them to the giver of them. This is named six times in this short chapter. In verse 2: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." In verse 6, we have it twice: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." In verse 9: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." Verse 11: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." And here again in verse 24: "They whom thou hast given me." There is a twofold giving of men to the Son by the Father. One is eternal in the purpose of His grace, and this is mainly what is meant here. The other is in

time when the Father by His Spirit draws men to Christ (John 6:44–45). All the elect are given from eternity to the Son to be redeemed by His blood. All the redeemed are in due time drawn by the Father to the Son to be kept to eternal life.

I would speak a little of this giving of men to Christ, first, as to the nature of it, and, second, as to the ends of it.

As to the nature of it, this giving of men to the Son to be redeemed and saved is the same thing as election and predestination. “He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself” (Eph. 1:4–5). And verse 11: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” The difference between these words is very small. Election points at the distinction of the persons on whom this grace fell from eternity. Predestination fixes the end to which they were appointed (1 Thess. 5:9). Giving them to Christ points forth the grand trustee with this great charge. The meaning of giving men to Christ, so often used by our Lord and hallowed by His using of it, has these five things in it:

1. There were divine transactions between the Father and Son about saving men. There was a counsel of peace between them both (Zech. 6:13), often and plainly revealed in the Word, yet a mystery unsearchable to all men, but firmly to be believed, reverently to be adored, and cautiously to be improved by us.

2. There was but a select company of mankind that this counsel was about. Our Lord, who knew them best, still speaks thus of them, especially in this prayer, as has been declared. He still speaks of them by way of distinction from the world. Whatever men may say of universal redemption, surely universal election is a contradiction in words. Election must be of a

fixed, determinate number. There is no election if there is no passing by. If all are taken, then none are chosen. If there is an election, there is a "rest," a remnant. And this "rest" is a multitude (Rom. 11:7). How great this number of the elect is, Christ and His Father knew, and the last day will declare, when they will be brought all together and obtain the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world and be judged to it by Christ, as they are the blessed of His Father (Matt. 25:34).

3. This counsel about their salvation was from eternity. Time election is as great a blunder as universal election. How often is the eternity of it asserted in the Word (see Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9)! Election is an immanent act of God about creatures, not on them, nor with them. It is in a transaction between the Father and the Son about men who did not then exist, but were only to exist one day and to reap the benefit of it in time and to eternity.

4. It follows that this grace of election must be unchangeable, immutable, and unalterable. It never changes. It never fails of its designed effect. All God's counsels are so: "Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isa. 25:1). His counsel stands forever: "The thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Ps. 33:11). He is of one mind, and who can turn Him? And "what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing which is appointed for me" (Job 23:13-14). Now, of this number of the elect given by the Father to the Son, there is no subtracting from it, no adding to it. The book of life admits of no corrections, no blotting out, no additions, no new editions.

5. It is also implied that in this giving of men to the Son, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has a special interest. Thereby they are made His charge. And He is the captain of their salvation to bring these sons of electing grace to eternal glory (Heb. 2:10).

Of the ends of this giving of men thus to Christ by the Father, it is a glorious act of God, and it is on glorious designs and ends. Of some of these from the Word, I would speak in these four particulars:

First, herein is a most clear display of absolute sovereignty in Jehovah. The glorious God is most zealous for the glory of this name of His sovereignty, as being what most nearly concerns the glory of His Godhead. And proud, vain men are most averse to owning it. The apostle Paul is of this same doctrine in Romans 9 and builds it on this same foundation. In verses 11–19, he states two strong objections against it, as carnal minds are fertile in vain arguments against divine counsels. And, oh, that all advocates for them had been satisfied with Paul's answers that are the only and strongest bulwarks of the Holy Ghost about this doctrine!

The first objection is in verse 14: "Is there unrighteousness with God?" Did God love Jacob and hate Esau before they either had done good or evil (vv. 11–13)? Where is the righteousness of this? Jacob had done no good to deserve love, and Esau had done no evil to deserve hatred.

How does the apostle answer it? By an abhorrence of the charge: "God forbid!" If we cannot see into the depth of God's counsels, let us still justify God, as in Jeremiah 12:1, and admire and adore the depth we cannot fathom (Rom. 11:33).

He answers with a reason taken from God's old saying to Moses (Rom. 9:15). Now, if Paul had been of some men's minds, he would have answered that God foresaw that though Jacob had done no good when he was in the womb, yet He saw that in time he would be a holy man, a wrestler with God, and a great believer. And therefore God loved him, and therefore there was no unrighteousness with God. As for Esau, Paul would have said that God foresaw that he would prove to be a profane man, would sell his birthright for a mess of

pottage, grieve the hearts of his godly father and mother by his marriages, and hate to the death his godly brother Jacob. And therefore God hated Esau, and therefore there was no unrighteousness with God. But Paul, instead of hinting anything like this, gives an answer inconsistent with and subversive of this notion. Verse 15: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." See the apostle's inference from and application of this word of God in verse 16: "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." And in the case of reprobate Pharaoh, seen in verse 17, he again infers in verse 18: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will, he hardeneth." He plainly lays the sovereign will and pleasure of God as the fixed foundation of the counsels of God about men's eternal state.

The second objection is in verse 19: "Thou wilt say then unto me, 'Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?'" This is a plausible, strong objection in every natural man's heart.

How does the apostle answer it? Verse 20: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" He calls it in verse 19 a saying to Paul, but here in verse 20 he calls it a replying against God. But is challenging the objector an answer to the objection? Yes, in part it is, as if Paul had said, "Do you know neither God nor yourself, that you cavil against His will and counsels?" Thus Elihu answered Job: "Behold, in this thou art not just. I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not account [or, "He answers not"] of any of his matters" (Job 33:12–13). And after Paul had checked the arrogance of the objector, he again lays the same ground of God's absolute sovereignty in verses 20–33, with many Scriptures brought to the same purpose.

The second end of God giving men to Jesus Christ is to glorify the free, infinite, and everlasting love to them that He gives. So it is in Ephesians 1:4–6. The love of the Father shines in giving us to Christ to be redeemed. The love of the Son shines in His receiving us. And these two loves (if I may call them so) do not eclipse but enlighten one another and make a glorious light to the eye of a believer. Election is always in love and from it, or with it. And this love has no cause but what is in the heart of the lover. “He loves because he loves” (Deut. 7:7–8). It had no beginning; it has no intermission; and it will have no ending. It is from everlasting to everlasting (Ps. 103:17). It is an everlasting love. Therefore, He draws with loving kindness, or extended loving kindness (Jer. 31:3). And He never stops drawing us thus till He has crowned us with loving kindness and tender mercies (Ps. 103:4). Here this blessed love shines in giving men to Christ, and here believers should behold it.

A third end of God the Father giving men to His Son is so that there may be a glorious and sure salvation brought about for them who are thus given in sovereign pleasure and love. If Adam had stood in that state wherein he was created (I do not know if it is allowable to wish that it had been so), it would have been but a poor, low happiness that he would have conveyed to his posterity compared with what comes by the second Adam to His offspring. That it was uncertain is evident by the issue. The first Adam was entrusted with his own and all his natural posterity's happiness with this charge: “So will it fare with you and all your posterity, as your behavior is.” In this commanded behavior, he failed, fell himself, and dragged us all with him into the same pit of sin and misery. But now it has pleased the Father to lodge the happiness of His elect in His Son's hand, where it is more sure and more glorious than the former was.

This giving men to the Son is to raise up a great name of glory and honor to Jesus Christ. Great is His glory in being the repairer of this great breach that sin made between God and man. This the apostle says in Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." More of this later when we come to speak of Christ's glory in this text. We will now only mention a little of Christ's concern in those who are given to Him.

All the redeemed and all their concerns for their salvation are lodged in Christ's hands, and in His only. Their persons and everything that pertains to them are given to Him.

All the impediments of their salvation are laid on Christ, so that by Him they may be removed. These are many and great, as you know. There is sin, the law with its curse for sin, the holy justice and wrath of God, and the power of hell and death. When a sinner's eyes are opened to see those impediments of salvation, it is no wonder if he says with the disciples, "Who then can be saved?" All these impediments Christ removed. But how? By taking them on Himself and removing them out of our way. For all the impediments of our salvation were impediments laid in Christ's way to His glory. He could not enter into His own glory till He had removed the impediments of the elect's salvation. There could be no impediments in Christ's way to His glory without His relationship to His people. As He was the Son of God, eternal glory was His natural right and possession. But when He comes to be surety and mediator, He must first suffer before He enters into His glory (Luke 24:26, 46). He must purge our sins by Himself (Heb. 1:3). He must put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (9:26). He must through death destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (2:14). He must be made under the law so that He may redeem them who were under the law (Gal. 4:4-5). "He

redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). He must make an entrance to the holiest of all for us by His blood. He must consecrate the way for us by His flesh (Heb. 10:19–20). He must enter into the holy place by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12). Thus, by our Lord Jesus Christ, all the gates of hell are shut on the elect, and none can open them. And all the gates of heaven are opened, and none can shut them on them who are given to Christ.

All the parts and pieces of salvation are in Christ's hand and come to us by Him. The acceptance of our persons is in and through this Beloved (Eph. 1:6). The forgiveness of our sins is through His blood (Eph. 1:7). Our quickening when dead in sins, our rising and sitting in heavenly places is with Christ and in Him (Eph. 2:4–6). Our title and right to heaven is singly owing to Him. What right does a sinner have to heaven? No more and no other than he has to Jesus Christ. If he is united to Christ by faith in Him, he is an heir of God, an heir of glory, and a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Nay, our sanctification, which is glory begun (2 Cor. 3:18), is but a beam of this sun of righteousness darted into our souls. Unless Christ had been made sanctification to us, there would never have been a sanctified man or woman in the world.

The actual possession of the kingdom is owing to Jesus Christ. We have a right to it in Him. Our charter for it is sealed by His blood. We have the earnest of it by His Spirit. We are kept to it, and it kept for us, by His power. And at last we receive it out of His own hand. "I give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28). It is too great and too good a gift to be given by any but blessed Jesus.

Application: Learn to see with wonder and adoration the high spring of the well of life and salvation for poor men. It is in

the Father giving men to the Son. Nothing is before it, and all the blessings of grace and glory flow from it. From hence is the creating of the world, so that these men might be born in it. From hence came His permitting and ordering of Adam's fall, so that the redeemer might be needful. From this Christ came into the world to redeem them. From this came the gospel as a light to seek those lost ones. From this comes the Spirit to make the gospel effectual, so that they who are ordained to eternal life may believe (Acts 13:48).

Labor to see your own concern in this giving to the Son. It is but a deep and dangerous speculation without this care. Many poor questions are in people's heads. And many poor ways of answering are in men's hearts. Some would know if they have any grace and true holiness. Others go farther, and they would know if they have faith, the spring of holiness. Some would know their title and right to heaven. There is an allowed room and place for these inquiries, and the like. But how few, even among true Christians, ask this question: Was I given by the Father to the Son? It is a question that may be made and may be answered to satisfaction. Christ tells His disciples it in Luke 10:20. Paul knew it (1 Thess. 5:9). Peter bids us give diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). But because there is some difficulty and danger in managing this inquiry, I will offer a few pieces of advice about it:

1. Lay it down as a fixed persuasion in your heart that satisfaction in this matter would be of great advantage to your souls. This would bring you to the top of the mount. As Moses on the top of Pisgah saw the earthly Canaan, so you, from the sight of your electing grace, may find it both an easy and a comforting thing to view all the streams of grace and mercy toward you. You would then see from where they spring and where they run.

This sight would keep you low and humble. The most humbling thought is this: I was, of mere sovereign grace, given by the Father to the Son. A false pretender to this blessing may be proud, but the true believer of it is always humbled by it. From where is it that there is so much pride among Christians? Why are they puffed up so soon and so much? Is it not always on account of what they do, are, or receive? Here is a blessing, where none of those puffing-up things are. It is a blessing that has no sort of respect to what we are, have, or do.

The knowledge of this blessing of electing love is of great use in extreme trials. We are called to lay our account with them. The Lord brings them on us, and we need all the armor of God against them (Eph. 6:11). The hope of salvation is a helmet in the evil day (1 Thess. 5:8–9). And the knowledge that we are appointed to salvation is the ground of this hope. Christ comforts the hearts of His people with this: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Christ tells Ananias that Paul was a chosen vessel who was to do and suffer much for His name (Acts 9:15–16). Ananias tells it to Paul, and Paul repeats it in the midst of his sufferings in a great assembly (Acts 22:14–15).

2. For as great advantages as this knowledge has in it, do not think, do not attempt to attain it by a sudden leap. You must ascend to it by degrees. It was a good saying, I think, of the blessed martyr John Bradford: “No man should go to the university of predestination till he is well trained in the grammar school of faith and repentance.” If this or the like method is neglected, no good can ensue, but much hurt will. God’s decrees are in some way like the mount that must not be touched; but you must first worship at a distance and then make a reverent and awe-filled approach. This is not only holy ground, but it is unsearchable by us. Now know that though electing love has no cause or ground for it without God

Himself, yet it has great and noble fruits. And in the decree of the end of salvation, there is a wise design of fit means and ways to compass this end: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). And 1 Peter 1:2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." There is a work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope whereby the election of God may be known (1 Thess. 1:3–4). You must not leap immediately up to the purpose of God, but climb up thereto by the steps He has prescribed in His revealed will.

3. You must be at great pains about this. This knowledge of your own concern in this giving to the Son is not easily acquired; wherefore the apostle says in 2 Peter 1:10, "Give diligence [and, verse 5, "Give all diligence"] to make your calling and election sure." God's part in your calling and election is sure enough and needs none of your labor to make it more sure. But to make it sure to yourselves and to make the knowledge thereof sure and clear to you, diligence is needful, and diligence will do it. Alas! Who bestows any diligence about this greatest concern? Search out the fruits and marks of election, and when you find any of them, then, and not before, climb up this high tree of the Father giving you to Jesus Christ.

4. Do not be discouraged if it does not yet appear to you that you were given by the Father to the Son. It may be, though you do not see it. Many of the given do not know it for a long time. Yea, I see no great danger in saying that not a few of those given to the Son may be in darkness, doubts, and fears about it till the last and brightest day declares it, and till the last sentence proclaims, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," blessed by this giving. "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you

from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). It is wisely ordered by the Lord that all who are given to the Son do not (though they should endeavor it) know that they were given, and that those who are not given cannot know it—that the book of life is not always legible to all believers, and that the book of death cannot be read by any unbeliever. It would be a miserable world if the reprobate could be as sure of their being passed by as the elect may be of their being chosen to salvation. If therefore any of you are in the dark about your own election, do not be discouraged. It may be, though you do not know it. And to such discouraged souls I would speak a few words.

Objection: Some of you may say that this is strange doctrine.

Answer: I am sorry that this doctrine is so rarely taught. And I am sure that it is not only the doctrine of Christ and His apostles, but that the work of the gospel in conversion of sinners and in the edification, growth, and holiness of saints prospered more when such doctrine was more commonly taught than now. You souls who are discouraged about this doctrine, answer these questions:

1. Can you hear of this giving of some by the Father to the Son and bless the giver (the Father) and the receiver (the Son) and count all the given as a happy remnant? A heart grumbling and replying against this sovereign grace of God I dare not say is a sure token of one who is not given, but it is surely a very bad thing. But, on the contrary, it is a hopeful sign of an interest in this great blessing when a poor creature, in his deepest distress and fears about his own salvation, has a high value for electing love and reckons them blessed indeed who are sharers thereof. He admires and adores this design, even when doubtful of his own interest therein.

2. Can you be sure that you were not given to the Son? No, surely. God has not revealed it, nor will He reveal it. Your heart is blind and deceitful; do not trust it. Satan knows it and is a liar, especially when he pretends to teach you God's secret purposes. The devil was never in God's counsel—why should you regard his whispers? He is a reprobate, condemned spirit, raging against God; and he strives to infuse his own spirit and temper into sinners. Say then, "If I do not know that I was given to the Son, I cannot know, and I should not conclude, and none can prove that I was not given to Him."

3. Is Christ as God's gift precious to you (1 Peter 2:6–8)? Then it is sure that you were given to Christ. It is a deep secret who are given by the Father to the Son. But it is an open, plain truth that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). How do you like Him? How do you esteem and love Him? Say then, "Although I am not sure that I was given to Christ, I am sure that Christ has come as a savior, just such a one as I need."

4. Can you give yourselves to Jesus Christ to be saved by Him? Then you were given to Him to be redeemed by Him. Your faith on Him speaks of your election in Him. True faith is the faith of God's elect (Titus 1:1). Why are they so called? It is because all (and only) God's elect get it and have it, and because election may be known by it, because faith flows from electing love and should lead the believer to this love as its origin and spring. Answer then, you who do not know that you were given to Christ by the Father: Do you give yourself to Christ? Do you see that you had no one in heaven or earth to entrust your soul to but Christ? Have you so seen Him in His skill and good will to save lost sinners that you have, daily do, and resolve still to bring, lay, and leave your perishing soul with Jesus Christ, as on Him who speaks in righteousness and is mighty to save (Isa. 63)? Then you were given to Jesus Christ.

Go on in trusting Him and in living by faith on Him. And He will make you know that He loved you and gave Himself for you (Gal. 2:20). And if you know that He gave Himself for you in time, conclude that you were given to Him by the Father from eternity, and that you will be with Him where He is to eternity.

CHAPTER 3

Christ Knows Those Who Are Given to Him

Peter gives a good testimony to Jesus Christ in John 6:68: “Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Christ Himself is eternal life (1 John 1:2). And in this text we have Him who was and is essential, eternal life praying for and willing to communicate eternal life to all His people.

The first thing I took up in the matter of Christ’s prayer in this verse was the name and description of those He prays for: “they whom thou hast given me.” From this part of the verse, I named three doctrines and spoke of the first in the last sermon. I now come to the second doctrine.

Christ knows them all particularly, fully, and exactly. Christ does not here pray, as we ought, for the elect on the general truth revealed in the Word that there is a body of the elect, though we do not know who they are. But Christ has them all now in His eye and heart particularly. Paul was in His eye, as well as all who were to believe on Him through grace. Why are we commanded to pray for all men, though Christ did not (John 17:9–10)? Because we do not know particularly who are the elect, but Christ did.

On this truth I would offer a few things in proof of it and then apply it. For this doctrine looks like a deep and barren point, yet it is profitable.

For proof that the elect are known to Jesus Christ, let us see what He Himself says of it in John 10. In that parable in verse 3, "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." You will never believe till Christ call you by name. In the doctrine taught by Him on the parable in verse 14, "I am the good shepherd [Oh, how well it becomes Christ to commend Himself! You will never love Him till Christ Himself commends Himself to you], and know my sheep." And verse 27: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Verse 28: "And I give unto them eternal life." Well does Christ know to whom He gives eternal life. And woe to them to whom He will say, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). Little better are those words in John 10:26: "But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep." Christ knew who were His sheep and who not, who were gathered into His fold and who were yet straying as lost sheep on the mountains. Verse 16: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice."

The grounds of this truth are that Christ, as God, knows all things. And therefore He knows who are given to Him. It is a pity that, when the Godhead of the Son shines so very brightly in the New Testament, any should doubt and deny it. And it is a pity also that the deniers of this rock of the church of Christ should not renounce the name of Christians, or that any true Christian should afford this honorable name to such apostates. Peter, when asked by his master about his love for Him in John 21:17, answered by a humble appeal to Him as all-knowing. He who knows all things must know who were given to Him by the Father.

The Son of God was a concerned party in this transaction. As the Father was the giver of the elect, so the Son was the receiver of them. Will any say that the Father did not know whom He gave, when His foreknowledge is so expressly told

in Romans 8:29? It is equally absurd to say that the Son did not know whom He received. And as the Father's giving was of particular, distinct, and distinguishable persons, so was the Son's receiving of such persons. Hence our Lord says of them in this prayer in verses 9 and 10, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." This transaction between the Father and Son was a business as of high sovereignty about mankind and of infinite love to the given, and so was it wrought in infinite wisdom. The manifold wisdom of God is in this eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:9–11). It is a high reflection on all the glory of God in this transaction to say that the Father did not know particularly whom He gave to the Son, or that the Son did not know who were given to Him.

Christ's knowing who were given to Him is the ground of His undertaking and dispatching the work of redemption. This work He undertook in love; and this love is still acted on persons (Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5). These persons must be known to Christ if they are so beloved by Him.

It is this knowledge in Christ that is the ground of Christ's patience and pains with the elect. If any will say that Christ, in dying, designed no more for Peter than for Judas (God forgive them and open their eyes), I hope they will not say that Christ did no more for Peter than for Judas. The visible difference that is between Christ's way of dealing with men flows from His knowing them who are given to Him. There are some with whom Christ deals in and by the gospel. And on their first refusal, He leaves them, and Christ and they never meet till the last day. He waits a long time for others, and yet He leaves them at last. But there are some with whom Christ deals and, though they refuse Him again and again, yet He will never leave them till He has gained their hearts and saved them.

Paul thought that he was the rarest instance of this: "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first [in me, the chief sinner] Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:16). Yet we may say that there are some in heaven and some on earth who have been as great patterns as Paul—though they were not so filled with the Holy Ghost as he, nor was Christ's grace in calling them so set on a candlestick for all ages, as it was in his case. It may be that Paul never heard Christ preach, nor saw His face, though he was brought up at Jerusalem in Christ's time (Acts 22:3; 26:4). It is likely that he heard no more of Him than by the common report and by the slanders of the Pharisees, Christ's constant enemies. It was but blind zeal for the law that locked him up in unbelief and made him hate Christ's name and people. But how many have there been since Paul who have lived long under the light of the gospel, whom the Lord has striven long with, and they have as long striven against Him, whom yet He has subdued at last! Blessed be His name. And may such instances be multiplied to His praise. This way is taken by Christ with some, according to His charge from His Father: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39).

This knowing of those who are given to Him is the ground of the confidence of Christ as mediator, as to the success of His work of both His work of redemption of them by His blood and of the work of His Spirit in applying it to the souls and consciences of the redeemed. So He proclaims it: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37). "I am sure," He would say, "of every one of them, sooner or later." As long as there is one given who has not yet come to Christ, there is one yet to believe on Him. Christ might well promise this to

Himself, for the Father had promised it: “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:10–11).

The latter part of John 6:37 is Christ’s promise to us: “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Why do none but the given come to Christ? Because none can come unless they are drawn by the Father (John 6:44–45). Behold this blessed order: The Father gives the elect to His Son to be redeemed. The Son, in love, lays down His life for them and redeems them. The Father draws them to Christ and makes them believers. Christ receives them as given, redeemed, and drawn. And thus are they saved. Christ knows them well, and therefore He welcomes them.

Application: The truth that Christ knows all who are given to Him should feed and strengthen our faith, as to all the elect. Christ knows them; therefore, they will be saved. The apostle in 2 Timothy 2:18–19 brings this in as a ground of faith, even when damnable errors creep in and “overthrow the faith of some; nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” The Lord-giver knows who are His and whom He gives. And the Lord-receiver knows who are His and whom He receives. The Lord knows better who are His than the devil knows who are his—for many whom the devil had as his (as all natural men are, according to Eph. 2:2–3) and thought he was sure of as being his have been rescued by the Lord. But never did the devil prevail fully against any who are Christ’s.

It is a happy parenthesis in Matthew 24:24, when our Lord is warning of dangerous times by false christs and of their great success in deceiving. He says that “they shall deceive [if it were possible] the very elect.” There are two cases of the elect

that this truth should strengthen our faith in. First, as to the uncalled elect. Many of them are yet uncalled and lying in the common pit of nature, but they will be called. The gospel will be taken away from that place where none such are. All God's pains in the gospel are taken for the elect's sakes, as Paul's pains were (2 Tim. 2:10). Some are converted already, and many more are to be. Second, in case of backsliding and apostasy—a sad, but not very rare case. Some who have given great witness of the truth of the grace of God in them have, through the power of corruption, the prevalence of temptation, and the Lord leaving them, fallen foully and lain long. Yet, if they are Christ's, His mark is on them, and they will be recovered.

Believers from this truth have grounds of strong consolation in both praising and in praying. The immutability of His counsel is declared so “that we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:17–18). Have you fled for refuge to Jesus Christ? Do you know it? Has the Lord revealed to you that you have sought your only refuge in the shadow of Christ's wings? Then how you should rejoice and give thanks for your election! Thus the apostle did usually (Eph. 1:3–4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

I dare not say that no believer can be heartily thankful for Christ's grace before he fully and surely knows its highest spring. But I am sure that that believer praises best who knows best that he was given to the Son. The receivings of the glorified will be the greatest. Their praises will be the highest, and their knowledge of eternal love as the spring of all their grace and glory will be the clearest. And as this raises praise, so it raises mighty prayer. Our Lord prays for His people under this name: “thine and mine” (John 17:9–10). David prays for himself under this name: “I am thine, save me” (Ps. 119:94). The more clear your knowledge is of your interest in God and in His love, the more mighty will your pleadings with Him be.

CHAPTER 4

Christ's Heart Is Set on the Bliss of All Whom the Father Has Given Him

*T*his doctrine that Christ's heart is set on the bliss of all whom the Father has given Him He expresses in this desire. On this point I would, first, give some proofs of this truth and, second, show from where this heartfelt concern for their bliss flows.

There are five proofs of the truth that Christ's heart is set on the bliss and eternal salvation of His people:

1. Christ's covenanting for them proves this. In that day (if a day may be talked of in eternity—but we are creatures of time and have no fit words for eternity) when this blessed company was given by the Father to the Son, the Son undertook to do all things needful to bring them to eternal glory. He undertook and promised to take on Himself their nature and in that nature to bear their sins and, by the sacrifice of that nature for their sins, to make an expiation of their sins. In a word, He promised to do all He was required to do, and He did all He promised to the Father for the salvation of His people. Whenever we look to this treaty, we must gather that surely the Son of God had a great mind to the happiness of His people.

2. Christ's cheerfully laying down His life for their redemption proves how His heart was set on their salvation. It was His errand in coming into the world: "I am come that they

might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Believers get a greater, higher, and nobler life by the second Adam than they lost by the first Adam. This is the meaning of that “much more” twice mentioned by the apostle when comparing these two heads (Rom. 5:15, 17). But how does Christ give this life and His people receive it? By His death. He laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:11, 15). “Therefore his Father loved him” (v. 17). And thereby He proved His love for the salvation of His people (John 15:13).

3. He proves His love for their salvation by His sealing and confirming the covenant, the charter of their salvation, with His own blood (cf. Gal. 3:15–17 with Heb. 9:15–17). It is called “the blood of the everlasting covenant” in Hebrews 13:20. Christ’s blood was not only redeeming and purchasing blood, a just and full price for both the heirs and the inheritance, but it was sealing blood, a confirming of that covenant in and by which the inheritance was secured to the heirs and the heirs secured for their inheritance. Alas! Many have the Bible and use it but little. And many use it amiss because they do not know its right name. It is well and warrantably from its contents called in its title page, in all languages and translations, “The Old and New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” But how few, in reading this title, mind the use and virtue of the blood of Jesus that turned the covenant of God’s grace into the testament of Christ and thereby sealed and confirmed all the good words and good things in that covenant?

It was a happy word we find in the *Book of Martyrs* that some in the dawning of the light of the gospel in this land used in calling the New Testament (a great rarity in those days), “The blood of Christ.” You never rightly read the gospel, nor do you understand the design of it, nor rightly believe one promise in it till in your heart you can say, “This gospel is the only charter of my salvation, sealed with the blood of my only Savior.” If any

are for another savior than Christ and for another security and charter of salvation than His thus sealed testament, it must be at their eternal peril. Let them try and perish. For as God is true, perish they will, even all who take this course (Acts 4:12).

4. Christ proves His love for His people's salvation by His intercession for them, of which this chapter is a great instance, and whereof we have so much spoken in Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; and 1 John 2:1. This is His business in heaven. By this He prepares their place for them (John 14:2-3), and on it He assures them of their possessing it.

5. Christ gives His Spirit to His people to prove His concern about their salvation. We may allude to Isaiah 5:4: "What could have been done more?" He covenanted with the Father from eternity about their salvation. He bought it for them, and them for it, in the fullness of time. The day of Christ's redeeming His people was the flower of time, the greatest and most noble thing done since God set the clock of time going; for His glorious return is to be at the end of time. He turned the covenant of their salvation into a testament by His blood and did in that testament leave all the grace and glory bought by His blood as a legacy to His people. When He had done this, He went to heaven with His blood (Heb. 9:12), so that it might speak before God (Heb. 12:24) for all blessings to His people. And till they get full possession of glory, He gives to them His Spirit. All who are His have His Spirit as surely as it is that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9, 15; Gal. 4:6).

This gift of the Spirit is a marvelous gift. None can know it but they who receive it: "The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). This

gift is always given in mere love and grace and is a sure proof of God's special love. This gift of the Spirit is an earnest of heaven. God has sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). And in Ephesians 1:13–14, He is called "that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." He is called "the firstfruits of the Spirit" in Romans 8:23. This gift is an enriching gift. How great things He does in and on the man! How much good He brings along with Himself! He reveals Christ to the soul (John 16:14–15), draws the soul to Christ, unites him with Christ, dwells in the believer, and seals him to the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). He comforts him till that day comes. Hence He is called "the Comforter" by our Lord in John 14:16; 15:26; and 16:7. Yet for all the richness of this gift of the Spirit, this you must know: that as soon as a man receives this gift, he sees and finds himself to be a poor, empty, and needy creature. When this eye salve of Christ anoints a man's eyes, then he sees what he did not see before: that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17–18). Therefore, the Spirit of Christ in believers is a spirit of grace and of supplications (Zech. 12:10), a spirit of adoption crying, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). If no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:3), surely no man can call the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "Abba, Father," but by the Holy Ghost. The first word of the new creature is "Abba." But many believers live long before they can say "Abba" confidently. They do not consider duly that as this relation is granted by the Lord, so it should be pleaded by believers without any regard to worth in us, but only to His own free grace and love in Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of Christ in believers is a spirit of prayer, a spirit of begging in a child at its heavenly Father's door. The believer

finds manifold daily wants. He knows none can relieve and supply his wants but his God by Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:19). He has an instinct and some ability by the Spirit to beg and wait. The operation of the Spirit in believers, the communion of the Holy Ghost, is a great mystery. He works more on them than they feel and know. They feel more than they can express in words. And they express more than any who have not received the same Spirit of faith can understand. But this we know: that whenever the Spirit of Christ applies His grace and power to the heart of a sinner, there is something wrought that day that will last to eternity. There is, by this finger of God, that impression made on the soul and that mark left on it that will never wear out and that sin and Satan will never be able to blot out again. But it will remain and grow and be seen at the coming of Christ at the last day (Phil. 1:6).

Question: Why is Christ's heart so set on His people's glory in heaven?

Answer: Because of His near interest in them. His interest in His church and people is greater and closer than we can conceive. The Holy Ghost uses many similitudes to help our thoughts. Of them, I would name only two of the plainest and most common. One is that of Christ being the head and the church His body and members (Eph. 1:22–23; 4:15–16; Col. 2:19). Another is the marriage union of man and wife, and especially of the first married couple, Adam and Eve, our first parents (Eph. 5:25–32). And you may well think that it was a fit match. When the first man was made, God took a part of this man's body and made of it a woman to be a wife to him. So is the church, Christ's bride, taken out of Christ's side—not in a sleep (as it was with the first Adam in Gen. 2:21–22), but in and by His death. As Eve was made a most excellent woman for both the endowments of body and mind, so Adam

in innocence doubtless loved her perfectly. She was of him, from him, for him, and made to be with him. All this is but a shadow of the church, Christ's bride. The first Adam's love for his rare wife was nothing compared to Christ's love for His bride. Yea, Christ is not only the head of the body and the husband thereof, but Christ is to the church as our souls are to our bodies (1 Cor. 6:17). All the life, power, and ability of our bodies naturally flows from the soul dwelling in it. If the soul is ever so happy (as the spirits of just men made perfect are), yet it has a longing in its glorified state for its reunion with the body. So Christ, the quickening Spirit (as Paul calls Him in 1 Cor. 15:45), desires to have His glorified body with Him where He is.

Christ is much concerned about glory to His people because of His engagements for and to His people. There is a triple engagement that Christ lies under for bringing His people to heaven:

First, there is the command of His Father, and this commandment is eternal life (John 6:38–40). This Christ knew and revealed (John 12:49–50).

Second, there is His promise to His Father in the everlasting covenant.

Third, there is His promise to us in the gospel (1 John 2:25). He has engaged to His Father that none who are given to Him will ever perish. And He has promised us often and plainly in the gospel that none who believe on Him will ever be ashamed. And woefully would a believer in Christ be ashamed if he came short of heaven.

The greatness of Christ's love for His people makes Him so concerned about their complete salvation. Christ's love is so great that it passes knowledge, and some Christians' love for Christ is so weak that it is hardly seen and felt by them. Not everyone can give Peter's answer to Christ's question, "Lord,

thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:15–17). Now we know concerning love that it naturally lies in wishing well to the beloved. Does Christ love His people? How can He but wish them well? And how can He wish them better than to be with Him where He is?

Application: Is Jesus Christ so concerned for the glory and blessedness of His people? Then see how sweetly we come to heaven. It is by Christ's blessed will, His blood paying the price and giving us the right and title to glory, and His heart and good will giving possession of it. Thus we are saved, both surely and sweetly.

How firmly we should believe on Jesus Christ and trust Him for salvation! It is no small reproach to Him that is so often done by unbelief and doubting that are so usual to some Christians. Christ minds our salvation heartily, and we believe feebly. He says, "I will have them with Me where I am." And we often say, "Lord, Thou wilt not bring me where Thou art." Is it not sinful in us and dishonorable to Christ for us to be saying, "Thou wilt not," when He is saying, "I will"? We should trust our salvation on Jesus Christ, not only on Him who alone can save and who is able to save perfectly, but on Him who has more good will to save than we can have willingness to be saved by Him. None would ever have been saved by Him, none would ever have been brought to heaven unless Christ had possessed more willingness to bring them there than they had to be led there by Him. "He must in all things have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18), and in this especially. Unbelief is in all doubtings of Christ's good will to save. Note the leper's faith in Matthew 8:2: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." No perishing sinner can be quite excused who will put an "if" on Christ's willingness to save one who employs Him

in His office of saving, wherein His glory is so concerned, and His heart so deeply engaged.

We should give Him the glory that is due to Him. It robs Christ of His glory to believe that the willingness to be saved is in the sinner. For Christ's good will to save is the cause of any desire of salvation in any. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Ps. 110:3). When He has a mind to save, He works this willingness in men to be saved by Him. And they will own it to proceed from His willingness when they become strong believers, and they will see it and know it perfectly when they get full salvation.

How strongly should believers love the Lord Jesus Christ! Is His heart so set on your heaven? How filled with love for Him ought your heart to be! Woe to them who do not love Him (1 Cor. 16:22). And in no better case are they who think they love Him enough, and such as love anything as well, and who do not hate all things in comparison with Him (Luke 14:26). To love Christ as you do your life will not be enough. It is higher and greater love that Christ deserves and requires, and it is that only that He will accept.

How patiently and quietly should we submit to Christ's conducting and guiding us in the way to heaven! Is His heart set on bringing you there? Let Him guide you in the way as He pleases. Does He say peremptorily, "I will have them with me where I am"? Let Him guide you as He will while you are in the world. When a believer is satisfied by faith that Christ wills glory to him in the end, he will find it easy to submit to Christ's conduct along the way. He may indeed, in some trials of his faith, be put to say, "This is a dark path I am led to walk in," but faith will say, "But I am in Christ's hand. This is His way of leading me."

Every step that Christ leads the believing traveler in must lead to heaven. He best knows the way. And the wisdom of

the Christian lies in following Christ wherever He goes and however He leads him. Though you do not see heaven, the end; though you do not know the path He leads you in; though the path, to you, looks more like the way to hell than to heaven—yet if Christ leads you, and if you are in His hand, it is impossible but that Christ your guide will bring you to heaven as your home.

CHAPTER 5

The Blessing for Which Christ Prays

*T*his chapter contains the best part of the gospel. If the gospel is good news from heaven (as surely it is), the best part of that good news is what the Savior sends up to heaven in this prayer. And what He sends up in this prayer, He brought down from heaven from His Father (John 6:38). I have made some entrance on verse 24, the sweetest of this prayer, if comparison may be made, where every word is most sweet and excellent. I have spoken to the manner of Christ's praying, "I will." The manner is singular, and the matter is most excellent. The manner of Christ's praying here is more like a commander than a supplicant. What specialties there were in the person who made it and in the season that drew forth these high words, you have already heard.

Our Lord not only describes those for whom He prayed, but expressly denies that He prayed for anyone besides them. Verses 9 and 10: "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." From this description of those for whom Christ prayed in this verse and in other parts of this chapter, I have spoken about in these three doctrinal points:

1. There is a select, determinate company of men who were given by the Father to the Son to be redeemed and saved by Him.
2. This company was particularly and exactly known by Jesus Christ.
3. Christ's heart was fixed and resolved on the eternal salvation of all those who were given to Him. And He expresses it highly in this "I will."

The next thing in the matter of Christ's prayer follows, and that is the blessing He prays for regarding them: "that they also may be with me where I am." There are three things here that I would first take notice of and explain, and then speak to the words themselves, and then give you from them the doctrines which I intend to insist more largely on.

The first thing I take notice of is this "also," and what its significance is; second, what it is to be with Christ, as distinct from other biblical words about Christ and His people; and, third, what it is to be with Christ where He is.

Concerning this word "also," it does not in the least hint that there are any whom He desires may be with Him where He is besides those who were given to Him. But it is only His praying for another and greater blessing to them who were given to Him. Our Lord had prayed for many and great things for them before in this chapter and prayer. He had prayed that His Father would keep them, would sanctify them, and would make them all one in the Father and in the Son. But, our Lord is saying, "There is something more than all this I would have for them. I would have them to be with Me where I am."

Hence observe that nothing short of and nothing less than heaven and eternal glory in it stints and limits Christ's heart and prayers for His people. For all He has done for them, for all He has given to them (and there is a great deal of both),

there is still this “also” in His heart for them. “I will that they also may be with Me where I am. I will not only go where they are, but I will also have them where I am.” Nothing less than everlasting blessedness to His people limits Christ’s will and prayers for them. He prays for everything for them, and for this “also.”

When the apostle is speaking to believers in Hebrews 6:4–9, he gives a very gracious insinuation after a most fearful alarm. He had spoken some of the most terrible words in the Scripture, on a supposition of an utter apostasy from Christianity after great attainments: if “such as have been enlightened... do fall away.” Their case is desperate. They are soil that “brings forth nothing but briars and thorns, are near unto cursing, and their end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” All the grace that Christ gives and all the grace that believers receive and act on in this life are but things that accompany salvation, that pertain to the state of salvation, and prepare us for the full enjoyment of salvation in heaven.

There are several sorts of gifts that Christ bestows and believers receive in this life that pertain to salvation:

The first is their right and title to heaven, and that is Christ Himself, possessed by faith, dwelling in their hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The day that Christ entered into their hearts, the hope of glory began to dawn. And the deeper He enters into the heart of any, the greater is the hope, so as to make the believer “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

The Lord also gives a fitness for heaven. And that is wrought by His Spirit and grace on His people: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). This fitness for partaking is inseparable from a right and title to glory, at

least so far that no believer can have a comfortable view of his right without some experience of his fitness for enjoying the inheritance. This same apostle said to this same purpose in 2 Corinthians 5:5: “Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God; who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

There is the earnest of the inheritance that Christ gives and Christians receive sometimes (Eph. 1:13–14). This pertains to glory. It is like the first fruits of that good land frequently spoken of in the Word and might be more often tasted by believers were it not for their laziness and unbelief when they want it and their bad guiding of it when at any time they enjoy a little of it.

Application: Imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in praying for yourselves. Imitate Him in all your askings. There are some spiritual blessings that believers are very desirous of. Conscience terrifies you, and then you cry, “Oh, for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and for peace with God thereby, and peace within! Oh, for victory over sin and for strength to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing!” These are all good prayers, but if all this were granted to you, remember to pray with this “also” for glory. Beg for pardon and heaven also, holiness and heaven also. Ask for any good thing that you want and that He has promised. Ask for everything, and heaven also. Let your prayers for yourselves be as large as Christ’s are for you.

Remember this “also” in all your receivings as well as in your askings. His fullness is infinite, and His bounty is great; but His people are but narrow vessels and cannot receive much. They are leaky vessels and cannot keep long what they receive. Is He kind, large-hearted, and open-handed to you? No believer would dare deny it. Bless Him, and beg for heaven also.

Jacob was a meek, lowly, humble man and said, "I am not worthy of the least [or, "I am less than the least"] of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant" (Gen. 32:10). This man looks on the least mercy as a great mountain and on himself as a little molehill. You would think that surely this humble man would not stand up to God for anything. Yet he will weep and make supplication (as in Hos. 12:3-4) and wrestle all night and say (doubtless with his eyes full of tears, and his heart full of faith and love), "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Receive all His grace and bounty with all the sense you can reach of your own unworthiness, yet still remember this "also." Do not be satisfied so as to not desire eternal glory. Make use of all experiences of His grace to you to quicken both your desire and your faith of eternal life. Let that well of water in you that Christ's grace has made spring up into everlasting life (John 4:14).

The next words that are to be explained are "with me." "I will that they be with me." It may be that some of them were with Christ when He prayed this. It may be that all eleven apostles were there. But their being with Christ in the garden was but a small matter. Christ was then at His lowest. Then the cloud was thickest and the eclipse darkest on the Son of God. It is another and better place and case that Christ prays to have them with Him in than this one.

There are three phrases concerning Christ and His people in Scripture that are good and gracious. But the one in our text is beyond them all. First, we find that His people are said to be in Him (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 5:20). Second, Christ is said to be in His people (2 Cor. 13:5). We are in Christ by faith, and Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (John 17:23; Eph. 3:17). And, third, Christ is said to be with His people. This was among the last words of Christ when going to heaven: "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt.

28:20). It is as if He had said, "Though you shall never see My face again till I bring you to heaven, yet I am with you always." But this idea of being with Christ is above all those three, for as great as they are, this one is far better (Phil. 1:23).

The next words to be explained in the text are "where I am." "That they may be with me where I am." Where was Christ when He said these words? He was either in the garden or going to it. For what is in these four chapters (chs. 14–17) was in all appearance spoken by our Lord partly at His last supper and partly immediately after it, as may be gathered from John 14:31: "Arise, let us go hence." Christ was on the earth when He said this, but surely He meant heaven in this phrase "where I am." He was just leaving the world and going to heaven, as He says, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father" (John 16:28). And in John 17:11–12, He speaks as if He were no more in the world: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." So like is this blessed prayer to the intercession of our great high priest in heaven.

Now let us consider how far this blessing of being with Christ where He dwells is above and beyond all the great things He had done for and said before to His people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ became what His people are. He became all that we are except sin. There was no difference between Christ and another man, as He came into the world, but this (and it was His glory and our salvation): that He was sinless. But all His people are "shapen in iniquity," and in sin did their mother conceive them (Ps. 51:5). Are the children partakers of flesh and blood? He also Himself likewise took part of the same. He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made "like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:14, 16–17).

Jesus Christ was not only made what His people were, but He came where they are. He came into the world, their dwelling place, and came down from heaven to the earth (John 6:38). Never did any person come down from heaven but Jesus Christ. Neither could He have come down from heaven if He had not been God, for that body He took to Himself was formed in the lowest parts of the earth (Ps. 139:15) just like the bodies of other men, though in a singular manner.

What marvelous grace and love was here, that the eternal Son of God would not only take on Himself His people's nature but would come and dwell where they dwelt, and that with delight! "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him," as the Son with the Father (see Prov. 8:30–31). It is very much like John 1:1–2: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." And verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." But see further what is said: "Rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:31). When was this? "From everlasting, or ever the earth was" (v. 23). "While as yet he had not made the earth" (v. 26). How marvelous is this expression, that God's Son, the eternal wisdom of the Father, eternally rejoiced in the habitable part of the earth when there was no earth! And that His delights were with the sons of men when there was no man nor son of man on the earth! But the habitable part of the earth, though not yet made, was the place He was to come to in order to redeem His people. And as He delighted in it from eternity, He came triumphantly into it in the fullness of time: "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). He also loved the ground His bride was to tread on, the earth where they were to live in

and where in time He was to court the heart and win the love of His people.

Our Lord went where His people deserved to go. There is a good sense of that in that harsh phrase, “He descended into hell.” It is a popish fable to imagine that after Christ died He went down into the place of the damned, either to suffer or to do anything there. His humiliation was accomplished in His dying and lying in the grave for a time. But if we take it in the sense that the stroke of divine justice that His people by sin had deserved Christ felt and bore, this is the usual voice of the gospel. The sword of justice was aroused, furbished, and drawn against Jesus Christ, and His soul pierced thereby (Zech. 13:7). He was apprehended, accused, arraigned, condemned, and executed, most unjustly and wickedly by men, but most righteously by God. Men’s putting Christ to death was the most unjust and wicked act that ever was done in the world. But the Lord Jehovah’s part in it was most just and righteous. If you have ears to hear it, this is a sure truth: Never did a condemned sinner deserve hell more justly nor was or will be sent into it more righteously than the spotless Lamb of God deserved the stroke of divine justice for the sins of His people that were laid on Him. It was indeed infinite grace and love in the Father to substitute His only begotten Son to be the Savior of sinners (1 John 4:9–10). It was infinite grace in our Lord Jesus Christ to condescend to be the sacrifice for sinners (2 Cor. 8:9). But when both are done, justice was glorified in the execution of this sacrifice (Rom. 3:25–26).

Our Lord also went where He had a mind to bring us, and that is to heaven. And yet all this is short of being with Him where He is. On this point, consider how He went and left His people: “And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into

heaven" (Luke 24:50–51). A blessed way of going hence! Our blessed Lord came into the world as the greatest blessing that it ever got. He blessed His people while He was with them, blessed them at His parting, and will return again to bless them again. The last use our Lord made of His lips on earth (into which grace was poured, says Ps. 45:2) and the last use He made of His holy hands was to bless His people. And the force and virtue of that blessing remains to this day and will remain until His return. He went away blessing and will come again blessing. He ascended with a shout (Ps. 47:5), and He will Himself descend from heaven with a shout (1 Thess. 4:16).

Consider what He went to heaven for: It was to possess heaven for us, as the forerunner (Heb. 6:20); to prepare a place for us (John 14:2–3); to make intercession for us (Heb. 9:24); to mind our concerns while we are here and to welcome us to heaven when He calls us there. You may think that it is far more comfortable for believers now to die, having Christ in heaven before them, than it was for believers to die before He came into the world, as many did; or to die, and leave Christ in the world, as it may be some did, though His saving grace is the same in all the states He was in. But now we die to be with Him (Phil. 1:23), to be where He is (John 14:2–3).

Christ is with His people even while they are here in the world. This is also a great blessing, but short of our being with Him where He is. There are two seasons when this presence of Christ with His people is known. The first is when they are at their best. When is a Christian at his best? Everyone can answer that it is when most of Christ's presence is enjoyed. The second is when they are at their worst. When is a Christian at his worst? When he is in great affliction (Isa. 43:2). Paul found this presence: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." He had no friend then and there

but Jesus Christ. “Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me” (2 Tim. 4:16–17).

When a believer is greatly tempted, then is he in a bad condition. Peter was warned of both his danger and relief (Luke 22:31–32). Paul had this exercise (2 Cor. 12:7–9) and relief under it, and he makes this use of it: “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” It is as if he had said, “I have gotten a troublesome visit from the devil, but it has been the occasion of a gracious visit from Christ. And if the one comes first and the other follows, the first is to be patiently borne and the other is to be thankfully received.”

There is also a presence of Christ with His people even in their stumblings. Though He is displeased with them for their falling, yet He has a double care about them. One is that they may not fall utterly: “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand” (Ps. 37:24). Another care of Christ about His stumbling children is to take them up again.

Last, Christ’s people have His presence with them in their dying, and it is a precious and needful blessing. Will Christ withdraw His gracious help and presence from His people when it is so very needful? Paul calls dying by a sweet name: “sleeping in Jesus” (1 Thess. 4:14). It is a dark place and a cold pillow that this sleep is taken on, but it is the sweetest sleep that the believer ever took. The body is freed from all pain and trouble and will be sweetly awakened at the last day. And till then the Spirit is not only with Him who gave it (Eccl. 12:7), but with Him who redeemed it (Ps. 31:5).

But now what Christ prays for here is far beyond all those. He was made what we are, came where we are, suffered what we deserved, went to heaven for us, and gives His presence

with us here both in life and death. But more than all is this, "I will have them where I am."

There are two points of doctrine that I would speak to from these words:

1. To be with Christ where He is—this is Christ's and the believer's heaven, that heaven that Christ gives and that the believer receives.

2. Our Lord's will is set on His people's enjoying this blessedness.

I would at this time conclude with three words of application of what has been said:

1. Behold how greatly Christ loves His people. This prayer of His for them flowed from His boundless love. He cannot be pleased without them, and they cannot be happy without Him. All the glory and bliss that Christ is possessed of does not fully satisfy Him till He has all His people with Him. His church is His body, "the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23).

2. Behold how happy His people are. Moses sang thus of old, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" (Deut. 33:29). Much more may we say so when Christ has appeared, "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

3. Learn to pray moderately for the lives of Christ's people. There are some of the godly who are very useful by their gifts and grace, and, if spared, might be of great profit to the church of Christ. Such we should be loath to lose, and their lives we may pray for. Yet it must be done moderately. Who can tell but that Christ and we are praying counter to one another? He may be saying in heaven, "Father, I will have such a one to be with Me where I am," and we be saying on earth, "Lord, we would have him to be with us where we are." We are saying,

“We cannot spare him as yet,” and Christ may be saying, “I will no longer be without him.”

It is the force of this prayer of Christ, “I will have them to be with me where I am,” that is the cause of the death of the godly. It is the force of this prayer that carries away so many of the saints in our day. Christ is saying in heaven, “I will have them where I am. They are despised in the world and badly used on the earth. So, Father, let Us have them where We are.”

Should we not pray submissively for their lives while we do not know His secret will? And should we not believingly submit to His will when He reveals it? Say, “Let them go from us, since Christ calls them to be with Him.” It is His will and their great advantage (Phil. 1:23).

CHAPTER 6

The Perfect Blessedness of the People of God

In the last sermon I raised two points of doctrine. To the first of these I will now speak:

Doctrine 1: The perfect and complete blessedness of the church and people of God stands in being with Christ where He is.

Thus Christ expresses it: “that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3). And John 12:26: “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.” The apostle sums up the blessedness of the church at the last day in this: “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). So also in 2 Corinthians 5:6–8, where it is called being present with the Lord. In Philippians 1:23, it is called being with Christ.

There are four things I would premise concerning this matter that may be of use to regulate your thoughts in hearing and studying the Word of God about heaven:

This blessedness is greatly in the dark to us. It is an enjoyment “within the veil,” as in Hebrews 6:19; and it is necessarily so. The thing we desire to be informed of is what it is to be with Christ where He is. And here everything is dark and deep. What Christ is, where He is, what it is to be with Him—who can tell or know?

When the beloved disciple who lay in Christ's bosom on earth was speaking of this bliss in 1 John 3:2, he said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." What? Did John never see Him as He is? No, they who saw Him in His humbled state saw Him under a veil that His work rendered necessary for a time. And believers who now see Him by faith do not see Him as He is, but only see Him as painted forth to us in and by the gospel, as in Galatians 3:1.

No man can know what it is to see Christ as He is till he sees Him as He is, and that will not be till He appears. To this belongs those words: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Heaven will be a blessed surprise to all who possess it. It will be found to be far beyond all the largest desires and the highest expectations that were ever raised in their hearts. So hell will be to all the heirs of wrath vastly beyond all their fearful expectations (Heb. 10:27) and the foretastes of it that are great in some wicked men. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath" (Ps. 90:11). No man can fear too much God's wrath, and no man can overrate the glory to come. In that matter, the Lord does "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

There is some light about this in the Word that helps us to know something of this bliss of being with Christ where He is. There are three special ends the Spirit of God designs in making any mention of the heavenly state and glory.

The first end is to disparage this world and all things either enjoyed or expected in it. In Psalm 17:14–15, the portion of the ungodly in this life and the blessedness of the righteous in the one to come are expressed. Our Lord compares the

two states to disparage the present and to prefer the future (Matt. 6:19–20; Luke 20:34–36). And heaven is also spoken of in comparison with and in preference above the best state of Christians in this world (2 Cor. 5:1–2; Phil. 1:23).

Second, heaven is spoken of in the Word to invite and allure men to seek it. It is “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And all should press toward this mark (Phil. 3:14). They should run so as they may obtain it (1 Cor. 9:24), as being the “one thing needful, and that good part, or portion” (Luke 10:42).

Third, the Word speaks of heaven and the glory to come to encourage the people of God and heirs of glory under all their trials and troubles in this life. If it had not been for this, the Lord might have kept the glory to come among many other secret things that belong to Him (Deut. 29:29). But He knew that through much tribulation His people must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22), and that the hope of glory was a proper and needful cordial to support their hearts in all their sorrows. And be assured of it, that if ever you are in the depths of distress (and who is secured against them?), you will find that nothing short of the believing views and lively hope of glory will be able to keep you from sinking. “I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living,” said David in Psalm 27:13. And they have little of David’s spirit who think that he had no better land of the living in his eye there than the land of Canaan in which he lived as a stranger, though he was the king of it. So also Paul said of himself and of all believers in Christ, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19). For these ends the Lord speaks of heaven in the Word. And it is not to gratify the curiosity of men, but rather to check it.

The light that shines in the Word about heaven is only a light to be seen by the eye of faith. None but a believer can know rightly what the Word speaks of heaven. Unbelievers are blind and cannot see afar off (2 Peter 1:9), but the believer does see afar off (Heb. 11:13). The Word is light in itself, so that, if all the world were blind, the light of the sun would be no less in itself than it is—but it would be a light to none, for it is light to none but those who have eyes. Even so it is with the light of the Word: It shines brightly in itself, but the blind unbeliever sees nothing of it. He is both blind and veiled (2 Cor. 4:3–4).

The experience of believers in this life is a great help to them in knowing what heaven is. Now, let us join all these four together: There is no full and perfect knowing what heaven is till we are in it. There is no right knowing of heaven but in the light of the Word. That light in the Word can only be taken up and perceived by the eye of faith. And this faith is much strengthened by experience. If believers themselves did not have something of this experience and spiritual feeling, they would be much more in the dark about the glory to be enjoyed in heaven than they are now.

On this heading of spiritual experience, I will not mention any great and extraordinary enjoyments that the Lord, in His grace and wisdom, is pleased in some special seasons to indulge some of His people with. But I would only speak of some ordinary ones that lie level with the experience of all true believers and are of great advantage to them, as in many other things, so specially to raise and keep on right and high thoughts of heaven.

One of these is the revelation of Jesus Christ. This works faith; faith works union with Christ; union with Christ works communion with Him; and communion is the believer's bliss. This spring of all, the revelation of Jesus Christ, is of two sorts.

The first is the revealing of Jesus Christ in and by the gospel. All who have the gospel have this, and many have no more, and they all perish who have no more. The second is the revealing of Christ to the heart by the Spirit of Christ prayed for (Eph. 1:17). Paul got this according to Galatians 1:16: "He revealed his Son in me." It is certain that a man may often read all the New Testament and hear the most able ministers preach Christ all his days and yet remain ignorant of Jesus Christ and perish. The apostle, in Ephesians 1:17-18, joins the knowledge of Christ and the knowledge of heaven together. He prayed that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Does heaven stand in being with Christ where He is? How is it possible that a man could know what heaven is who does not know who Christ is? And none can know Christ without a revelation (Matt. 11:27), and that by the grace of the Spirit of Christ working on the heart in and by the light of the word of Christ.

The experience of believing in Jesus Christ and of living by faith in Him (Gal. 2:20) is a great help to knowing heaven. We know that there is no faith of this sort in heaven. Faith is the traveler's, the runner's looking to Jesus while the race is not yet finished (Heb. 12:2). But the glorified above look on and behold Him as we cannot distinctly apprehend, "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). And those above walk by sight, not by faith.

Question: Since there is such a difference between the two states of faith and sight, how then can the experience of believing afford any light and help to know what heaven is?

Answer. Consider that faith, though opposed to sight, yet is in its exercise a sort of spiritual seeing. So it is often expressed with respect to both the author of it and the actings of it. See how it is wrought by its author: “For 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” (2 Cor. 4:6). And as it is wrought by light, faith acts in seeing. Thus the great Old Testament believers are said by their faith to have seen the promises (that is, the blessings promised) afar off (Heb. 11:13). And it is a “looking at things not seen” (2 Cor. 4:18), that is, things not presently possessed nor fully known.

Faith is indeed described in Hebrews 11:1 to be “the evidence of things not seen.” And that description (rather than definition), as it determines what the nature of the objects of faith are as things not seen, so it plainly expresses that the act of faith is drawn forth by an evidence of these unseen things. And this evidence and demonstration is in the Word of God, which the believer sees, is persuaded by, and rests on. “I do not know,” the believer says, “all the great and good things that God has promised. But I do know that God has promised them, and though they are hidden in the promise, yet, because they are secured thereby, I will embrace them in the promise until performance comes.” As it is expressed in verse 13: “These all died in faith [they lived by faith also] not having received the promises [that is, in their accomplishment; but the promises themselves they had, for on them their faith stood], but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Here we have an account of the faith of Old Testament believers that is enough to shame and humble most New Testament believers. If we are helped at any time to set our “amen” of faith to the promise of eternal life, we

think it is a great attainment. But, alas! When do we find this seeing afar off, this persuasion, this embracing, this confessing and declaring plainly that we seek and look for this heavenly country, as in verses 10 and 14?

Consider more particularly faith in Jesus Christ. It always rises from a discovery of Him and acts in an approach to Him—hence so often faith is called “coming to Him” (John 6:37, 44–45). And in that act, faith intends and seeks eternal life in and by Him.

Consider the natural and immediate effect of faith. It is union with Christ. He draws to bring them near. They believe so as to be near Him. His drawing and their coming make it up. Is then the state of glory in being with Christ where He is? Then surely such as are united to Him by faith and have Him dwelling in their hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17) and are living daily by faith on Him (Gal. 2:20) must have a greater help to know better what it is to be with Christ where He is than any unbeliever can.

The experience of communion with Christ is a further and nearer help to believers to know what it is to be with Christ where He is. When Christ is revealed, He is believed on. When He is believed on, Christ and the believer are united. And when this union is made, communion with Him follows. This communion stands in these four things:

1. It stands in a mutual interest of the persons who are united. Communion is that whereby Christ is ours and we are His, as in Song of Solomon 2:16: “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” All that Christ is is ours for our salvation. And all that is ours is His for His glory and service. As Christ has all right to dispose of us and all that is ours because we are His, so we have a right to partake of Christ and all that is His for our salvation because He is ours. Communion is in the improvement of this

mutual right and interest. Let me name some of the blessed fruits of this interest:

1. By virtue of this interest, Christ's righteousness is a believer's for his perfect justification. The righteousness is perfect, and so is the justification. No glorified saint is more perfectly justified than Paul was on the day he was made a believer in Christ. If perfect righteousness is the ground on which a believing sinner is justified (as the gospel plainly declares), the justification must be perfect also. If justification is sought by the law and by works, the seeker of justification must still be doing and can never be done, but is indeed undoing himself, dishonoring Christ (Gal. 2:21), and frustrating the grace of God. And he is not only rendering his justification imperfect—for "the law made nothing perfect" (Heb. 7:19)—but impossible (Rom. 8:3). It is impossible for God's holy law to justify a sinner, and it never was appointed for that end, but rather to condemn (Rom. 3:19), to stop sinners' mouths and to bind them over to the judgment of God till the righteousness of God apart from the law comes on them to absolve them (Rom. 3:20–22).

2. By virtue of this interest in Christ, the believer receives the Spirit of Christ for his sanctification—not indeed for his perfect sanctification, but for the perfecting of sanctification. Christ's righteousness is never applied imperfectly, for to whomever it is imputed it is made over wholly and to all the intents and purposes for which it was wrought out and brought in by Christ. But the Spirit of Christ is imparted to believers in measure and in various degrees as He sees good: "Unto every one of us is grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7). By this potent principle, the Spirit of Christ, sanctification is even at first universal in the whole man and complete in its parts. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are

become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). He is a new man. He is born again. He has a new nature, a new mind, a new understanding, a new conscience, a new heart, new affections, and a new life. But though all is new in the believer, there is nothing in him that is perfectly new. He needs daily to pray, as Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Yet despite all the weakness of this new creature and the mixture and neighborhood of the flesh, its contrary, and all opposition it meets with from it, and the low state it is often brought into by the captivating power of sin—yet the power of Christ's Spirit not only preserves the holy seed in the heart but raises it up again and will certainly perfect it. There was never a saving work of Christ wrought in the heart of a poor sinner that Christ ever left to be a matter of triumph to the devil. Christ is a wise builder. When He lays the foundation, He knows what the perfecting of it will cost Him, is provided with it, and resolved to lay it out and to finish His work. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [or finish] it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

3. By virtue of this interest in Christ, believers have all Christ's fullness for their supply. He is all in all to them (Col. 3:11). "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (Col. 1:19). And surely this lodging of all fullness should and does highly please all believers. "And of [or out of] his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7). Where did Paul and John get all their grace? Out of Christ's fullness. How was it that they received so much grace beyond others? It was according to the measure of the gift of Christ. But the stock and treasure is common to all believers. They are partakers of Christ (Heb. 3:14) and "called to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ

our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). The apostle, in Colossians 2:8, gives a needful warning: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.” But how will we know and discern the snare? It is “after the tradition of men, after the rudiments [or elements or principles] of the world, and not after Christ.” His argument to enforce this warning is deep and strong: “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (v. 9). It dwells really and substantially in this one man Jesus Christ. So that those deceive you who direct you to any for supply but to Him. If you would be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19), you must seek it and find it in Him “in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily.” And this will not be in vain. “And ye are complete in him” (v. 10). Never did and never could a believer use this fullness suitably to all its worth in itself and to the gracious right he has to use it.

But what is there in believers that Christ has communion with? All good is in Him, and this is the believer’s all. And therefore it is easy to understand what their communion with Christ is, and what His communications to them are. He clothes and covers them with His righteousness, sanctifies them by His Spirit, and supplies them out of His fullness. But is there anything in His people that Christ has communion with? Yes, there is. And that is all in them that is either consistent with their union with Him or that flows from that union.

Of the first sort is all the bad that is remaining in them. For as the grace of union with and relation to Christ was not suspended and delayed till they were faultless, so when this grace is dispensed it does not presently remove faultiness, as it will when this union and communion is perfect, which Christ here prays for. Christ’s body is made up of sinful members. And they are, even while sin and infirmity cleaves to them, united to a sinless, glorious head. And it is the great glory of His grace that He takes such members into union with Himself

and maintains that union by communion with them as their need requires till the blessed day comes that is here prayed for, when this union will issue in that communion which will quite remove fault and infirmity in His people.

To deny that Christ has any interest, concern, and work about what is bad in His people is to deny our fellowship with Him in those things wherein we are most needy of it and most sensibly benefited by it; for our own sinfulness and infirmity is better known to us and felt by us than is His righteousness and perfect fullness. And neither is the latter so well known to us as by its gracious application to our relief under the former. So our sinfulness (I mean, that which remains even in the best of believers) serves to magnify His forgiving grace. He who bids us to forgive our brother who sins against us “not only seven times, but seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21–22) forgives His people many more times and many sins, even all of them (Ps. 103:3)—all our trespasses, according to Colossians 2:13.

And how blessed is that communion when the blood of sprinkling speaks peace and pardon to a troubled conscience! Our corruptions and spiritual diseases are the subjects of Christ's care. And His care about them is to cure them and to keep His people from dying under them. The greatest care is used by tender parents about their sick and wounded children. That man never knew the guilt of sin rightly who thinks that anything less or other than the blood of the Son of God can cleanse from it. And that man never saw the corruption and plague of his heart rightly who is not persuaded that only the great physician Christ can cure it—and no man can employ Him rightly for the one and not for both. They do but deceive themselves in their religion whose main heart exercise is not with Christ for both. Alas, there are many disquieted consciences and many defiled hearts and lives in many who are called Christians. And some of them are often complaining

and sometimes sinking in their complainings because they do not believe and lay this truth to heart: that cleansing and purging the conscience from the guilt of sin and purifying the heart and life from the dominion of sin are Christ's proper works. The first He does by the sprinkling of His blood; the other, by the power of His Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:4-7). And all who use any other means for these ends not only labor in vain but sin greatly against God, who has made Christ "unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that no flesh should glory in his presence," and so that he who glories might glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:29-31).

Not only are our infirmities, sinfulness, and diseases under the gracious care and cure of our Lord Jesus Christ, but our persons, our souls, our bodies, and all our lots and concerns are at His disposal and to His glory and service. Every believer in every distinct act of faith yields himself and all he is and has under Christ's dominion. "Grant me Thy salvation according to Thy promise, and guide me in the way according to Thy will. I am Thine; save me" (see Ps. 119:94).

Also, Christ has communion with His own good in them. All that is in us that is our own is bad. And all that is good in us is of His giving and working. All our graces are His fruits (Song 4:16). They are all of Christ's planting, watering, and ripening; and He feeds on them as His pleasant fruits. All the spiritual services and duties that believers perform are all of them fruit growing from their abiding in the vine of Christ (John 15:4-5) and are pleasing to Him. And surely when it is so, the believer finds sweet profit by it. "I will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). It is easy to conceive how we may feast with Him, for He has all.

But how can He feast with us who are nothing and have nothing? He does it in two ways:

First, He feasts with His people on His own store of grace that He brings with Him. David said in 1 Chronicles 29:14, "Of thine own have we given thee." So Christ says, "It is of My own that I feast with you, O believer. All your faith, love, repentance, and service are My gifts, My graces that I bring with Me and am delighted in."

Second, Christ may be said to feast with His people in and by that pleasure He has not only to give but to see them feed on what He brings with Him. Would you feast on Jesus Christ, believers? Feed on Him with holy hunger. Is a kind mother delighted with her hungry babe's sucking at her breast? Is it not as a feast to a charitable man to see a starving person eat heartily of the food he gives him? Much more is it a feast to our Lord to see starving sinners feeding on the bread of life and drinking of the water of life. Hear His voice: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song 5:1). "It is all Mine, all of My preparing. Use it freely; feed plentifully; you are highly welcome."

But, alas, most Christians give the answer that follows in verse 2: "I sleep, but my heart waketh." Christ's gracious offers and invitations are heard by us between sleeping and waking. And so is it seen in the sorry entertainment we give them, and hence follows the poor life that many of us lead. So much for the first thing in communion: mutual interest.

2. This communion has behavior in it. It stands not only in the mutual interest that each has in the other, but also in interaction one with another. This is what the apostle has in 1 John 1:3, where we have two communions or fellowships spoken of: the fellowship of Christians with one another and the fellowship that Christians have with the Father and Son. And that

this second fellowship is mutual is hinted at in verse 7: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Those then who know best by experience what it is to be with Christ on earth, in walking with Him and in Him, will know best what it is to be with Him where He is. The greatest enjoyments of Christ here are the best helps to conceive of what is to be received in heaven.

3. This interaction produces likeness to Christ. The nearer a man is to Christ, the more fellowship he has with Him, and the more he grows to be like Christ. Compare 2 Corinthians 3:18 with 1 John 3:2. Paul speaks of Christians in this life; John, of the same persons in the next life. And both speak of likeness to Christ as being wrought the same way: by seeing and beholding His glory. Perfect likeness to Christ flows from perfectly beholding His glory. And a begun likeness to Him flows from a begun beholding of His glory by faith. The apostle in 2 Corinthians 3:7 speaks of the glory of the countenance of Moses which was such that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold his face, which glory was to be done away. In this the apostle respects that passage in Exodus 34:29–35, where it says that Moses, returning from the mount after his second forty days' abode there, had, by his long interaction with God, a beam of heavenly glory impressed on his face. Whether it continued all his life afterward or not the Scripture is silent about, and therefore we cannot be positive. But we may safely draw from it that the nearer and more continued our converse with Christ on earth is, the more a heavenly likeness to Christ is impressed on the soul. Has this not been known to many when they had been long struggling and striving with and bewailing over a body of death, strong corruptions, and distempers that rendered them unlike Christ and loathsome in their own eyes? If He is pleased (as often He is) to draw near

to them and to cause them to approach Him, as in Psalm 65:4, how suddenly and how sweetly likeness to Christ is wrought in the soul! True nearness to Christ and conversation with Him always has this effect. Communion with Christ, if real, is always the life of grace and bane of corruption. And let all examine and judge their enjoyments by this plain and sure test: Have you anything that you call communion with Christ? Does it not in some measure mortify your lusts and enliven the grace of God in you? If it does not work both in you, it is not of the right sort.

4. This converse with Christ and this likeness to Him produce both love and delight. It is not possible for it to be otherwise. Such great mercies in themselves, such great blessings to us, and so much of God's love for us, shining in the giving of them, must raise love and delight. This is one of the fruits of communion with Christ: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song 2:3).

The tree of life, Jesus Christ, has a refreshing shade for the hungry soul. Sit down under His shadow and eat of His fruit, and you must find it sweet to your taste. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter 2:3). See how the same apostle speaks of the communion that believers have with Christ: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8-9).

All of this so that you may perceive that what the Lord is pleased to afford to His people here in communion with Christ gives a great help to believers to know better what it is to be with Christ where He is than any unbeliever can, and that those who have the greatest experience in these things have an advantage in this matter beyond ordinary believers.

So much of the four things that I thought fit to premise. The glory of the heavenly state is greatly in the dark to Christians while on earth. The only light wherein anything of it can be known is the light of the Word. This light of the Word is light only to the eye of faith. And faith is helped in this discovery by experience.

It now follows that heaven consists in being with Christ where He is. And this I will give in these four things:

First, it stands in perfect immediate presence with Christ. All the presence that Christ affords and that His people now enjoy here is, with regards to this, but absence from the Lord. "Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.... We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:6, 8). I am sure that there are few Christians but think that if they just enjoyed Christ as Paul did so often, they would think it a great presence. But Paul counts that as long as he dwelt in the body he was absent from the Lord. Perfect presence is when all on both sides is present, all of Christ and all of the Christian. But now all of Christ is not with us, and all of us is not with Him. On His part, we have Christ's Spirit, Word, and grace. On our part, there is present with Him our hearts and the workings of our faith, love, and desire toward Him. But this presence is imperfect and mixed with much distance and absence. And this sort of presence with Christ is but mediate. There are some glasses and helps that, though useful now, will be useless one day (1 Cor. 13:10–12). Yet this imperfect and mediate presence is more excellent in itself and more valued by everyone who has tasted it than the utmost that this world and the things of it can give to a worldling (Ps. 4:6–7).

This being with Christ where He is has in it perfect and full fruition and enjoyment of Christ. And here, words and

thoughts shrink far below the greatness of this matter. What it is to enjoy Christ—who can tell? Believers are partakers of Christ and are in Him, and He in them. Faith, when strong, grasps at Him and cleaves to Him. Love, when flaming, embraces Him straitly, holds Him fast, and will not let Him go. When Christ's love for us burns and shines, and our love for Him is kindled thereby, how sweet this enjoyment is. But all this is far short of what will be enjoyed when we will be with Him where He is. The difference is far greater between these two than between the loving husband and the beloved wife, entertaining correspondence by letters to one another in different and far distant countries. Thereby they communicate their heart, love, and mind to one another. And this is very comfortable, especially when this intercourse may be speedy and in an instant, as it is between Christ and believers: "And it shall come to pass [and blessed be God that this often comes to pass] that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). There is no length of time required to carry the believer's mind to Christ in heaven. And just as speedily, He can send His mind to them again. But this is far short of the comfort of seeing face to face.

This presence and this enjoyment is in the best state and place. It is where He is. And surely our Lord is well lodged above. All the presence we have with Christ and the enjoyment of Him is not where He is, but where we are. Here, we are on the dunghill of this earth, having sin cleaving to us to provoke Him and misery on us to grieve us. Hence it is amazing grace in Him to grant anything of His presence and fellowship to us. And hence all that we enjoy of it is attended with manifold imperfections, inseparable from our state while we are where we are and not to be removed from us till we are where He is.

This is to be forever. The greatest blessing has the longest duration, if duration is a proper word to be used of eternity,

which is justly called “a perpetual now.” Christ’s presence now where we are is a choice blessing. Believers would have more of it when they have a little of it. And when they have much of it, they would keep it. But they cannot always have His presence when they would, nor can they always keep it when they have it. It may please Him to awake and leave us (Song 3:5; 8:4), even when we are best pleased with His company. Even then, He is our beloved, and His love to us is the same when standing behind our wall, when looking forth at the window, showing Himself, or flourishing through the lattice, as when His left hand is under our head and His right hand embraces us (Song 2:6, 9). Christ’s sweetest visits to His people where they are are often embittered, so to speak, with the thoughts and fears of His withdrawing Himself. “Now,” says the believer, “I have a clear sky; but how soon may the weather change and clouds return again!” But in the state of glory above, when we will be with Him where He is, no fears and no ground or suspicion of any such thing will ever enter into the heart of any of the glorified. The state of grace is a sure state of God’s making. No vessel of grace and mercy will ever be emptied of it. But it is not a sure state to every believer’s thinking, for fears of miscarriage may exist where no real danger is. But the state of glory is not only sure and unchangeable as it is of God’s gracious making, but it is so as to every glorified person’s thinking. No pillars in the upper house can shake (Rev. 3:12). Pillars in the lower house may shake but are never removed. But in heaven there is no danger, no fear, nor any cause of either to eternity. We will be ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17).

Application: See how great Christ’s interest is in our salvation and how justly He is called our Savior. He has bought and redeemed the kingdom for the heirs and the heirs for the kingdom. He as slain has made the way to it (Heb. 10:19–20).

He is the guide to heaven and captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). He wills it to them in His testament (Luke 22:29). He welcomes them to heaven when He calls them by death (Acts 7:59). And He, as fully enjoyed, is heaven itself.

Do not wonder that few are saved. From this doctrine you may see the causes thereof. We find Christ teaching this doctrine that there are few who are saved in Matthew 19:23–26; Mark 10:23–27; and Luke 18:24–27. It is thrice recorded, and on the same occasion, and with the same sense of it in His disciples. The occasion of Christ's teaching was the great zeal of a young rich man in asking our Lord the way to heaven and his sudden recoiling when Christ touched his idol. On this occasion Christ taught, "How hardly will they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" His disciples were astonished at His words, but Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23–24). On Christ's repeating and explaining His words, verse 26 says, "And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?'" Why were they so astonished and exceedingly amazed, as it is said in Matthew 19:25? Were there not many poor people who had no riches nor any temptation to trust in them (and such the disciples themselves were) who might be saved? Their amazement seems to have its rise from this: that if one snare, as that of riches, so endangered a man's salvation, what greater danger were all men exposed to by manifold temptations and disorders of their hearts? But as to the doctrine before us, that being with Christ where He is is heaven, I may justly confirm from it what Christ taught: that few will be saved. For few know what it is nor the way to it. And, indeed, no natural man can know what they are. When our Lord is again preaching this doctrine in that noted place in Matthew 7:13–14, He said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for

wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." According to the frame of men's spirits, they frame thoughts of heaven and of the way to it. The Islamic paradise is brutish; the popish paradise is little better. The natural philosopher's conceptions of heaven are more manly, though carnal. Only a true Christian can have a right thought of heaven, because he knows Jesus Christ and enjoys communion with Him. Christ Himself is the way to heaven, as He is a slain redeemer. And Christ Himself is heaven itself, as He is a glorified, enjoyed redeemer. All this is unintelligible and incredible to every natural man. Can that man ever count it blessedness to be with Christ above who counts it a piece of misery to be in His company on earth? And is it possible that such can be saved who neither know what heaven is nor the way to it, and who dislike and hate both the way and the end as revealed in the Word and as impressed on the hearts of all the godly in all ages?

Would you secure heaven to yourselves? See to get into Christ by faith. Seek acquaintance with Him. Press after communion with Him. Let all your thoughts of heaven, all your care to secure your possessing it, and all your exercise in pressing toward it—let all center in this one person, Jesus Christ. Alas! How many poor Christians are there who go awkwardly to work about salvation! How poorly they fare! How sorrowfully they live! And how many of them die in darkness! And all because they do not mind Christ rightly as the way, the truth, and the life! They attend on all the ordinances of the gospel. They would be in heaven. They often muse and think on it and wonder at the greatness of the prize and sometimes have some good hope, through grace, that they will possess it. But with many, these are but like the morning cloud and

the early dew. And their doubts and darkness return on them because they do not remember Jesus Christ and live by faith on Him as the only way to heaven and the enjoyment of Him as the Christian's heaven as He brings all the sons to glory. You need no more to secure your right to eternal life than to be possessed of Christ by faith. And you need no better eternal life than to be with Christ where He is. He Himself describes it by this: "that they may be with me where I am." And surely Christ best knows what heaven is, since He bought it, prepared it, and possessed it for His people. He knows the way to it, for He is both the way and the guide to it. Hear His voice, therefore, and follow Him, and He will give you eternal life. And you will never perish, neither will any man (or devil, or thing) pluck you out of His hand (John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35-39).

CHAPTER 7

Four Marvelous Things about Salvation

*T*here are four marvelous things about salvation that we should often think on:

First is that there is so high a savior as Christ is and so great a salvation as heaven is provided for fallen man. There was no such provision made for standing Adam to keep him from falling, and no such provision for the fallen angels to restore them to their first estate. But for fallen man this provision is made—not for all, but for a numerous remnant according to the election of grace, and that to bring them to a far better end than Adam fell from by sin.

Second is that the knowledge of this Savior and this salvation is kept from multitudes as needy thereof as any who have it. The pagans and natives in the east and west are as needy of the gospel as you and no more unworthy and undeserving than you. Yet you have gospel light, and they live and perish in gross darkness. This is only from God's sovereign pleasure, as our Lord owns it in Luke 10:21. And that sovereignty shines and is to be owned equally by us in both dispensing and withholding the outward means of salvation and also in dispensing and withholding the inward, effectual grace and the blessing of the means.

Third, it is marvelous (though both very sinful and usual) that this Savior and His salvation are so greatly despised by the most part of those who need Him and it extremely and have the gospel offer made daily to them. Alas! Few mind Him, and few care for the great salvation He brings with Him and offers so freely to men. No man under the gospel miscarries eternally and no man or woman perishes without Jesus Christ but such as do not in heart care for Him and His salvation. Justly do they deserve to perish, and dreadful will their perdition be.

Fourth, it is marvelous that this blessed Savior and His great salvation are yet given to a multitude of refusers. All by nature are unworthy; many reject the offer often. Yet grace prevails at last on some of them and makes them willing. There are many in the world (but they were thought on by Him before the world was made) from whom Christ will take no refusal, though they give Him many. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice" (Jer. 22:21). Yet to many such there is a time of love fixed; and when it comes, they are spoken for, spoken to, dealt with, and prevailed upon. I cannot say but that those who are early brought to Christ have some special advantages in both their being prevented from gross sin and sad wanderings and in the opportunities of serving Christ by His grace given to them. But I am sure that the longer any stand out in rebellion against Christ, when they are subdued, they should most of all men admire the grace of their conqueror. Paul, though called when a young man, yet counts that Jesus Christ should show forth in him all longsuffering for a pattern to them who would hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:16). Yet, doubtless, Christ has drawn forth more longsuffering to many sinners than He did on Paul in his unregenerate state.

Of this Savior and His salvation I have been speaking from this part of this excellent prayer. I have been often commending this chapter to you, and though I hope none are so foolish as to think that when they have got this chapter by heart (and I know no chapter in God's Word more worthy of a room in the heart and memory than this), they may make a prayer of it, as if it were one of David's psalms. Yet I am sure we may pray on it, for though many of the words in it are only fit to be uttered in prayer by the blessed mouth that first spoke them, yet all of them may be food for the faith of every believer.

I have spoken of the manner of this prayer: "Father, I will."

I have also entered on the matter of it and have taken up four things therein. First, the description of those for whom He prays: "Those whom thou hast given me." None but Christ can describe those they pray for this way. He only had the book of life before Him in prayer. It is a great mercy if we get spiritual light to read our own name in that book, but it is not allowed us to either desire or expect to read any other name therein but our own.

I have shown the blessing that Christ prays for to such persons. And it is expressed thus: "that they may be with me where I am." From whence I drew two points of doctrine. The first was that the perfect blessedness of the people of God stands in being with Christ where He is. On this I have already spoken.

Doctrine 2: It is Christ's will to have His people possessed of this bliss of being with Him where He is.

Our Lord said, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." This He said of them all without distinction or exception. This prayer is universal—for His whole body of the elect. And it is particular—for every individual member of that body. As they cannot be perfectly happy till they are with Him where He is (and that they all

know), so our Lord does not get all His will and mind about them till they are thus with Him. And this we should believe. The meaning of this will of Christ about His people's bliss is in these:

It is His heart's desire.

It is His delight to have them with Him.

It is His fixed purpose and resolution. His heart is fixed on this: that He will have them all with Him.

It is His will declared to His Father in such a manner and season and with such circumstances as add great weight to it.

It is His will revealed to us in His written Word and therefore is of great use to us to believe and rejoice in it. But who can tell (even when Christ has told us) what His will is? The will of the Son of God, the will of a dying redeemer, the will of a man personally united to the Son of God—how far this exceeds all our thoughts!

In handling this point, I would prove that it is Christ's will, show why it is so, and apply it. That it is Christ's will to have His people with Him where He is appears from these two things: the price He paid for them and the pains He takes on them.

See the great and dear price He paid for them. The price was of infinite value, and the purchase was great. He bought the heirs for the inheritance and the inheritance for the heirs. Christ in redeeming had respect to both. And He, as slain, was the price for both. He bought us and our forfeited inheritance, as He often declares. And this proves that it is His will and mind that they should possess it. What wise or honest man purchases that for another that he will not let him possess? When our Lord laid down His life—yea, staked down His crown and glory and bore so much distress, and all that He might at last have all His people with Him where He is—surely we must conclude that Christ's heart and mind were greatly set on it. The grand view of the good will of Christ to saving

His people and having them in heaven is to be had on His cross. The death of the Savior proclaims His good will to save. He knew that He must save us by dying, and we know that we are saved by His death. Therefore, He had a desire and delight to die for His people. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him" (Isa. 53:10). And Christ was pleased to be bruised (Heb. 10:5–10).

Then see the great pains that Christ takes with His people to bring them to heaven. This proves that His heart is set on them possessing it. On this proof, I would insist on a few particulars:

1. Christ draws to Himself those whom He intends to save. By nature they are far from Christ and salvation. By His grace they are brought near (Eph. 2:13). Christ and salvation are inseparable. When Christ entered into Zacchaeus's heart by faith, then salvation came to his house (Luke 19:9–10). Christ's drawing a sinner is His working faith in that sinner. And the sinner's believing on Christ is his coming to Christ. Thus the nearness is obtained. Christ is the author and finisher of faith (Heb. 12:2). But His way of working faith is a great mystery (John 3:8). Believers themselves find their own faith a great mystery even to themselves. They often know the fruits and effects of their faith better than they know the actings of it. And again, they may know better what they do and what way their hearts act toward Christ when they believe than they know what Christ was doing with them when He was working faith in them and making them believers. For usually Christ's work in drawing men to Himself is so terrible that they cannot think that any good is meant to them.

Little did Paul know what Christ meant by His first visit and words to him (Acts 9:3–9), but he knew well afterward (Gal. 1:15–16). And he often told of it (Acts 22:26). The sum of all he said was this: "I was a bitter enemy to Jesus Christ, yet

He was pleased to make me a believer on Him and called me to preach Him and faith in Him to the perishing world.”

When Christ is drawing His chosen by the cords of love (as in Hos. 11:4), usually they are jealous that those cords of love are but the grins of an enemy. How is it possible that the charge of sin on the conscience, the discovery of the abominations in the man's heart, and binding him over to the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 3:19) can be looked on as gracious methods of Christ to draw men to Himself? Yet afterward they know that all this was done in love and for their good. Of all the sins the Lord's people are guilty of, this is the greatest and should be deeply repented of: the rebellion against and resistance they made to the saving grace and drawing arm of Jesus Christ. That we walk after the imagination of our own hearts, that we love to wander, that we live in sin and love and commit it—all these things are proper and natural to sinners, so that though all should abhor them, yet none should wonder at them.

But when Christ is drawing perishing sinners to Himself so that He may save them, when He is plucking them out of the fire that will burn them and out of the water that will drown them—then for men to oppose and resist Him (as all do till His grace makes them willing) has something in it beyond the common sinfulness of men. Yea, it is a sin beyond the possibility of the devil, the father of sin and of sinners; for the grace of God was never in the offer of the fallen angels, nor did it ever make any assault on them. Yea, these reprobates sinfully resist the general drawing of Christ by the gospel and His Spirit's dealing with them (as in Acts 7:51: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye”), by which they draw on dreadful guilt and destruction and are made inexcusable. Our Lord tells them, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin”

(John 15:22, 24), namely, their sin of unbelief. Yet they never resist the saving arm and design of Christ to save them, as many of the elect do for a while, till the Lord's day of power comes that always prevails over all resistance. For surely another sort of grace was applied to blaspheming Saul than on that traitor Judas, and on Peter stumbling than on Judas falling. Herein Christ abundantly proves His mind and good will to save His people in His drawing them to Himself so that He may save them. So He says in John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." And this He said in one of His saddest hours, as you may see in verses 27–28.

The devil and wicked world (that lies in his arms, as in 1 John 5:19: "The whole world lieth in wickedness," or "in that wicked one") thought that if they could once get rid of Christ and slay Him, they would never more be troubled with Him nor with believers on Him. But they were utterly disappointed. Christ foretold this, and it was blessedly fulfilled and will be until His second coming. It is as if He had said, "They despise the virtue and grace of a living savior and think that if they had slain Me there would be an end of Me and of My interests on earth. But when they have done what they would, they will find themselves further from their purpose; for I will put forth the virtue of My death in drawing multitudes to Me." And it is not unlikely that within a few weeks after His death and within a few days after His ascension, there was a greater multitude of sinners drawn to Christ by faith than were in all the few years He lived and preached on the earth.

2. Another proof of this is from Him making them fit to possess heaven (Col. 1:12). Take heed in this matter. No man is fit for Christ till he is in Him. But he who is in Christ is fit for heaven, and none will possess it but he who is made fit for it—and that is a divine work. Christ is fit for sinners to save them. See how fit He is made by God in 1 Corinthians 1:30.

He is made all we want for salvation. Christ had no work in the world but for sinners. And none will employ Christ in His saving calling and office but convinced and sensible sinners. None but such can see their need of Christ. And such as see no need of Christ can never employ Him by faith, for believing is nothing but a needy, lost sinner's trusting this able Savior with his salvation. Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), and the lost man comes to and seeks salvation from Christ and gets it. If a man disowns his own name, "sinner," he therein disowns Christ's name, "a savior of sinners." If men pretend to use Christ as a physician and do not subscribe their true name to their petitions—"a lost, sick sinner, bleeding to death by the sting of sin and of the law"—He will have nothing to do with them. He will say to them, "I came to save sinners, but you are whole and righteous folks and think you can save yourselves. It is but a little that ails you, and you think you can soon cure it. But if you try your own art, you perish. Your wound is deadly, and no balm can heal it but Mine." No man is fit for Christ till he gets Christ. But a man must be made fit for heaven before he gets heaven. No man can get this fitness but by Christ, and Christ's working this fitness is the proof I give of Christ's mind to give glory to them in whom He works it.

Let me speak a little to what this fitness for heaven is, wherein it stands, and how Christ works it in His people.

This fitness to possess heaven is twofold: It is a fitness as to the state of the person and a fitness as to the nature and frame of he who is to be the possessor of heaven. The apostle in Colossians 1:12–14 hints at both plainly enough.

Fitness in the state of the person for possessing heaven stands in two things: He must be reconciled to the Lord of this good land of heaven, and he must be related to this inheritance—both come by Jesus Christ. Enemies and strangers

are unfit to possess it. And none such will to all eternity. Yet all men by nature are both enemies to God and unrelated to heaven. But Christ changes the state of those whom He minds to save and thus makes them fit to possess the inheritance. They are made friends and reconciled to God by the grace of justification. They are made children and heirs and so are related to the inheritance by the grace of adoption. And both are by Jesus Christ, as we see in Romans 5:8–10; 8:14, 17; Galatians 3:26; and 4:5–6. Can an enemy expect an inheritance from his enemy? And this is the natural state that God and man stand in to one another. Can a stranger expect an inheritance in a strange country where he has no friend or relation to leave him anything, and when the man is so poor that he can purchase nothing?

The apostle in Ephesians 2:12 tells them what they were by nature and what they should remember still: “that at that time ye were without Christ.” And what followed? They were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.” This was Israel’s peculiar right, according to Romans 9:4: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.” But now their state was that of “having no hope, and without God in the world.” How did the blessed change from this woeful state? “But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (v. 13). “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners; but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (v. 19). So that all who pretend to the hope of heaven should search well and make sure that they have a right to it and friends there. And the great friend in heaven is Jesus Christ, who bought the kingdom dearly and conveys the right to it freely to all who believe on Him.

Also there is a fitness for heaven in the nature and frame of the heart of the heir of it. This fitness is necessary, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). And it is wrought by Jesus Christ in the grace of sanctification. This the apostle discourses plainly on in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, where he expressly shows the equal necessity of justification and sanctification to inherit the kingdom of Christ and God, and of the interest that Christ has in giving them both. It is very remarkable in Romans 8:30, one of the deepest and yet one of the clearest scriptures (deepest for matter, and clearest for faith) about God's method of salvation: "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It seems to some to be strange that there is no mention in it of sanctification. There is only predestination, calling, justification, and glory. The obvious reason for this is that sanctification is included in glory. It is not so much the way to glory as it is a piece, part, and beginning of it.

Now, this great work of Christ in sanctifying His people is seen in all His work on them and His way with them, from their regeneration until their welcome to heaven. About this fitness for glory by sanctification, these three things are well known:

They who study sanctification the right way most diligently attain most of it. The only way is by faith in Christ Jesus (Acts 26:18).

They who attain most of it think least of their attainments. They see so much evil remaining in them (Rom. 7) and so much good before them (Phil. 3:12–14) that they still press forward for more sanctification. If any man thinks himself to be very holy, any Christian may not only justly question the truth of that pretense, but his having any holiness at all. For true gospel holiness is a frame of heart and soul wrought by

the Spirit of Christ that works in believers a holy hatred of all sin, a loathing of himself in whom so much of it still remains, and a pressing after that perfection in holiness that can only be attained when he is where Christ is.

All sensible and wise believers, in their building their faith and hope of possessing glory and in their believing and pleading with God for that possession, lay a far greater (yea, another sort of) weight on what Christ has done for them and promised to them than on that small bit of holiness He has wrought in them—though that also is to be thankfully owned, tenderly cherished, and used as food for their faith.

So much for this second proof that Christ proves His mind to have His people with Him where He is when He not only draws them to Himself while they are on the earth but makes them fit to be with Him in heaven. All He has done for His people when He was in this world is applied to them to change their state. And all He does in them by His Spirit is to change their frame. And thus by both He makes them fit for heaven.

3. Another proof of Christ's will to have His people with Him where He is is that He, by His Spirit, works in the hearts of His people desires, faith, and hopes of this bliss. This is a proof both that they will possess it and that Christ has a mind that they should have it. Christ raises no desires and raises no faith and hope for that which He has no mind to give. So the apostle argues in 2 Corinthians 5:1–5. We know what heaven is (v. 1). We groan earnestly (v. 2). We groan as being burdened (v. 4). We are confident always in those groanings (vv. 6, 8). And the reason for all is in verse 5: "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

The apostle reasons the same in Hebrews 11:16. Speaking of the ancient believers before the law, he says, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly [and this desire

they declared plainly, says v. 14, by word and deed]; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city," that is, heaven. Their desiring it is not the cause or reason of God's preparing it. But God's preparing it was the cause of His revealing it, and His revealing it by His promise to them was the ground of their believing it. Their faith was the cause of their desire of it; and this desire, thus raised and thus grounded, was a demonstration to them that they would surely possess it. And so should be to every believer in all ages.

Has Christ raised desires in your hearts to be with Him where He is? Do you feel them in your souls? And are you daily expressing them to Him in prayer, alone, and in all your attendance on Him in gospel ordinances? If He has yet further opened to you the door of hope as the dawn to your heavy, darkened heart, lift up your heads and hearts, "your redemption draweth near" (Luke 21:28). "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed" (Rom. 13:11), nearer than when you first trusted in Christ, nearer than when you first begged it of Him. Gracious Jesus will never balk the desires of heaven which He Himself has put and kept up in your heart. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble. Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear" (Ps. 10:17).

4. Christ's good will to give eternal life to His people appears in the earnest He gives to them. This is more often spoken of in the Word than known and felt by the readers and hearers of the word. It is called "the earnest of the Spirit" from its immediate author (2 Cor. 5:5); "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," for therein it is put (2 Cor. 1:22); and "the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14), for to that it refers. It is something of heaven given to believers on earth—some special presence of Christ manifested to them, some special fellowship with Him, filling them with joy, peace, and a likeness to Him.

How well is this known to those who have it! And how sure is it that no words can make another to know it! It is the hidden manna that Christ gives His people to eat of (and no man knows its taste but he who eats it, and while he eats it) and the white stone Christ gives, “and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it” (Rev. 2:17).

Why is this earnest given? It is to secure the bargain of the covenant to the believer and to secure him of the possession of glory. Therefore is it called “the firstfruits of the Spirit” in Romans 8:23; “sealing of believers” in 2 Corinthians 1:22; and “to the day of redemption” in Ephesians 4:30. This earnest must be a rich jewel when the devil, that great thief and robber, sets himself so against those who have it. It was more than an earnest that Paul got in 2 Corinthians 12:1–3. The devil hated Paul from the day that Christ took him out of his arms. He hated his gifts, grace, and service—and that Paul knew well and felt often. But he never fell on him so fiercely as when Paul became enriched with extraordinary enjoyments.

No believer will get this earnest if the devil can hinder it. And none can keep it without a battle with hell. But though Satan by his malice and craft and our unbelieving hearts join together (as too often they do) to rob us of this earnest and the sense of it, yet Christ will never take it away nor break the bargain of our salvation. “Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail” (Ps. 89:33–35). This is the voice of God.

Is this earnest a universal blessing to all, or only a special kindness to some believers? On the one hand, the discouraged, complaining mood of some Christians seems to say that they do not have it. On the other hand, many have this earnest and have it frequently repeated to them. What will we say to this question? These things we may be sure of: that it is a choice mercy and a great advantage to a believer to have it (as the

contraries are as sure to such as do not have it), and that it is a great duty to press after it. There are ways and means of God's appointment for reaching it. There are gracious promises of a blessing on those means. And faith and diligence in seeking this blessing in God's way are usually successful. It seems far safer for us to lay our want of it on our own unbelief than to reflect on His word and way.

Next we examine why it is and must be His will and mind. Take these two accounts of it: because of His faithfulness in the covenant and because of His love for His people.

It is Christ's will and mind because of His faithfulness in the covenant of grace. The clearest and surest view of our salvation is to be had in this covenant. Therein we see that the elect are given by the Father to the Son to be redeemed by Him, and so that He may give them eternal life. John 17:2: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." This charge the Son accepted from eternity and in the fullness of time came into the world to fulfill (John 6:38–39). They were given to Him on the condition of Him coming and redeeming them by His blood, which condition He fulfilled.

They are promised to Him as His purchase by the Father, when the Son had bought them as He promised. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:10–11).

Bringing them safely to glory is charged on the Son and promised by Him again to the Father: "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:38–39). "And I know

that His commandment is life everlasting” (John 12:50). Christ stands engaged by this covenant to give a good account of all His charge. And He will do it fully one day when He presents His people to His Father and will say of all as we read of in Hebrews 2:13, “Behold, I and the children which God hath given me,” and as He said of a few of them in the present chapter, verse 12: “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost.” And surely Christ is as good at keeping His people now that He is in heaven as when He was on earth, for He is with them always, even to the end of the world.

Christ yet further promises eternal life to His people: “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25), and it is the grand comprehensive promise. Yea, Christ Himself is called “eternal life” (1 John 1:2; 5:20). When Christ came into the world, eternal life came into it. When Christ is shown and revealed, eternal life is made known. When Christ is embraced by faith, eternal life is gotten. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:11–12). Oh, that all men did but know how closely, how inseparably, and how eternally Christ and eternal life are linked together! There is no eternal life without Christ, and no Christ without eternal life. He also promises it as well as contains it: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28). It is this and such like promises of eternal life made by Jesus Christ that every true believer builds his hope of heaven on. And thus Christ’s faithfulness and truth are concerned in bringing all His people to glory.

Consider Christ’s wonderful love for His people. True love cannot bear being away for long periods of time, much less

an everlasting parting. Christ loves His people so well that He must have them with Him, otherwise He would lose His love and His beloved—and that cannot be. The love of Christ for His people may well be their delight and their wonder. There is both pleasure and profit in studying it. But all our thoughts can never reach to its infinite dimensions; for it has height, depth, breadth, and length, and in all these passes knowledge (Eph. 3:18–19). And because of the sweetness of this theme of Christ's love, and because all I will say in the application of this doctrine at this time is to require love to Him again, I would speak a little of this blessed love of Christ for His people, as it is the cause of His being willing to have them with Him where He is.

Christ's love for His people has no cause or reason for it but itself. Love is the only cause of His love. Our love for Him has good cause and strong reason for it. His own worth in Himself, His love for us, and the great things He has done for us and has promised to us justly deserve more love than we can give Him. But none of these things are in us so as to engage His love for us.

This love of Christ not only has no cause in us to raise it, but it is a love that acts and moves against all things that may justly quench love and raise loathing. There is not only no worth nor beauty in us that He should desire us (as the unbelieving world thought and thinks falsely of Christ Himself, as in Isa. 53:2), but there is a great deal in us to make us justly hateful and loathsome in His eyes. There is enmity to Him in our heart and nature. There are provocations in our conversation and walk. There are vileness, loathsomeness, poverty, and all misery in our state. Yet Christ's love overcomes all: "Thy time was the time of love, saith the Lord" (Ezek. 16:6–8). A strange time of love, and a strange love! A wretched, naked, polluted infant, cast out into the open field, to the loathing

of its person, as in verse 5. Was that a time of love? Was that a time for the prince of heaven to love the filthy and perishing? To any but to the heart of a god this would have been a time of loathing and not of love. The same thing the apostle teaches without a parable in Ephesians 2:1–4.

It is a love that sets Christ at work in all His saving work. And hard, dear, and costly work it was for Him. Yet love made Him do it all, and He did it delightfully. He died for us in love. He called us in love. He planted His grace in us in love. He visits us in love. And when He corrects and rebukes us, He does that in love too (Rev. 3:19). And though we do not like it, He likes it, and it is for our good. All that Christ does for, in, with, on, and about His people (and who can tell all?) He does all in and from His love for them. And this shows us both the nature of His love for us and the debt we are under to love Him in return.

This love of Christ for His people both designs and effects the greatest good to those He loves. Among creatures there is a great deal of love to little purpose. Either they intend but little by their love, or, if they do design it, their love cannot reach it. But the greatest good, eternal life, is not only intended by Christ in His love for His people, but it is surely attained. All whom Christ loves are saved. Why? Because His love is saving. Salvation is designed by this lover and is perfected by this love.

Application: Let me therefore exhort you to love Jesus Christ. Is His heart set on having all His people with Him where He is? Surely we ought to return love back to Him again. Most of those who pretend to the name of Christian think they make some conscience of it, as being a most just debt and duty to Him. And they are ready to say with Paul, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:22). But as the love that Christ bears to His people is not

so well known and believed as it ought to be, so the love His people owe to Him is not so well paid as it ought to be. I would therefore advise you in five things about your love for Christ:

1. Take a serious view of the lover and of the beloved and of the love He bears for them: of Christ who loves, and of His people whom He loves, and of the love He bears for them. When these three are seen by the eye of faith in the light of God's Word—His glory and greatness who loves, the vileness of them He loves, and the greatness of the love He bears for them—two thoughts will rise in the heart: How marvelous it is that such a person as He should love in such a manner such persons as we are, and how great our returns of love back to Him should be! What is the cause of this usual and sad remark, that carnal, secure sinners count it an easy thing to believe that Christ loves them, though they never tasted of His special love, when many sincere Christians find the faith of Christ's love for them so difficult, though they dare not deny their tasting sometimes that He is gracious, as in 1 Peter 2:3? Yea, they find it hardest to believe it in such times when either the divine dignity of Christ or their own wretchedness are seen by them, and usually they go together. This is the cause of it: because this love of Christ is as mysterious and wonderful as the lover Himself is (Isa. 9:6). We cannot easily think that Christ loves any but such as are in some way like Him. Nor do we rightly know that Christ can and does love those who are not like Him, so as to make them like Him by His love—for His love always has this blessed effect on all them on whom it falls.

2. Learn to believe Christ's love. Usually we would have His love proved and manifested to us. But I advise you to take this way of getting your faith fixed on Christ's love. Do not think that I would persuade you to rashly conclude that Christ loves you. What I design is only this: Take Christ's love letters and His amiable picture in the gospel (and the New Testament is

full of them) and believe and love them, and Him by them. Behold Christ crucified in Galatians 3:1. Behold Him dying and redeeming by His blood, and that in mere love for the redeemed. Read His love letters, filled with gracious calls, offers, and promises, and all these letters sealed with His blood shed in love. This is a blessed exercise that you will soon find the advantage of.

3. Then pray much for His love to be manifested to you in particular. You are to give Him glory in believing His love letters, His beautiful picture in the gospel, and in raising faith and love by those helps. But you may also beg for His love to be manifested to you. See His promise in John 14:21–23, words more precious than fine gold: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”—that is, “I will love him, and make him know it.”

And when one of His disciples asked, either in ignorance or in wonder, how this could be (v. 22), our Lord answered, “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come [My Father and I] unto him, and make our abode with him” (v. 23). These words are very much like His words in Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Thus He manifests His love: “God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (v. 15). “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us [and so must we know and believe the love that His Son has for us]. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (v. 16). “Herein is our love made perfect” (v. 17). But how did it begin, and how is

it advanced? “We love him because he first loved us” (v. 19). Alas! What are Christians doing? And how poorly they do! Where is the man who is sick of love for Christ? This blessed disease (or soul’s health, rather) is twofold: either in pining hunger for the manifestation of His love (as Song 5:8), or in the overwhelming sweetness of His manifested love (Song 2:5). If you know nothing of either of these, your carcasses may be well, but your souls do not prosper. I do not think that there ever was a poor believer who did long breathe after Christ’s love but he felt it. Most people do not care about it; therefore, they do not seek it, and therefore they do not find it. And some of them may say—as they in Acts 19:2, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost”—“We have not felt any of the love of Christ; we know nothing of it but as it is spoken of in the Scriptures, and as it is to be enjoyed in heaven.” But how it burns as a hot fire in the heart (Song 8:6–7), alas, few on earth feel.

4. When Christ has manifested His love, then light your torch of love at the warm beams of the sun of righteousness. I mean, kindle your love for Him at the fire of His love for you. No other fire will kindle true love for Christ but the faith and feeling of Christ’s love for you. What made Paul such a fervent lover of Christ but that he knew so well how Christ loved him! “He loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). No wonder that he said, “I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13), that is, “Christ died at Jerusalem for my redemption, and will I not die there for His glory, if He calls me?”

5. When you have kindled your love for Christ at the flame of His love for you, then let it burn and spend (but it cannot spend, but grows by burning) in His service and to His praise. Use and act that love in all holy worship and in all gospel obedience. That is the best worship and the most acceptable

obedience that is performed from love for Christ. This love constrained Paul (2 Cor. 5:14) to his excellent living for Christ. That working and running that only the spur of the law in men's consciences constrains some to is of no account in the sight of God. Faith in Christ raises love for Christ. And faith and love enliven to all holy obedience and spiritual worship. Then the Christian reads and hears the word of Christ because he loves to hear His voice. He prays, for he loves to speak and to pour out his heart to his best friend. He sits down at the Lord's Table because he loves to see and draw virtue from his slain Savior. He hates evil because he loves the Lord (Ps. 97:10). He keeps Christ's commandments because he loves the commander (John 14:15).

Sirs, be assured of this: You are not yet on the right road of Christianity, you are not yet on that path wherein you can be hearty and sincere and wherein you will be constant and never faint until you once tap into the power of the love of Christ. Then you will be sweetly carried on in all your way and in His ways. Then may the believer in and lover of Christ say, "Let the Lord lead me where He pleases, I am still going to heaven and am in the river of life, the love of Christ, that began (if I may say so) from eternity and carries me through time to the eternal enjoyment of the same love in heaven."

CHAPTER 8

The Application of the Doctrines

*M*en's hearts are best known by their prayers, and by the same way we may know Christ's heart. Whoever would know how deeply His heart is concerned in the saving of His people, let them read and believe this prayer. And, indeed, unless people know how Christ's heart stands affected regarding their salvation, their hearts will never stand well affected toward Him in employing Him for salvation. A clear and strong persuasion of Christ's hearty concern in and about saving sinners will make a poor sinner hearty in trusting Him with his own salvation.

I have been speaking of this from the precious words of our text. And I would now proceed to a larger application of the two doctrines thus far addressed, and that in four exhortations:

Exhortation 1: Is it Christ's will to have all His people with Him where He is? Then we are called to admire this wonderful will of Christ. This will has its causes and springs, as you have heard. But these are so far from making it less wonderful that they indeed make it more wonderful. In order to help you admire this will of Christ, I would give you a few things to consider:

First, Jesus Christ knows Himself best. We hear about being with Christ, but we know little of what it means because we know so little who and what Christ is. But Christ knows Himself fully and perfectly, and therefore He knew what a great blessing He willed for His people when He uttered this suit to His Father. It is the wise constitution of God that the knowledge of Christ, the enjoyment of Christ, and the knowledge of that enjoyment are inseparable. We, alas, know little of Christ. We enjoy little of Him. And therefore we know very little what perfect enjoyment of Him is. But Christ knew Himself perfectly, and He knew what bliss His company would be to His people. This is one thing that may make us admire this will of Christ. It is as if our Lord had said, "My poor people do not know fully wherein their greatest bliss consists; but I know it well and will it to them."

Second, our Lord Jesus knew best where He was to be. I told you where Christ was when He made this His will, even near the lowest step of His humbled state. He was just going to the garden of agony and from that to the death of the cross. But He prayed as if He were in heaven already. And He well knew where He was going and what a high and happy state He was going to, to which also He meant to bring His people. He commends it and encourages His disciples from it in John 14:2–3. But when we pray for heaven, we pray in the dark. We pray for a blessing that we do not know but in a very small part (see 1 Cor. 2:9; 1 John 3:2). If it were possible that any believer out of heaven fully knew what heaven was, that man would either be as in heaven or would pray wonderfully for it. But Christ knew well what heaven was and therefore prayed for it to His people.

Third, Christ knew well where His people were, in an evil world (v. 11), and what bad entertainment they then had and

were to have in it. In love and pity for them, therefore, He willed this blessed lodging for them in heaven.

Christ knew well what their frame of heart and desires were. He knew what a heart He had put in them, that nothing less than being with Him where He was would content, satisfy, and make them happy. Would you know, when Christ begins to do good to a poor sinner, what the first thing is that Christ does to one He intends to save? It is plainly this: He makes such a hole in the man's heart that nothing but Christ and heaven can fill it. None but Christ, nothing but being with Him where He is can satisfy this man. Christ's grace given springs up into everlasting life (John 4:14). And He who created this spring will neither divert nor stop it. But as their hearts, by His grace, spring up to heaven, Christ's heart in this prayer springs up to that same everlasting life for them.

Exhortation 2: Love this blessed willer. Love Jesus Christ, who wills to have all His people in heaven with Him and love Him for willing it.

Objection: I do not know that Christ wills this for me. If I knew it, I would then love Him.

Answer: Though you do not know it, you do not doubt that He deserves your highest love. No darkness as to your interest in Christ can dissolve the obligation of your duty to love Christ nor excuse you from the sin of not loving Him.

All the devils in hell, out of hell, or in your heart cannot prove that you are one whom Christ has no mind to have with Him. If anyone suggests it, you have reason to say that they lie and cannot possibly prove it. I will suppose your state to be as bad as you imagine, that you have no light, knowledge, or ground to believe and hope that you are in Christ's will and prayer, yea, that you have many fears of the contrary and

appearance of grounds for them—yet it is certain that it is impossible to prove that Christ has no mind to save you.

Is it not some considerable encouragement to you that it is certain that many just such as you are in this will of Christ? This prayer was put up and has been oftentimes answered for many just such as you are. There is not so great a difference between men in their natural state as many imagine. There is indeed some difference in their outward conduct. Some wander strangely. And some are, by education and restraining common grace, kept within tolerable bounds. But still, as to the substance of an unrenewed state, all in it are alike. They are swine still, whether washed or wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22), until Christ's grace changes them.

You who doubt that you are not in Christ's will for glory, can you bless Him and love Him for willing salvation to so many others? It is a sad supposition, I admit. And I think it is sinful for any to lay down as to himself that Christ has no mind to save him. Yet sad suppositions laid close to the heart and conscience sometimes produce and draw forth some good thing that lay hidden in the heart.

Let me therefore argue with such. You fear or conclude that Christ has no mind to save you, that He has no thoughts of love for you. Well, though this thought is sinful in all who daily hear the voice of His love in the gospel, I would say to such: Is it not righteous with Him? Do you not agree that you do not deserve His love and that you justly deserve His hatred? Proud quarrelling with His justice is very unsuitable to one who pleads for His mercy.

Is not this sad case very afflicting to your souls? Alas, many have bitter complaints in their mouths when there is little sense in their hearts of what they complain of. Surely, there are complaining hypocrites as well as boasting hypocrites.

Is there any inclination in your spirits to admire, love, and praise Jesus Christ for saving so many? I am persuaded (and that with good warrant from Christ's gospel) that the person who admires Christ's grace in saving others will never be lost himself. Yea, there is some heavenly fire in this smoking flax, or wick, that tenderhearted Jesus will not quench (Isa. 42:3), nor will He let the many waters quench it, nor will the floods drown it (Song 8:7), although they are the floods of hell.

Exhortation 3: Search and try whether you are in this will of Christ. Blessed be the Lord that no man can know that he is not in Christ's will, yet any Christian may know that he is in it. It is a matter of the greatest concern and calls for suitable diligence (2 Peter 1:10). Christ's prayer and Christ's blood are of the same extent. And both have an everlasting voice and virtue. This prayer of our Lord's was put up on the same night He was taken, and its force and virtue are still as great as when it was first uttered.

So it is with the voice and virtue of His blood. It speaks to this day things as precious as when He shed it. Alas! Our prayers have but little virtue and force when they are first put up, and that little is quickly spent. And were it not for our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), they would all come to nothing and never more be heard of. But it is far (oh, how far!) otherwise with Christ's prayers. They have infinite virtue when first put up, and that virtue is of eternal duration. Here we have our Lord praying to have all His people with Him where He is. His prayers were always heard. "And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always" (John 11:41-42).

And surely He was heard in His last and main prayer for His own glory and His people's blessedness in this text. Christ did all the Father's will in working out the redemption of the

elect. And the Father will do all the Son's will in giving the blessings bought to the redeemed. It is then of the highest importance to us to know that we are in this will of Christ, that always is carried into effect, and in this prayer of His that is, has been, and surely will be answered.

For your help in this inquiry about your interest in Christ's will and prayer, I will look into this blessed chapter and Christ's prayer in it and from it show you some marks of those whom Christ prays for. Then let your consciences judge your interest in them.

The first mark of those for whom Christ prays is in verse 6: "I have manifested thy name unto them which thou gavest me out of the world." Would you know if you are in Christ's prayer and will? Then see if Christ has manifested to you the Father's name. It is His work and His alone: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). Now what is the Father's name? Many think they know it, to whom Christ never revealed it. If you ask them if they know Christ's Father's name, they have a ready answer: "Is He not the first person in the Trinity? Is He not God the Father, the Almighty, the maker and ruler of heaven and earth?"

Yes, but this is the name of God only in general. The name of Christ's Father is that name and discovery of God wherein He stands related to the Son, and the Son to the Father, with the power and virtue of this name, as in verse 26 of this chapter: "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." In comparing verses 6 and 26, I would mark two things: One is in Christ's way of expressing His work in revealing His Father's name to His people. In verse 6 it is, "I have manifested." In verse 26 it is, "I have declared thy

name." But though there is little difference in the English, there is considerable difference in the Greek, as anyone acquainted with the original language knows. I never looked on the inscription on Christ's cross—written by His enemies in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—as a warrant to preachers of Christ's gospel to stuff their sermons with shreds of those or any strange tongues, nor that criticisms on the words in the original languages are proper for the pulpit. And if preachers had as little pleasure in them as the people have profit by them, they would be quickly laid aside. But sometimes the penury of the common tongue does not answer the fullness of the original. And in that case it must be supplied by further explication, as in verses 6 and 26. In verse 6, our Lord tells the Father that He had manifested His name to them, and in verse 26, that He had declared His name to them.

As the words run in the English, they seem to us to be much the same. But in the Greek, there is a remarkable difference. In verse 6, Christ's manifesting the Father's name to them respects the glorious and clear discoveries Christ had made to them of the Father's name in and by Christ's incarnation, words, and works. In verse 26, His declaring to them the Father's name respects the light and knowledge of the Father's name that Christ had wrought and was further to work in them. The manifesting speaks the discoveries of His Father's name that Christ made to them. The declaring it speaks forth the fruit of the former in His disciples. It is as if He had said, "I have made Thy name known to them. I have made them know Thy name, and they do know it," as He said in verse 25.

In comparing verses 6 and 26, note that the fruits and effects are the same in both. Whatever difference there is in the words expressing this work of Christ, the fruit produced thereby is the same. In verse 6, the fruit is said to be in two things: first, that "they have kept thy Word," expressing their

faith and obedience; second, that “now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee” (v. 7)—that is, “My person, My calling, My furniture, My words and works are all of Thee.” This they knew. And it seems to relate to what they say in John 16:29–30. In verse 26, the fruit of Christ’s declaring the Father’s name to them is said to be “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” The Father’s name is a special discovery of the love of the Father to His Son first, and then through the Son to perishing sinners. See if you have had anything of this. Christ teaches the Father’s name, and the Father teaches Christ’s name by His Spirit when He draws men: “Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45).

The second mark is in verse 8 (and it is a sad thing if people can find their own name in no part of this prayer): “And I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.” Search and see if Christ has given you any of His words. He has the tongue of the learned from the Father (Isa. 50:4) and uses it on all He saves. We are saved by words—not by the words that men speak, but that Christ speaks. “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). So here Christ said, “I have given them these words of love, life, and power.” Has Christ at any time spoken to your heart, so that you have been made to say, “This is the voice of my Beloved,” as in Song of Solomon 2:8? Men must hear Christ’s voice before they open the door to Him (Rev. 3:20). His voice makes the dead to hear and live (John 5:25–26).

The third mark of one who is in Christ’s prayer is found in verses 14 and 16. Such are not of the world as Christ is not of the world. They are in the world, but not of it, as the apostle distinguishes in 1 John 2:19, speaking of apostates. They were for a while in the church and with it. But they were never of it, as appeared by their apostasy from it. Our Lord was in the world

as never any man was. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10). The world knew neither its maker nor its savior. His people are in the world, but not of it. They have neither the spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2:12), nor their heart in it, nor their treasure and portion in it (Matt. 6:21). There is something sown and planted in their hearts that came from another world than this one and draws them to heaven as their home. And this world is but their passage and thoroughfare to it. Are your hearts in heaven and taken off from this world? Then conclude that you are in Christ's prayer and will.

The fourth mark is that Christ prays for believers who believe on Him (v. 20). Everyone who can make out his faith in Christ may lay claim to this prayer (though he is but a weak believer) and to an interest in it.

I will give one mark in general from the whole prayer. Can you say amen to all of it? Can you set your seal and amen of faith and love to all that Christ prays for here, a hearty amen to all that Christ prays for His own glory and the happiness of His body, the church? Do you daily desire with the heart the same things that Christ here prayed for, especially as to this verse 24? When you hear Christ's desire of having His people with Him where He is, does your heart echo it? "I would, oh, that I were with Thee where Thou art!" If it is so, you have part and portion in this good matter. If Christ's will and your will agree together for the same blessing, then you are in Christ's prayer and will. And there will be a performance of the Lord when He will get all His will regarding you, and you get all your desires from Him.

Exhortation 4: Believe on this blessed willer of salvation and on this will. You are not called at first to believe your interest in Christ and in His will to save you in particular. But you are,

at the peril of your souls, to trust this Savior with your salvation. You are to do this because of His declared ability and goodwill to save. Saving faith in Christ is not a bare assent to any proposition of truth concerning Christ the Savior—for that is but an act of the mind, and it is in devils, and in many ungodly men—but it is an act of the heart on the person of the Savior. “Men believe with the heart unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:9–10). It is a trust in this divine person, as revealed to us by His names in the gospel. So faith is so often called “believing on his name” (John 1:12; 1 John 3:23). There is one name of Christ in Isaiah 63:1: “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” There we have a talking description of the object of faith. All He says is true. And you may trust Him and take His word. And He can do all, anything, everything in and about salvation that a sinner can need to be done. He is mighty to save. Never did a sinner perish through Christ’s want of might to save. Remember these two names of Christ in all your employing of Him about your salvation. The truth of His saving word and the might of His saving arm ought never to be out of the eye of faith. How strong would faith grow in us if our faith duly fixed on both!

There is one Scripture I would open a little to you to this purpose. It is a place well known. Oh, that it were as well used! 1 Timothy 1:15: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” This is a text that ought to be in the memory and heart of every Christian. There are three things in it that I would glance at to show you I am pressing you to believe regarding this great willer of eternal life to His people. Here you have three things:

First, we have the sum of the gospel: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” In this short summary we have these things:

1. His name who is the Savior: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It looks like the devil's gospel rather than God's gospel if it does not have Christ's name in it.

2. What this Savior did: He came into the world. Never did man come into the world but Jesus Christ. The first man and woman were made in the world by their great maker. And all their posterity are born into the world, as Christ calls it in John 16:21. And this word comprehends not only His incarnation but all the work He did in the world and all the entertainment He met with from God and man, angels and devils, when He was in the world.

3. The errand and business He came into the world for and on: to save sinners, a strange errand and a hard work! If there had been no sinners in the world, Christ would have had nothing to do in the world. They therefore who deny themselves to be sinners do what they can to turn Christ out of His office of a savior. He did not come to condemn the world, for that was already done (John 3:17–18). Neither did He come to judge the world (John 12:47), but to save the world. For at His second coming He will judge the world (Acts 17:31).

There was never a sinless man in the world except the first and second Adam. The first was here for a little time and by his fall made all the world sinners. The second man, the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47), was always sinless and by the sacrifice of Himself put away sin (Heb. 9:26) and saved sinners. How frequently He asserted and proved it by word and deed that this was His errand into and His business in the world! How frequently His enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, stumbled at His person, doctrine, and kindness to sinners, and that because they neither knew Him nor His errand in the world! If He was gracious to sinners, they called Him a friend of publicans and sinners (Matt. 11:19). If He forgave sinners, as in Matthew 9:2, they said that He blasphemed. When the

woman who was a sinner approached Him with faith and love (Luke 7:39), even His host, who was no open enemy (since he invited Christ to his house and table), spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is that touches Him; for she is a sinner." He likely thought that if Christ had known it, He would not have allowed her to do so. Poor man! He doubted Christ's being a prophet; but he had no thought of Christ's being God's great high priest.

Brethren, Christ has not changed from what He was when He was in this world now that He is in heaven. He has the same kind heart for sinners and the same business with them to save them. And the world has not changed from what it was when He was in it. Christ's acts of grace to sinners from the Father's right hand are as much maligned by such as are ignorant of Him and enemies to Him this day as what of this sort He did on earth (when He was in their streets, fields, and houses and was maligned and reproached by the scribes and Pharisees). Men change in every age. But the seed of the serpent, the children of the devil, and the spirit of unbelief never change. And all that has been, is, or will be in the world of this enmity to Christ's grace to sinners flows from men's gross ignorance of Christ's main business in the world.

Christ's errand into the world was to save sinners. But how does He save them? Some say by showing them the way of salvation by His doctrine and by His example. The devil said this of Paul and Silas: "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). But who can think that God sent His own Son and that the Son came into the world to do no more than a prophet, an apostle, or an ordinary gospel minister does or can do? Some will tell you that Christ saves sinners by teaching them and helping them to save themselves. What a gross perversion of the gospel

is this! How plain it is that Christ came not to help us save ourselves, but to save us by Himself! He alone did all the work, and He alone was able to do it. And the glory of saving is so rich a jewel in Christ's crown that no man, without pride and blasphemy, can offer to wear it.

To be the savior of sinners is Christ's property, and no creature in heaven or earth can share in it. The holy angels are humble adorers of this name, and all the redeemed of the Lord are the happy partakers of the virtue of this name of Christ (Rev. 5:9–14). The papists will tell you that Christ saves sinners indeed by His death, but that all the application of the virtue of His death He has left with the church—that He left Peter to be the head of the church, and that Peter left his power with his successors, the bishops of Rome. By those delusions, antichrist has usurped Christ's throne of salvation and has deceived the world and condemned it. Instead of saving sinners, antichrist has been destroying the saints of the most high God. Nothing but the wrath of God on despisers of Christ and His gospel would have brought in and kept up so long this abomination of desolation (2 Thess. 3:10–12; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). But what do Christ and the apostles say about Christ's saving sinners? How plain it is that He, and He alone, and by Himself, does all!

4. We have the commendation of the gospel: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." The gospel is a saying, a report (Isa. 53:1; Rom. 10:16). But it is a testimony of God (1 Cor. 2:1), a record of God (1 John 5:10–11). Faith comes by hearing it (Rom. 10:17) and is built on this divine saying.

It is a faithful saying because it is the record that God gives of His Son (1 John 5:10), and it is given by Him who cannot lie (Titus 1:2–3; Heb. 6:18). This faithful saying is worthy of all acceptance. And this extends to all persons. All and every sinner should accept it. And it extends also to the

acceptance itself. It is worthy of all manner of acceptance, of all sorts, degrees, and measures of real acceptance. No man is excepted, and no sort of real acceptance is excluded. No man can exceed in his accepting this saying. So the apostle commends the gospel by two things that would commend any saying of God or man. First, it is true, and any man may trust it. Second, it is good, and every man should accept it.

5. We have the application of the gospel: “of whom I am chief.” You and I make no doubt that Paul, when he wrote this, was one of the greatest believers in Christ who ever was, and that from that faith he was one of the holiest men on earth, and that from both he was one of the most humble saints (strong faith and true holiness never fail to produce this effect). And therefore he said, “Of whom I am chief.” He had just said in verse 14, “The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.” Yet for all this grace he counted himself the chief of sinners.

Why did he say so? Surely, because he thought so.

But why did he think so? I may say, Paul would never forget his own name, “chief sinner,” though he was not a condemned sinner, but a pardoned one. But wherein does the force of this way of him applying the gospel to himself lie? The saying is general: “Christ came into the world to save sinners.” So how could he say, “Of whom I am chief”? Did Christ come into the world to save all sinners? No. Jesus said, “For judgment [or discrimination] I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see [who *think* they see] might be made blind” (John 9:39). This is like what Simeon said of Christ in Luke 2:34, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel” (see 1 Peter 2:7–8). Are all sinners alike? No. Paul well knew it, who judged himself to be the greatest of sinners. But Paul applied it to himself warrantably thus, as any other sinner may: “Because Christ’s

business in the world is to save sinners, though I am the chief of sinners, I am *but* a sinner; and greater or smaller sinners are all one to Christ. His errand is for both sorts, and His saving skill is for both sorts. All diseases are alike to Christ's art. All of them are desperate and incurable to any but Christ, and all are equally curable by Him."

Would you know, then, by the example of this great sinner, by the practice of this great believer, and by the teaching of this great apostle Paul (whose heart and pen were guided by the Holy Ghost) what faith in Jesus Christ is, and in what manner you should act it? Then do these four things:

First, take God's holy and righteous law and read it and think on it with faith and fear and sign it. Study it in a clear light. Bring it to your conscience, and your conscience to it. When God's law, with its spiritual light and power, and your conscience meet together, it will fare with you as it did with Paul: "Without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once [and then he was dead in sin]; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:8–9). How could Paul be without the law, who was so zealous a Pharisee? I may say, he was indeed busy with the law, but the law was not busy with him. He sought righteousness and life by the law and little dreamed that sin and death would come on him when the law came to him.

Now, when you and the law meet thus, put your seal to the law and subscribe your name thus: "I am a chief transgressor of this law," as Paul did in Romans 7:12, 14: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.... For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." The truly convinced sinner thinks well of God's law while he thinks worst of himself. He "speaketh not evil of the law, nor judgeth the law" (James 4:11) when he judges and condemns himself.

One of these is in the heart of every sinner. He either condemns God's law for its strictness, as the wicked servant did his lord and master in Matthew 25:24, or he condemns himself for his sinful breaking of it. And if a sinner's conviction is not sound and thorough, then the poor sinner's heart is divided. His frame is made up of reflecting partly on the strictness and righteousness of God's law and partly on some of his own breaches of it. But such a man is far from sealing the law with Paul's name, "the chief of sinners." Nay, he can name and call himself "me, the sinner." It should be read "me, the great, the singular sinner." Another Pharisee called the forgiven believer the same name in Luke 7:39. If there is therefore any allowed grudge against God's law and a readiness to judge other sinners greater sinners than yourselves, you are not likely to write after Paul's copy.

Next, turn to the other side of the Bible, the gospel, and assign the same name, "chief of sinners," to it also: "Christ came into the world to save sinners." The greater the sinner, the greater is his need of a savior. And saving the chief of sinners brings the chief honor and glory to the Savior. Therefore, Paul both seals to the truth of the gospel saying and to its being worthy of all acceptance. He believes it and welcomes it as the chief of sinners. And so must you, if you would believe to the saving of the soul. Though there are greater and smaller sins and sinners, yet no man ever did or can believe as a little sinner. "Less than the least of all saints" is what we find in a great saint's mouth (Eph. 3:8). But never did any true saint either think or call himself a little sinner. For as no man who sees sin truly can call any sin small or little, so no man who sees himself to be a sinner really can count himself a small or little sinner. Nor can it ever be till there is a little law to break, a little god to offend, a little guilt to contract, and a little wrath

to incur. All these are impossible to be, blasphemy to wish, and madness to expect.

Would you put forth and act faith on Jesus Christ? Come to Jesus Christ on the same errand for which He came into the world. He came into the world to save sinners. So come to Christ to be saved by Him. This is believing. Christ came into the world to get glory to His grace in saving sinners. And the believer comes to Christ to give Christ employment in His calling of saving and to get the benefit of His calling. A sinner's giving Christ employment in His office of saving is proper believing. The physician came for the sick to heal them. And the sick seek the physician so that He may heal them (Matt. 9:12–13). “The great and good shepherd of the sheep [as He is called in John 10:11 and Hebrews 13:20] came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). When He has found them, caught them in the arms of His love, and lays them on the shoulders of His care and strength, as in Luke 15:4–5, then they by faith bleat, as it were, after His care and protection till He brings them safely into the blessed fold in heaven (John 10:16). You may hear the blessed bleating of one of Christ's flock: “I have gone astray like a lost sheep,” as all His flock have done (Isa. 53:6). “Seek thy servant” (Ps. 119:176). And surely, when the shepherd seeks the stray sheep and the stray sheep seeks the shepherd, they will quickly meet. If Christ came into the world to save sinners, and if sinners come to Him to be saved by Him, He will save them, and they will be saved by Him.

When you have given employment to Christ in His office of saving, leave it to Him and entrust it to Him. Are we commanded to cast our burden on the Lord (Ps. 55:22), to cast all our care on Him (1 Peter 5:7)? May we not, must we not cast our main care on Him? And is not the keeping of our souls our main care? If we cast this care on Christ, must we

not trust Him quietly with it? It is a great but common fault with many Christians. They say they cast their care on Him when yet, through unbelief, they keep the burden still on themselves. Remember that, on your casting your burden on the Lord by faith, if He does not quite take it off you, He will either take off the weight of your burden or He will make it as wings to you on your journey to heaven. How many can seal to this in their experience! Have you with your heart committed the greatest care of your salvation to Jesus Christ? Then say in your heart, "My main care is over. I have put it in a good, strong, and sure hand."

See how Naomi said to Ruth, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day" (Ruth 3:18). So say I. Sit down quietly and with confidence. Leave the care of your salvation to Christ, for that is His province. And set about the work of your salvation, for that is yours, wherein also He will help you (Phil. 2:12–13). When you have once come to Christ, all your remaining duty is to abide in Him and bring forth fruit (John 15:4–5)—but it is indeed a large one.

But, alas, for as plain as the call of faith is in the gospel, there are two thoughts in men's hearts that defeat all and send thousands of gospel hearers into hell. The first is this: Some do not and will not believe that they are sinners.

Who thinks so? All the secure world thinks so. They may say that they are sinners, as all are. And it may be that some profane lips may swear it, as in that idle assertion, "I am a sinner." But do they know what it is to be a sinner, what dreadful vileness is in a sinner, what a loathsome creature every sinner is in God's sight, and what wrath hangs over their heads that will surely fall on them unless mercy prevents it? Do men believe this as to themselves in particular? No, surely, as is undeniable by their backwardness to search their hearts and ways, their enmity

against the searching light of God's Word, and by their rebelling against any glances of light that force themselves on their conscience. They do not believe that they are lost, undone sinners. And they cannot endure to be persuaded of so plain and dreadful a condition. They will not own themselves to be sick, though a sovereign physician is at hand.

The second is this: Even these, when awakened, or others to whom their being sinners is discovered with divine light and power cannot be persuaded that Christ has any business with them, or that they should make application to Him. Most awakened sinners say and think much as the devils did: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not" (Mark 5:7). I may say that the devil has better cause and sins less in saying so than an awakened sinner, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but He came also to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). To awaken a secure sinner's conscience and to speak peace to an awakened conscience are proper and mighty works of God.

I would conclude at this time with a few exhortations to some duties of believers from this doctrine of Christ willing eternal life to all His people:

Mourn moderately for the death and departure of believers out of this world. They are well where they are and far better than they were when they were here (Phil. 1:23). And we will quickly meet again in a far better world than this one. This last statement is the apostle's argument to the same duty in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. Yea, Christ Himself used this argument in comforting His disciples in their sorrow for His own death (John 14:2-3). And surely Christ's death was a more trying providence to His disciples than any, many, or all Christians' deaths can ever be to us. If the glorified spirits of saints above heard and knew the mournings of their friends whom they

have left behind, would they not say, as Christ said when going to die, “Weep not for us, but for yourselves, and for your children” (Luke 23:28)? Christ still had a kind heart for children and expressed it when going to the cross. They would say, “Fools, do you mourn for us who are now beyond mourning? You will never be well till you are with us. You are but mourning over the rotten rags of mortality that we have cast off. You are but mourning over our tent, while we are in the King’s palace. We could not be in both at once. Judge which is best. You are mourning over our grave when it is empty, as they did over the empty grave and grave clothes of our Lord, when He was risen and alive forevermore” (see Matt. 28; John 20:5–7).

Pray moderately and modestly for the lives of believers. We should pray for their lives. We should thankfully own the Lord’s mercy to them and us when He answers our prayers, as in Philippians 2:27. Yet we must pray with deep submission. It may be that Christ in heaven is desiring at that time to have them with Him where He is, while we on earth are praying that they may be kept with us where we are.

Learn to look on your own death in a Christian way. Learn to both kiss death as a friend and to defy it as an enemy (1 Cor. 15:55–57) and to triumph over it as conquered and destroyed by Christ (Heb. 2:14) and abolished by Christ (2 Tim. 1:10). You all know that you must die. It is a more common than godly phrase with many: “as sure as death.” I would not have men talk much of death when they think little about it. Nor ought any to think of dying and going hence without thinking where they are going. But for believers, death is that dark trance that you must pass through in order to fulfill this prayer of Christ. You must cease to be where you are before you can be with Him where He is.

This world and your condition in it must be mean and low in your eyes. And Christ’s world and that condition in which

you will be when in it must be high to your faith before you can look on going there without amazement. Therefore climb by faith as to the top of Pisgah and take a large view of this good land of glory. Canaan, the type of glory, was, at God's command, beheld by Abraham (Gen. 13:14–17), though he was but a pilgrim in it and did not possess it but in his seed. It was beheld by Moses (Deut. 3:27; 32:52; 34:1–4), though the sight of it was all, and possession was denied him. But it is not so with us as to the true Canaan. All who behold it by faith will possess it. And this makes beholding it more sweet to us.

I have commended 1 Timothy 1:15 to you, especially to help and direct you in the work of faith. This is how we should daily act, and this is what we live by, what we should daily hear of, and that without wearying. As Christ has no other business in the world than to save sinners, so sinners should have no other business with Christ but to believe on Him. Remember and believe this truth: There is nothing a man can do for Christ that can either please Christ or profit the man unless he first trusts Christ for salvation. The faith and trust of the heart on Him for salvation is the main service (and the first) He craves. If a man pretends to worship, to obey and serve, yea, to love Christ and suffer for Him, yet if he does not trust Christ by faith, all is a mere provocation to Christ, and all is unprofitable to the man. Believe this, you can do nothing that will please Him or save you but to trust in Him. And if this faith were more diligently acted, all the blessed fruit—of peace within, sanctification, holy walking, and patience in tribulation—would exceedingly abound in you (2 Thess. 1:3–4).

CHAPTER 9

Why Christ Desires This Blessing

I have spoken to the first two things in the matter of Christ's prayer in this verse: first, His naming the persons He prayed for—"those whom thou hast given me." Second, His naming the blessing He prays for regarding them—"that they may also be with me where I am." Christ has no desire to be in heaven alone. He cannot be without His ransomed ones. He had sent many to heaven by His grace before He came into the world (Acts 15:11). He has been still drawing multitudes of them since He went back to heaven (John 12:32). And He will shortly return again from heaven to gather them all, every one, in soul and body, and carry them all home to His Father's house (John 14:2-3).

Now I come to speak of the third thing in the matter of this prayer, and that is the end for which Christ desires this blessing for those persons. It is: "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Deep words, and even deeper matter! What is rendered "my glory" in the original is "the glory that is mine," with a special emphasis. This being the main and deepest thing in these words, I must insist the more on it.

There are three expressions in this prayer of Christ's glory. In verse 5: "the glory I had with thee before the world was." This Christ prayed for. This glory that the Son had

from eternity with the Father was the glory that He had as the eternal, natural, and essential Son of God that far passes created understanding. But now this Son of God had taken man's nature and in that nature had done His work of redemption and fulfilled His Father's will and commission to Him—for our Lord speaks as if He had done all when it was so near being finished. Now, when He is going out of the world to His Father, as in John 16:28, He prays that He, as man and successful mediator, may be admitted to and possessed of the glory that He, as the Son of God, from eternity possessed with the Father; and that was not interrupted, but veiled only, in and by His humbled state on earth. While this is too deep for us, it is well understood by Him who prayed for it and who has long possessed it.

In verse 22 we have another expression of Christ's glory: "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." This is another glory than the former. This glory was given to Him by the Father and given to His people by the Son. It was given to Him that it might be given to others by Him, as His receiving gifts for men (Ps. 68:18) is called His giving gifts to men (Eph. 4:8). He received that He might give. And great is Christ's glory, in both the fullness He received and in His giving and our receiving out of His fullness. All fullness dwells in Him (Col. 1:19), and all the receivings of His people are out of that fullness (John 1:16).

In our text we have the third expression of Christ's glory. And it is spoken of in three short phrases. First, it is "my glory," or, "mine especially and properly." Second, it is "my glory which thou hast given me." And, third, it is a glory to be beheld by His people. And this is what I would speak to.

This prayer of Christ, that His people might behold His glory, respects three things:

It respects Christ's glory in itself. It wants, if I might say so, to be displayed and seen. This sun of righteousness, as He is called in Malachi 4:2, wants a dark world to shine on and would have eyes to look to His glorious light. He calls men to behold Him: "I said, 'Behold me, behold me,' unto a nation that was not called by my name" (Isa. 65:1-2). He at last will be glorified in His saints and admired by all who believe. And He comes in His glory for that end (2 Thess. 1:10). And all that He does in and for His people is that "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:12). What a vast difference there is between the glory that Christ gives us and the glory He gets from us! We have nothing to give. Or, if we had and gave, we can add nothing to His glory. But He not only gives to us and adds to us, but He is all in all to us (Col. 3:11). Yet so gracious is He that if you put a perishing soul into His hand to save, if you bring your vile sores to Him to be healed, therein He will be glorified. Christ is honored in His calling especially.

Also this prayer respects His people and their happiness. Not only is Christ glorified in His people's beholding His glory, but in beholding it they are made happy. There was never a believer who ever had so large a faith or a heart so enlarged and inflamed with love as to be able fully to conceive what warm love and what a high and great design was in our Lord's heart in putting this petition up for them. Believers on Jesus Christ, make no doubt but that He means well for you. He has designed great things for you and more than you can imagine in this prayer for you that you may behold His glory when you are with Him where He is.

Further, this prayer respects the eternal work and employment of His people when they are with Him where He is. If anyone asks, "What will we do? How will we be employed

through the ages of eternity?" Christ answers it here: "They will behold My glory." This is a work that they will never come to an end of, work they will never weary in, and work that they will have as little mind to weary of as they will have cause or reason to be weary in—for every view of His glory will dart fresh bliss into those who behold it.

There are two things to be discoursed from this part of the text: first, what the glory of Christ given to Him to be beheld in heaven is; and, second, what the beholding of this glory by His people in heaven is.

I will not enter on either of them this day, but would only prepare your hearts to think on them. These two questions—what is Christ's glory, and, what is the beholding of it in heaven?—are neither of them to be fully answered in this life. Christ's glory would be but a small glory if either the heart of man could conceive it fully, or the tongue of man could express it all. If the glory that Christ has prepared for His people is such as is described in 1 Corinthians 2:9, how much more must Christ's own glory be!

There was a man as able to tell as ever any man was, and that was Paul. He had been long exercised in the study of Christ and in preaching of Him. Yet he, when an old man and in bonds for Christ (Eph. 6:20), said this: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). And surely the riches of Christ are both those riches of grace and glory that He is possessed of and the riches that He enriches His people with here and in heaven. Is this not a strange text? And is it not strange preaching that is made on an unsearchable theme? Yet for all he knew, and for all he taught, Christ's riches were still unsearchable even to Paul—though it is just to think that he dove deeper in them than any man since.

Christ's riches, in Paul's eyes, were like a vast heap of gold that no man could count or like the vast ocean whose drops none can measure or tell. And Paul preached them all the better in that he saw them to be unsearchable. But if this man should be caught up to heaven and come again to the earth, would he not be able to tell strange things then? So it was with Paul (2 Cor. 12:1–7). But what did he say of it? He heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (v. 4). Any Christian may safely think that, though there is a veil cast on these visions and revelations of the Lord to Paul, as he calls them in verse 1, yet the main thing revealed was the glory of Christ. But it was revealed in such a light as was not fit to shine on earth. And therefore the apostle says no more of it, but only tells us what he felt after it, both his great danger and his sharp cure (vv. 7–9).

But though Christ's glory in heaven and the beholding of it are things within the veil and cannot be fully known by us till we are there, yet we must not lay aside all thoughts and inquiries about them while we are here. There are means and ways that God has appointed that we should use for knowing them. By His blessing some knowledge of them is obtained. And this knowledge is necessary to all and of great advantage to them who attain it.

I would therefore give you a few things more remotely about this great subject:

There is a discovery made to us in the Word of the glory of Christ, and there only are we to study it. It is the glory of the written Word of God that the glory of Christ is revealed in, and to us in and by it only. We must not study to know Christ, and we must not search into His glory but in that light. There are three ways that some use that are vain and unprofitable:

One is by the works of God's creation and providence (Ps. 19:1–6). These discover plainly the being of God and His eternal

power and Godhead (Rom. 1:20) and declare His wisdom and goodness. But nothing of Christ's glory is or can be learned in and by the old creation. Such as talk of a gospel preached to the heathen by the sun, moon, and stars gives them an office their Creator never made them for or put them in. And if they who teach such doctrine pretend to be Christians, surely they must have both a low and a false opinion of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, as it is called in 1 Timothy 1:11.

A second way is by men's own wisdom. That noble power in man is quite dark, dull, and blind about Christ and His glory. It can do something in its own sphere and orb. It can search into the earth, mount up to heaven, and contemplate God's glorious works. But it can never find out Jesus Christ or see His glory. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God [that is, savingly], it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:20–21). The gospel is the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery (1 Cor. 2:7) and the substance of it. Christ is the main and greatest part of this mystery (1 Tim. 3:16). But these are weak, vain means to know Christ by.

There is a third way that is not only unprofitable, but wicked. And that is the way of idolatry. The whole of popery is of this sort. They use many crafty devices to discover Christ's glory to the blind people. They have pictures of Christ as a babe, as on the cross, as in glory in heaven. But instead of making Christ's glory known to men, by these cursed devices they darken His glory, disgrace the Lord Christ, crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

The Word of God then is the only light in which Christ's glory shines. And in this light alone must we inquire into it. In other matters, there are many truths and things that are demonstrable by nature's light and well asserted in the Word

of God. But about Christ and His glory, nature's light, God's works of creation, and man's natural wisdom can give no help—and therefore we should not call in their assistance. It is only God's Word that can help in this great inquiry, and we should use it.

The only eye wherewith Christ and His glory can be seen is the eye of faith. The only mental eye by which the spiritual glory of Christ can be seen is faith. Faith is sometimes opposed to sight, as sight is taken for full enjoyment (2 Cor. 5:7). And faith is sometimes expressed by sight, as faith is a real apprehending of its object, as in 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:18; Hebrews 11:1, 13, 27; and in innumerable places in both the Old and New Testaments. And this eye is simply needful, even where the light of God's Word shines most. The Jews had the Old Testament, and yet they did not know Christ and saw no glory in Him, as was foretold of them in Isaiah 53:2–3. They saw Him and yet did not believe, but hated Him. So it is with all men to whom the gospel comes, until faith is given.

No eye but that of faith can see and take up Christ and His glory, and there are two causes for that: first, Christ and His glory are out of our sight now; second, it is always beyond the reach of any power in us but faith given by God. Christ's glory once passed before men's eyes, but none saw it except believers (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1–2). Could anything but faith take up Christ's glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth? Could any but a believer see Him and call Him "eternal life," when He was made of no reputation? At the last day, Christ and His glory will make a great appearance when He comes in His glory and sits on the throne of His glory (Matt. 25:31). But at that day (though all the nations are gathered together), there will be no faith, neither on His right or His left hand. What a strange thought is this! And what a strange day that will be! All the saved will have no faith,

nor have any need of it, nor use for it. Sight and love will put an end to their faith. And all the damned shall no more be unbelievers, for the sight and fear of Christ's glory will eternally remove their unbelief. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7). But from Christ going to heaven till His return to judge the world, faith is the only eye that can savingly behold Christ and His glory.

This eye of faith is only of Christ giving. No man is born with it. It grows up in no man by nature—no means, nor minister, nor any creature can give it. It is Christ's gift alone. It is by His Spirit (Eph. 1:17–18). It is the fruit of His eye salve (Rev. 3:18). All men are darkness till they are made light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8). There are two things always done together by Christ when He works faith: He manifests and reveals Himself, and He gives an eye to see Him and His glory. No man can see Christ by his own power, nor can he see Christ against Christ's will. "If he hide his face, who then can behold him?" (Job 34:29). If the sun shines, and the man has eyes and has them opened, he does and must see, and never until then.

This eye of faith that Christ gives is of great advantage and use to them who receive it. 1 John 5:20: "And we know that the Son of God is come." How do you know it? He "hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true [that understanding and the knowing of Christ is faith] and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

I would here name some advantages that attend the gift of faith, to the praise of the giver and the profit of the receivers of this gift:

Life, the first advantage, comes in this way. When Christ works faith in the heart, the new life is begun in the soul. The

man who gets faith and is made a believer “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). This life is from “the hearing of the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live” (v. 25). Christ has a voice to send forth that can make those born deaf to hear and the dead to live.

But how is it in the acting of this faith wrought by Christ? We have a notable place for this in John 3:14–15: “And 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.” Our Lord is here teaching Nicodemus, a weak but honest beginner. And He teaches him wisely and teaches him great things. He teaches the corruption of nature, the absolute necessity of regeneration, and that this regeneration is from the Holy Spirit of God, who therein works sovereignly, secretly, and effectually. He then preaches Himself to him, as He who came down from heaven and was in heaven (v. 13). Nicodemus did not understand Christ’s doctrine of regeneration, so Christ put him to greater mysteries about His person and His mission from heaven. We may think that he who said about the former, “How can these things be?,” might be more puzzled to know how Christ was to save sinners, and how they were to use Him for salvation. Both these Christ teaches him in verses 14 and 15 and more fully afterward in that same chapter to verse 21. And this He does by a type that no Israelite was ignorant of, though few masters in Israel rightly understood it.

The plain and full sense of it is this: As Moses (at God’s command and appointment) lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, so that every Israelite stung by the fiery serpents might look to it and live (Num. 21:6–9), so Christ, the Son of Man, is lifted up on the cross so that every sinner stung by sin and the curse of God’s law might look to Him by faith and

live forever. The Israelites were to use the lifted-up serpent by looking on it as the only ordinance of God for their healing and were to use neither salve nor plaster for the fiery serpents' deadly stings. So the stung sinner must use a crucified Christ as the only ordinance of God for life, and eternal life—and that life comes to him only by this look of faith.

The second advantage, all the believer's growth and increase in grace and life is by a believing beholding of the grace and glory of Christ. When the apostle is exhorting to growth in grace as the sure preservative against apostasy, he adds, "Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). It is as if he had said, "If you would grow in grace, you must also grow in the knowledge of Christ." Yea, when he is speaking of the greatest attainments in grace, he tells us this is the fruit of them: "They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8). But more directly, Paul teaches us how faith advances the Christian in his new life: "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). "We all. It is not only I, Paul, whom you may think to be singularly privileged, but all we who, under the dispensation of the gospel, have had the veil taken off our hearts and eyes, we all behold the same glory of Christ, and with the same sort of fruit." Though we do not all behold it with the same clarity and brightness, nor with the same measure of fruit, yet all who truly behold His glory are truly made conformable to Him. If no likeness to Christ's image is wrought in you, you make it to be justly suspected that it is either not the right Lord you behold, or not the right eye you behold Him with, or that it is not a right glass you behold Him in. For where all three are right, the fruit of likeness to Christ never fails.

The third advantage, all the peace, comfort, and joy of heart that believers have in this life, comes by a believing beholding of Christ and of His grace and glory. Joy and peace fill the heart by believing (Rom. 15:13). What can distress a believer when Christ's glory is seen? And what can quiet his heart when a dark cloud and veil is on His glory? No storm can be on a Christian, and no fear can disquiet him so but that a word spoken with Christ's power will comfort. "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matt. 14:27). Thus were they made to rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory," who loved Him and believed on Him whom they had not seen (1 Peter 1:8).

The beholding of the glory of Christ by the eye of faith is the greatest and surest test of men's state that can be. They who have it are true Christians, for thus are they made such (1 John 5:20). They who never saw Christ's glory remain still in the pit of condemned nature, where darkness and death rule.

Beholding Christ's glory by faith, as it is revealed in the gospel, is a good help to understand what beholding His glory in heaven is—for it is the same Christ and the same glory of Christ that is beheld in earth and in heaven. Only this glory shines in another manner in heaven and is beheld with another and higher eye than faith—though faith is the best eye, and the gospel the best glass on earth. On this point, I would show how impossible it is that an unbeliever, who never saw Christ's glory in the gospel, can have any right apprehension of beholding His glory in heaven.

Consider what heaven is. The Lord of heaven tells us that it is in being with Him where He is. Now, that man who never knew what Christ's company on earth is can never know what His company in heaven is. Speak to him of heaven as a state of rest and happiness, where no crosses, death, or trouble can be, and this the natural man can know and relish. But Christ's true heaven and Christ's picture of it in the Word are as dark and

disgusting to an unbeliever as Christ's yoke and burden is. But to a believer—one whom the Lord has chosen and caused to approach Him (Ps. 65:4), who has been often made to say, "It is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. 73:28), and can say with 1 John 1:3, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ"—to such I say, being with Christ where He is puts another light in his mind and another gust in his heart.

The work of heaven to behold Christ's glory cannot be understood by an unbeliever any more than a man born blind can know what pleasure and profit is in beholding the glory and light of the sun. And if such would and could search their hearts, they would find (and if they were honest they would own the truth, as some of them in blasphemy do) that the gospel discovery of heaven is dark and disgusting to them. They neither know it nor love it. It is hidden from their blinded eyes and cross to their carnal hearts.

They do not know the title to heaven, how a man comes by a right to it and enters into the possession of it, and that is by free grace in Jesus Christ. This is no small part of Christ's glory and of believers' happiness that it is so. This title is only to be perceived by faith. The same grace that we owe the forgiveness of sin to, we owe the possessing of glory to (Acts 26:18). By that same grace that we are welcomed to Christ's house of grace on earth (Rom. 5:2), by the same grace we are welcomed into Christ's house of glory above. It is grace brought to us (1 Peter 1:13). It is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life (Jude 21). But an unbeliever who has no knowledge or relish of this blessed tenure to glory by free grace, what fit and right thoughts can he have of heaven? All men are by nature ignorant of the true heaven: of the true way to it, of the true work and bliss in it, of the only title to it, and of the tenure of it. And therefore they need what the apostle prays for in Ephesians 1:17–19.

Application: Although you may think it preposterous to say anything of application before we enter on the doctrine itself, yet, since what has been said is but introductory to what I intend (if the Lord will) further to speak on this great subject, so what I say now in application will be accordingly managed.

The text we have before us is about beholding Christ's glory in heaven. I have been showing you that it is simply necessary to any right understanding of this great bliss that a man knows in his experience something of beholding Christ's glory by faith in this life. Without this, no words that men can speak about it can be understood by natural men, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). I may truly say that no natural man does or can understand this verse. It is grievous and shameful to see and read what blundering, confused work many wise and learned men, but destitute of that mind and spirit of Christ that led Paul in writing it, make of this verse, when it is plain and bright, though deep, to every ordinary Christian.

Now, the glory of Christ and beholding it are of the deepest of the deep things of God. How then can a natural man receive them, know them, or discern them? He is without that spiritual faculty by which alone they can be rightly entertained. It is a dangerous and hurtful practice to the church of God and to the souls of men and to the truths of God (and not a few are guilty of it, and many smart by it) for men to endeavor to bring down the deep mysteries of the gospel to the sense and gust of a natural unregenerate man. It is sure that those who teach should teach plainly. And those who write should make "the vision plain, that he may run that readeth it" (Hab. 2:2). But they must still speak or write as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11) and "as stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). If, as it is undoubted, we cannot bring up the natural man's

understanding to the deep things of God, we must not attempt to bring down the depths of God to their natural blindness. This would be to degrade the things of the Spirit of God and to delude the sinner. But let us study to declare God's mind in His Word as plainly as we can to natural men who hear us, and withal tell them that the things themselves of which we speak as plainly as we can are beyond their reach, so that they may know that the things of God are deep, and they themselves are blind, till the Spirit of Christ opens the understanding and opens the Scriptures to them, as He did to His disciples in Luke 24:32, 45.

My work at this time will be to offer you some helps to try yourselves and to find out whether you have ever beheld the glory of Christ in the gospel. You have the gospel glass, and most of you think you have the eye of faith also. The question that I put to your consciences is this: Have you seen His glory in the gospel by faith? If you have, then you will find three things:

1. Wherever Christ's glory is seen by faith, it is always seen as singular, transcendent, and matchless. So it is in itself, and so it is seen by all who behold it. Paul calls his knowledge of Christ "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). And that you may not think that he thought he had a great deal of it, and that you might know that Paul is rather commending Christ's excellency than the measure of his attainments in the knowledge of Christ, he tells us in verses 10–14 how small an opinion he had of what he had attained, in respect of what he wanted, followed, and pressed after. If you ever had a true view of Christ's glory, you would judge that there is no glory like it. What you formerly thought glorious, you will then say of it, as 2 Corinthians 3:10, "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." And the apostle is there speaking of the most outwardly glorious appearance that ever God made in the world in giving the law. And as he says again of that which is

most glorious in the eyes of one who does not know Christ (his own righteousness), in Philippians 3:8–9 he calls it and all things else “loss and dung” compared with Christ. And so will every man who sees Christ with anything of Paul’s eye.

For illustration, suppose that a man who was blind from the womb had his eyesight given him by God, as was the case mentioned in John 9. Suppose that his sight were given him in the nighttime in a house. He would doubtless wonder at the light of candles. But if he went abroad and saw the stars in the firmament or if the moon shone, this would be more glorious still. Yet when the morning dawned and the sun rose and shined, would not the man think, “Surely I never saw such a glorious light before”? Fire and candles on earth and moon and stars in heaven have no such light as the sun. So will it be to them to whom “the Sun of righteousness aris[eth] with healing in his wings” (Mal. 4:2), with salvation in His beams. He will say, “There is no glory like Christ’s glory, no man like Him, no angel, no creature like Him.” If Christ’s glory has not disgraced all other glory save His own, you have either seen little of it or none at all.

When the glory of Christ is seen by faith, desires of seeing more of it rise in the heart. What the preacher said in general about seeing in Ecclesiastes 1:8, “The eye is not satisfied with seeing,” is justly applicable to this spiritual eye in beholding Christ’s glory. It is not satisfied nor ever will be till the believer is with Christ where He is and beholds His glory there. Paul had many and singular views of Christ’s glory and yet was studying Christ still. If you knew Christ as well as Paul did, you would be of his mind. Yea, if you have any right beholding of His glory, you will still desire more.

[2.] He who beholds Christ’s glory truly perceives his own darkness and blindness and is humbled thereby. You may think this is a strange mark, but it is a sure one. It is strange, but most

true, that an unbeliever who "hath never heard Christ's voice, nor seen his shape" (as Christ said to the Jews concerning His Father in John 5:37) may, and many of them do think, that they know Christ. And they may say, as in Hosea 8:2, "My God, we know thee," or, "My Savior, I know Thee." Yet a true beholder of Christ's glory thinks that he does not know Him at all, or next to nothing. And those thoughts are proofs that the one is quite ignorant of Christ, and that the other has begun to know Him.

What the apostle said in 1 Corinthians 8:2, "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," holds good especially in the knowledge of Christ. A proud conceit of a man knowing Christ is a demonstration that the man never saw His glory. It would be as if a man should say, "I have seen the sun in its noonday glory, and I can stare on it steadily." Would not any man think that either this man did not have good eyes, or that he had not seen the right sun but only a picture of it, who has or can have nothing of the true sun's light and heat and influence, or that he was grossly lying? For all know that the glory of the sun is too great and bright for the sharpest and strongest eye.

When a man from the top of a high mountain looks round about him, he can see for many miles and can see many things. If this man has high thoughts of his eyes and sight, you cure him or he cures himself of that fancy by trying his sight with the sun. Then he sees what a disproportionate faculty his eye is to this glorious object. So is it with men when they approach Christ's glory. Then their darkness and blindness are discovered. As in His light we see light (Ps. 36:9), so by and in this light we see our own darkness. A very wise and good man said in Proverbs 30:2-4, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have [or know] the knowledge of the holy. What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?"

[3.] It is impossible that any ray and beam of Christ's glory can be rightly taken up by the eye of faith without the beholder of it being humbled by the sight of it. And the brighter the discovery, the more humble will it make the man to be. Perfect humility is only in heaven, where the perfect disclosure of Christ's glory is made by Him and gotten by the inhabitants. What did Isaiah say when he saw His glory and spoke of Him? "Woe is me, for I am undone" (Isa. 6:5). Why was he undone? "Because I am unclean, and have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." What did the beloved disciple say when he had a vision of Christ's glory? "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." And he might have died at the sight unless Christ had laid His right hand on him and spoken comfortably to him (Rev. 1:17–18). What was the fruit of Job seeing the Lord with the seeing of the eye, far beyond all he had heard by the hearing of the ear? Was not this the fruit and effect of it: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5–6)? Thus will it be with you, if you obtain any true discoveries of Christ's glory.

The Glory of Christ

*T*here is no greater theme on earth or in heaven than the glory of Christ. There is no higher enjoyment here or above than beholding this glory. Yet all the Lord's chosen will surely partake of it, for here Christ prays for it. In explaining Christ's words in His prayer for this blessing, I proposed to speak to two things: what Christ's glory is, and what it is to behold it.

Before I enter either of them, there are yet three things I would observe from the connection and scope of these words: "I will that they be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me."

Observation 1: Christ's presence and His people's beholding His glory go together. So it is on earth, and so it is in heaven. When is it that a man begins to see any of Christ's glory but when He is drawn to Christ, when Christ draws near to him and manifests Himself to him. Time was when Paul saw nothing of Christ's glory. He heard of Him, hated Him, and persecuted Him, but all this was from his ignorance and unbelief (1 Tim. 1:13). When he was first charged by Christ for his evil ways (Acts 9:4–5), it is no wonder that his first words were, "Who art thou, Lord?"—that is, "I do not know Thee. I never knew

that I did Thee any wrong.” But once Christ revealed Himself to Paul, immediately he saw Christ’s glory and made it his all.

So it is with all natural men till Christ draws near to them and brings them near to Him savingly. Christ “hath no form nor comeliness,” and when they see or hear of Him, there is no beauty that they should desire Him (Isa. 53:2). This is as true of them who hear of Christ and see Him crucified in the gospel light (Gal. 3:1) as of the Jews who saw His humbled state on earth. They wonder what men see in Jesus Christ, what glory in Him they behold by faith, and what believers mean when they say, as in Song of Solomon 5:16, “His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

If you had ever heard His voice or seen His face, you would know Him from all the men on earth or angels in heaven. But, alas! There are many who bear the name of Christians (and God knows well, and men may know pretty well also, how little they deserve that name) who never saw so much glory and desirableness in Jesus Christ as they see in a heap of the white and yellow dust of the earth. They cannot afford a good word or thought to the Jews (and justly) who preferred Barabbas to Christ, when they themselves daily do the like in preferring the satisfying of their vile lusts to the enjoyment of Christ’s company. And what the Jews did, they do from the same cause (and a sad and sinful one it is). Neither of them did nor do see anything of Christ’s glory. He is so far from them, they do not know Him (1 Cor. 2:8). He has not manifested Himself to them.

This truth appears also, as in the beginning, so in the progress of Christianity. If the Christian grows in grace, it is also in the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). If the new creature grows, it is by and under the beams and shinings of the sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:1). All gospel institutions are for this end, and when blessed, they reach it: “Till we all come in [or

into] the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Every Christian's experience bears witness to this. Do you not sometimes see more of Christ's glory than at other times? Is not the light brighter, and your faith more quick and active? And when is it so but when Christ draws nearer to you, and you are brought nearer to Him, than usual? But for such poor creatures who know nothing of Christ's presence with or absence from them, save in and by His ordinances and providences (in which also a true believer may find Christ's special presence, though others do not, nor can), I do not say that such see more of Christ's glory, but rather that they never saw any of it. They are blind and cannot see afar off (2 Peter 1:9). Christ is far from them, and they are far from Him. He has not yet looked on them in love, nor have they looked on Him by faith.

But for true Christians, if you should ask the question of when did you see most of Christ's glory, all would answer that though it is little that they ever beheld of it, yet the best sight they ever had was when He drew nearest to them. Then He displayed His glory, and then they beheld it. And it may be that He did so, and they found it, when they were in the deep dungeon, in darkness and distress. There is no case a believer is brought into but Christ's love will visit him in it. And the darker the place, His sunshine is both more needful and more glorious: "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Mic. 7:8). Not only will He bring me forth to the light, and I will behold His righteousness, as in verse 9, but when and while I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me and enlighten my darkness—as David sings by faith in Psalm 18:28, and as thousands have felt. So it is undoubted that most of Christ's glory is seen when He is nearest to His people.

Thus also it is with the state of saints in heaven. They are brought near to Christ. They are with Him where He is and therefore behold His glory, above all that we can conceive. Christians labor here under many humbling things within and without. They would see more of Christ's glory. They pray, as Moses did, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory" (Ex. 33:18). But yet they cannot behold it as they would. Why? Because they cannot be so near to Christ as they would. And He will not draw so near to them as they would while they are where they are and not yet where He is. The greatest nearness to Christ and the greatest visions of His glory are both reserved for His people when they will possess the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12).

Observation 2: Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly willing that His glory be beheld by His people. He prays here for it in an extraordinary manner: "I will it." Christ is a great deal more pleased and more desirous that His glory be beheld by His people than they are either willing or able to behold it. He has a good mind to be looked on when He speaks in Isaiah 45:22: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Verse 21 refers to Him as "a just God and a Saviour." (None can save a sinner but a god. A mere man-savior can save no sinner. And there is no God-Savior but our Lord Jesus Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever [Rom. 9:5]). Christ here calls men to look on Him for salvation. Look to Christ, and you will see salvation in His heart and eye. And salvation will dart in on your heart and soul. The brazen serpent was set up to be looked on by Israel. Though it could not speak, it could heal by God's ordinance. But the antitype, Jesus Christ, can both heal and speak. And the power of His voice can and always does give eyes to the man and salvation by looking. It makes the dead to both hear

and live (John 5:25). Again, in Isaiah 65:1, He says, "Behold me, behold me," to a nation that "was not called by my name."

Question 1: If Christ is so willing to have men behold His glory, why does He not display His glory and give all men eyes to see it?

Answer: Though this question savors of an ungodly, unhumbled heart, yet there are a few things that may stop such mouths. It is a wonder of grace that He does so to any. And they all admire it who partake of it. Thomas seems to admire it (John 14:22). It would be more hopeful work and more fitting for such to wonder that free grace falls on any than to murmur and grumble that it passes by so many.

Would you have this great blessing? Have you sought it humbly and earnestly? Have you turned His gracious call and promise into an earnest prayer? He says to you, "Look to Me, and be saved." So answer, "Lord, look on me and save me." A better man than any of us prayed so: "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name" (Ps. 119:132), and to the same purpose more largely in Psalm 106:4–5. Must not that man be both wicked and unreasonable who quarrels with God for not giving the grace that he himself is unwilling to receive, is careless to ask for, and strives against with all his might? But nothing will fully stop the mouths of cavilers against free grace but either some taste of this grace or the judgment of the last day. "Out of their own mouth they shall be judged by the Lord" (Luke 19:22).

But even Christians themselves are apt to say that if Christ is so willing to have His glory beheld by His people, why then does He stand so far off? Why does He hide Himself so long? Why do I pray and am not heard? If He would as earnestly have His glory beheld as I would behold it, why is this distance and darkness so long continued?

We have many such complaints from eminent saints in the Word, and they are too common in all times. We experience the tremblings of unbelief of saints in Scripture more than the vigor of their faith. The infirmities of saints are recorded in the Word for our humbling and warning; and their graces, for our imitation and encouragement. To such honest complainers I would say that this mood comes on you from the remnants of natural enmity to the glory of God's grace. This enmity, though it was subdued in its power in you in the day of His power on you, yet has its roots underground and sometimes springs up and troubles you. There is no evil perfectly rooted out of a sanctified man in this life, nor any grace planted in him that is perfect.

I would also say that the sovereignty of His grace appears as much in the times and measures of its dispensation as in its being given at first to the sinner who never obtained any before. Let all believers remember that they are still under the dominion of the same free grace that at first subdued them to Christ. The greatest receivers of Christ's grace are not masters of it, but subjects and receivers. They must not say, as Jeremiah 2:31, "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." The richest saint must be and is a humble beggar at grace's door all his days. And Christ is the lord of the house and the dispenser of the alms. And as the alms are too good not to be patiently waited for, so the Lord is too good and too great to be quarreled with. Never did a believer get any good by complaining of Him. Complain to Him and pray and ask largely, but still with faith and patience. Knock at His door, but stay and bless Him that ever He gave you any crumb of His grace. Mix your prayers for new wanted grace with praises for His old dispensed grace. Christ loves you and has proved it. Believe it, bless Him for it, and wait for His renewing His love to you. And in due time you will find that He will not only

answer, but will out-do all your desires for Him and all your expectations from Him.

Observation 3: Beholding Christ's glory in heaven is the main part of the happiness of His people there. So Christ expresses it, as if He would explain what His people should get and do when they are where He is: They will behold His glory. This is that true beatific vision, that happy-making sight, that so many of the schoolmen (though they are generally better philosophers than divines) talk and write of. But all such as talk and think of it must do so poorly who are unacquainted with Christ and His grace in their own hearts. But this much is sure and is plainly revealed: The happiness of the glorified stands and flourishes to eternity in beholding Christ's glory.

The object is most excellent. The eye with which they behold Him and the light they behold Him in are rare and singular. There are no such eyes, and there is no such light on earth or in the lower created heavens. And the fruits of beholding His glory in this blessed way are inexpressible. There are two eyes that believers behold Christ's glory with: faith and sight. It is the same glory of the same Jesus that is seen. It is the same man who sees His glory. But how vastly different are these two eyes and the two beholdings! The one is for this life; the other, for the next life.

The glory of Christ as it shines in heaven is not for the eye of faith. Faith may take it up in the promise and believe and wait for it, but the glory of Christ in heaven is far above the eye of faith (Rom. 8:24–25). On the other hand, the glory of Christ as it shines in the gospel and as seen by faith is not for sight and is unspeakably below it. For as needful and useful as faith is now to believers, yet when they come to the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls, they have nothing more to do with it. There is no need of the shield of faith when the war has ended, and the soldier of faith is made more than a

conqueror through Christ who loved him. Pictures of Christ, love letters from Him, and love tokens (the glory of the gospel and the necessary food of faith) are no more needed when the blessed Beloved is present and enjoyed.

I would now come to speak of the first thing mentioned earlier: the glory of Christ. And it is with reverence and godly fear that I should speak and you should hear of this great and awful theme. What I mean to say of it will be under these two headings: the glory of Christ as He represents God to us; and the glory of Christ as He represents us to God, as He is God's only true representative of His church to God. Christ is both, and great is His glory in both. I will speak soberly of this glory.

Christ is the only representative of God to His church, and great is His glory therein. This glory of Christ is beheld by faith now, and to eternity by sight. There are many words about this, especially in the New Testament where the Old Testament veil over Christ's glory is taken away. And yet the New Testament light will itself vanish also when the Lord returns in His glory and has His church with Him where He is. I will name just a few of them. He is called "the image of the invisible God" in Colossians 1:15. He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" in Hebrews 1:3. Who is the image? He "that upholdeth all things by the word of his power; who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." Whose glory's brightness is He? What person's character does He bear? God the Father's, who spoke in the Old Testament times by the prophets and in the New Testament times by His Son (vv. 1-2). So 2 Corinthians 4:6: "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shineth in the face [or person] of Jesus Christ." These are all deep words, and it is deep matter in them.

To prepare our way to enter on this theme, there are three things I would lay before you:

A right and sound knowledge of God is simply and absolutely necessary to true happiness in this and the other world. Our Lord in John 17:3 said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." And the apostle, speaking of Christ as known, said, "This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). None know the true God and none can come by eternal life but they who know Christ. No faith, love, worship, or obedience can be performed and acted by him who does not know God. The Athenian inscription, "To the unknown God," was ridiculous but suitable enough for blind idolaters. This truth of the necessity of the knowledge of God in order to please and enjoy Him and to know His favor is engraved on men's hearts by nature.

God in Himself and absolutely considered is unknowable by men in this life unless He in some way manifests Himself to us. This seems to be referred to by 1 Timothy 6:16: "He dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see." Ephesians 5:13: "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." Yet divine light is covering God (Ps. 104:1-2) that no creature can see through. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). This truth stands on three foundations: the greatness of God and His glory, the shortness of men's reach as creatures, and the corruption of their minds as sinners. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). That is a dreadful but true picture of the dungeon that all men by nature are born in, must live and die in, and go through it and from it into outer darkness.

In what way God did and does manifest Himself and His glory to the holy angels and how they behold Him is quite hidden from us. Though our Lord tells us that "in heaven they

do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10), yet what this is we know no more than we do that in Revelation 22:4 of the triumphant church that will see His face.

To come a little lower and to speak of the first man who was made a little lower than the angels, it is also beyond our understanding how God manifested Himself to him and how he beheld God’s glory—though we are sure that both were done. But when sin came in, then plainly the minds of all men are so defiled and darkened that there is a necessity that they must all be taught of God who know the Lord. And blessed be His name that He has promised this in the new covenant and fulfills it to the heirs of promise, as they are called in Jeremiah 31:32–34; John 6:45; and Hebrews 6:17. Yet when the saving knowledge of God and faith are given, such is the weakness of this eye that, on any special appearance of the glory of God, fear and amazement seize their hearts. From this came that saying, so usual in old times, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God” (Judg. 13:22), though God appeared in mercy to Manoah and his wife and with a promise of a son to them and a judge and savior to Israel. Jacob had wrestled and prevailed with the angel and was blessed by him. Yet he said, with thankfulness and wonder, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen. 32:30). What made Isaiah to say, on seeing God’s glory, “Woe is me! I am undone” (Isa. 6:5)? Did God threaten him? Did God smite him? No, but, “Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts”—that is, “I have seen His glory, and His spotless holiness has been proclaimed in my ears. Thereby I see that my own uncleanness and the uncleanness of others I dwell among greatly endanger me.”

Notwithstanding all this depth of God’s glory and darkness in all men’s minds by nature since the fall of Adam, yet all men in all ages have been seeking out and studying and

making for themselves some representations of God. They know that there is a God. They quickly come to know that this God is out of their sight. And, on a little deeper thinking, they know that this invisible God is also beyond the reach of their minds and thoughts. Is there a curious student of God's works of creation who does not find something in the smallest of His creatures that our understanding cannot comprehend? What must we think of the former of all things? "Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" (Job 11:7). A conviction of this depth in God and darkness in man seems to have been declared in the inscription on the altar at Athens (Acts 17:23). This Paul takes for his text, if I may so say, and makes an excellent sermon on it. The conviction that is in men's hearts of the depth of God and of the darkness in themselves has bred a desire in all men to know something more of God than they do, so that they may please, serve, and worship Him and obtain His favor. And this darkness and desire have brought forth two great plagues on the world that are likely to last as long as the world lasts and as long as sinners live in it: two representations of God devised by men.

The first way of men's studying to represent God to themselves is the more fine way of the better sort of the heathens and their philosophers, and that was by framing thoughts, ideas, and contemplations of God from the light of nature and the exercise of their reason. This way the apostle takes notice of as a poor way and unprofitable (Rom. 1:20).

That philosopher spoke like a divine who, when he was asked by his prince what God was, desired a day's time to think on it. When that was granted and done, he asked two days' time to think on the question. After the two days, he asked four days. And when the king wondered at his delays, he gave this true and ingenuous answer: "The more I think of God, the less I can tell what He is." And this will be the sure effect on all who

without the light of God's Word and Spirit busy themselves to frame representations of God Himself in their minds.

The heathens have indeed spoken and written many good thoughts of some of the divine attributes that may be read with profit. Some read them with wonder as to how they came by such thoughts. And many have thought that some of these philosophers might have seen some part of the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul quoted one of them at Athens (Acts 17:28), whom he called "one of their own poets"; and another in Titus 1:12, whom he called "a prophet of their own." Yet what he quoted of this last one was a complete Greek verse of poetry and the other but a half verse. But their philosophers taught and wrote in both prose and verse.

Yet though we who have the light of God's Word may make good use of their sparks of nature's light, we must not thence think that they by their wisdom know God savingly, contrary to 1 Corinthians 1:21: "The world by wisdom knew not God." An ungrounded charity to the salvation of the heathen, who never knew God in Christ, is a reflection on the gospel of Christ. And if men will coin a new gospel and a way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ as only preached to the heathen by sun, moon, and stars, contrary to the Word of God (John 14:6; 17:3; Acts 4:11–12; Eph. 2:12), know and remember that it is false coin! And men's coining another way to God than by His Son Jesus Christ, revealed in and by the gospel, is treason against the majesty of heaven, and though it may deceive men on earth, it will never pass as currency in heaven.

The other way of men's presenting God to themselves is by images and outward representations of God, an old abomination. It is likely that it was not before the deluge, for it is not named, but only violence and lusts and general corruption in manners are given as the procuring causes of God's destroying the world by water. Besides, the world was but lately

created, and the glory of the Creator stared every man in the face—and that Methuselah, who died a little before the flood, had lived some hundreds of years while the first man Adam lived. Besides, Enoch's prophecy, cited by Jude 14–15, makes no mention of idolatry. But however it was before the flood, idolatry came quickly into the world afterward and is likely to continue till it is purged by fire.

Now, what is idolatry? And why is it that the world is so mad upon idols (Jer. 50:38)? Idolatry is worshipping the true God by and under any image or representation of God, devised by men's heads or framed by men's hands. The first command of the moral law forbids having any god and worshipping any god but the true God. The second command forbids making any resemblance or image of God and worshipping God by it. Divine worship is the glory that God will not give to another, neither His praise to graven images (Isa. 42:8)—and that because He is a jealous God.

Worship is God's throne in the world of angels and men, and He will admit no rival or partner in it. The idolaters pretend that they only honor God and give no divine glory to the image, but the Lord calls worshipping Him by an image worshipping the creature more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

Now, how does idolatry come into the world? And what keeps it up in it since all men by their reason think, as Paul said all ought to think, that the Godhead is not like gold, silver, or stone, engraved by art or man's device (Acts 17:29)? The true cause of this sin's rise and reign in the world is that all men by nature know there is a God who made the world and that they ought to worship Him, but who He is and what is pleasing worship to this God they do not know. They know that if there is a God, He must not be like any creature in heaven or on earth. The distance between God and creatures is, in its greatness, known only to Him who can comprehend

His own glorious majesty and the emptiness of nothing creatures. And therefore we see how He speaks in Isaiah 40:17: "All nations before him are as nothing [that is, pretty low, but He yet lays them lower], and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." Verse 18: "To whom, then, will you liken God?" But though God only can comprehend the greatness of this distance between God and creatures, yet all men apprehend that it is and must be great. Then, when reason tells them that this God, who made all things in time, is eternal; that He is immense and unsearchable in all perfections; that He is a spirit—every one of these descriptions of God stun and puzzle the man's understanding. So all must say, as one did, "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out" (Job 37:23). So that, in this confusion and darkness, they must, as they did in John 4:22, worship what they do not know. And because "they knew not God" so as to glorify Him as God, they turned "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man" (Rom. 1:21–23).

Man in his ignorance and sinfulness first thinks that God is such a one as himself (Ps. 50:21) and then thinks that any representation of God may serve. And, indeed, the meanest creeping thing is an image too good for such a god. A god altogether like a sinner is none other than the god of this world, the devil (2 Cor. 4:4). See the first gross idolatry among Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 32). They had heard the fiery law proclaimed dreadfully only about forty days before, and idolatry especially prohibited and threatened in that law. Yet they barely had the dread of that voice out of their ears before their hearts were turned aside, their hands were busied in making an idol, and they were on their knees worshipping it. In verse 1, they say, "Up, and make us gods to go before us." What a poor god he is who is of man's making! All Israel could not make one fly or gnat, yet they are for god-making.

When they had their golden calf, they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (v. 4). Did they not know that a few weeks before they had brought that gold out of the land of Egypt, of which they had now made their idol? Did they not know that this idol could no more go one step before them, with them, or after them than a stone? And doubtless they meant to carry it, if Moses had not made them to destroy and drink it (v. 20). But they had brought their idolatrous hearts with them out of the land of Egypt (Ezek. 23:3, 8, 19), and they thought this calf was a fit representation of the true God. Therefore, "proclamation is made of a feast tomorrow, to the Lord, to Jehovah" (Ex. 32:5).

As long as God is not known by His Word and Spirit, no man is secured from falling into idolatry. Let us look into the anti-Christian state, and there any Christian may see that the whole of their worship, from beginning to end, is a mere mass of idolatry and wicked representations of God. Their hearts, their houses, their streets and highways, and their temples are all filled with idols, many false gods, as angels and saints, many wicked representations even of the divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Justly may it be called, as old Babylon was, "a land of graven images" (Jer. 50:38). The old pagan Rome and the new anti-Christian Rome are equally full of idols, only with different names. Heathen names are laid aside, and Christian names taken up in their place. But the idols and the idolatry are the same, with the addition of a god made of bread to be first made, then worshipped, and then eaten. This is enough of an abomination to make the natural conscience of a cannibal kick at.

To conclude this heading about worshipping God by images, I would say only that it is a sin as plainly forbidden in God's Word as any sin whatsoever, as fearfully punished as any sin, and that it is a sin that rises both from unworthy

thoughts of God and increases these unworthy thoughts. It stupefies men and takes away their reason. Isaiah 44:20: "He [the idolater] feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Psalm 115:8: "But they that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them."

The idol and the idolater are much alike. The idol is void of all natural life and sense, and the idolater is as void of all spiritual life and sense. Has that man the soul and spirit of a man in him, has he any sense of the majesty of the true and living God who can call a log of wood or a bit of bread a god and worship it? I have said more of idolatry because it is the sin that is most dishonorable to God, most destructive to the souls of men, and a dreadful stumbling block to the Jews and Muslims who justly abhor idols, however blind and sottish they otherwise are. Nor can any man wonder that they stumble at the name of Christianity when they see the greatest part of such as profess that name as much given to idolatry as ever the heathen were, either before or since Christ came into the world.

This sin is also a disgrace to mankind and a shameful defacing of that image of God in which he was first made, when a man so "debaseth himself even unto hell" (Isa. 57:9) as to worship what either his own or other men's hands have made. Yet this sin of idolatry is a demonstration that the light of nature and the notion of a god (notwithstanding all the weakness, darkness, and corruption mixed with it in fallen man) are so deeply and strongly rooted in men's hearts that they will rather take up with anything for a god, yea, make a god for themselves rather than have none. It is no rare thing to see an idolatrous prince who is as proud as Lucifer, and who says in his heart, as Lucifer did in Isaiah 14:12-14, and who has pride and ambition enough to desire to be lord of the whole earth. Yet such a wretch as this, who is not worthy to

live among his fellow mortals, will humble himself and kneel before a proud priest, confess his sins to him, and ask and receive pardon from him as from a god, and worship the work of the meanest of his subjects' hands.

This was the proud boast in the last age of a confessor to a great king: "When I have my king on his knees before me, and my god [meaning the consecrated wafer] in my hands, what can I not do?" From such gods, such kings, and such priests may the only true God deliver us and all the nations on earth. But as long as the spirit of Demetrius prevails, Diana will not be without a rich temple and many worshippers. "Ye know that by this craft we have our wealth" (Acts 19:25). For if false gods were not rich gods and rich-making gods, they quickly would have no priests, temples, or worshippers. And "quickly may it be" is the hearty prayer of every true Christian.

And this leads me to the point in hand: that the Lord Jesus Christ, God-man and our mediator, is the only true representative of God to the church. God only makes Himself savingly known to men in His Son Jesus Christ. Men who would know God savingly, worship God acceptably, and enjoy God forever must seek and get all in and by Jesus Christ.

In handling this, I would speak to two things: the fitness of Christ to be God's representative to His church, and the glory of Christ in being so.

As to Christ's fitness to represent God to men, it appears in three things:

1. In the divine dignity of His person. He is God's eternal Son and God equal with the Father. I know that this rock on which the church of Christ is built is boldly struck at in these last and worst days. But we should know as well that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). I would only say now that that man or woman who owns the authority of the New Testament (though Christ's Godhead shines very

brightly in the Old Testament) and will read but three chapters (John 1; Col. 1; Heb. 1) and can say that Christ is a mere man and creature—that man is under a judicial blindness. All who worship Christ and call on His name in prayer and deny Him to be true God are guilty of idolatry. A mere image of a creature and representation of God used in worship is an idol. But the eternal Son of God, who is in His person the image of God and the character of the Father's person, is unspeakably fit to declare God to men (John 1:18). He alone does it, and no one else can.

2. The Son's assuming man's nature to His own divine person makes Him fit to represent God to men (John 1:1–18). His being God-man made Him fit to represent God to men and to represent men to God. God is only to be savingly known by men as He is God in Christ. And sinners are only accepted by God as they are in Christ. His human nature is a creature, but the Son of God who assumed and dwells personally in this nature is a divine person. It is not His nature as man but His divine nature dwelling in that nature that makes Him the only right representative and image of the invisible God to His church.

3. Christ's being installed in the office of mediator makes Him fit to represent God to men. He is the "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Such as on this account talk of Christ's being God by office know neither God, Christ, or His office. Our Lord Jesus Christ is God in office and is to be worshipped by His people as clothed with it. In His office as prophet, He represents and reveals the mind and will of God to be known and believed by the church that is commanded by the Father to hear Him (Matt. 17:5). As king, "all judgment is committed to the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. And he that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the

Father which hath sent him" (John 5:22–23). As priest, as all in that office are "taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that they might both offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5:1), so "the Son was consecrated for this office by an oath" (7:28). And as priest, He "must have somewhat also to offer" (8:3), which offering was Himself—and this He has offered (9:26; 10:5–10).

After this offering, "he entered in [as priest] into the holy place; into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:12, 24). And there He remains and "liveth for ever to make intercession for us" (7:25), until "he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation" (9:28). Now in this office Christ represents His church to God. And in His prophetic and kingly office, He represents God to His church. Both are equally needful for our salvation, and both are performed only by Jesus Christ as mediator, who alone can represent God to us so that we may savingly know God. He represents us so to God that we may be graciously received by Him. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (3:1).

Consider how fit He is to do all God's business with us (and all our business with God) for our salvation and His Father's and His own glory. He is clothed with a most honorable office of mediator (the honor and work of which office no mere creature could bear and dispatch) and furnished with all fullness for its discharge and management. This office He discharged when on earth in our nature as man. And in the same nature He is doing what remains to be done in that office in heaven. And this high officer, this man Jesus Christ, is "God over all, blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5). So His fitness for making a true and saving representation of God to His people is evident, but so great and glorious that we cannot

fully apprehend it by faith. We have in our Lord Jesus Christ a mediator between God and men to take away the breach that sin had made between them and to make an everlasting friendship. He is a mediator so furnished for His office that any may trust Him in it. We have this mediator in our own nature, a partaker of flesh and blood as we are (Heb. 2:14, 17), in all things made like His brethren that He might be more fit for us, and that we might be the more familiar with Him. And this mediator, by His office, this real and true man by the taking of our nature, is God, the only begotten of the Father. Can any doubt this truth that we are on: that the Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, mediator, is the true, real and only representative of God to His church?

What is Christ's glory in being God's representative to His church? Herein He is exceedingly exalted. How greatly is it expressed in Ephesians 1:20–23 and in Philippians 2:6–11! And how hard it is to think suitably of them! I will only touch on three particulars in it:

1. It is glory to Jesus Christ that all the saving discoveries of God are made to men in and by Him. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shineth to men, in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Till a man knows Jesus Christ, he does not know God—nay, he has no god (Eph. 2:12). They who are without Christ are without God in the world. "You were atheists" is the Greek word, though the Ephesians to whom he writes had been great idolaters and had gods and goddesses more than were worth having (Acts 19).

2. Great is Christ's glory in that all the worship that is given to God, if right and as it is commanded, is given to God in and by Jesus Christ. There is no coming to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). If we believe in God, we must also believe on Him (John 14:1). Through Him we believe on God (1 Peter 1:21). If we believe on Him, we believe not on Him (only, or alone),

but on the one who sent Him. And he who sees Him sees Him who sent Him (John 12:44–45). If we pray, we must do it in Christ's name (John 14:13–14; 16:23–24). Yea, whatsoever we do, whether in word or deed, must all be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (Col. 3:17). All our gospel sacrifices are to be offered to God by Him (Heb. 13:15).

3. Now, consider how great a person this must be, as the apostle argues about His type, Melchisedec, in Hebrews 7:1–4. And he is there exalting that unknown man's priesthood above the Levitical one in that Abraham, Levi's great-grandfather, gave the tenth of the spoils to him. How much greater is Jesus Christ, of whom Melchisedec was but a type and shadow, to whom we must not only give a tenth but all of that worship and service we pay and owe to God!

All the mercy, favor, and bounty of God to men comes to us in and by Jesus Christ. There are no spiritual blessings in heavenly things that God blesses us with but are in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Application: All the use of this doctrine I will at this time make is in one warning that I wish may be as well taken as it is needful, both to me to give it and to you to take it. The secret moth and poison in many people's religion is that it is not Christianity. God outside of Christ is a consuming fire. God not worshipped in Christ is an idol. All hopes of acceptance outside of Christ are vain dreams. A heaven outside of Christ is little better than the Muslims' paradise. How sad it is, how visible it is, and how common it is that many men and women pray every day and hear every day and would know God rightly and worship Him acceptably. And, if we might believe their words and professions, they know a great deal of God and serve Him not a little, when, in the meantime, Jesus Christ, as the only glass in and by which the true God and His glory are

to be known and adored, is not minded by them! They have no sense, no experience of it, no conviction of the necessity of Christ's representing an invisible, incomprehensible God to them. They make no attempts to know God in and by this only right way. Hence is it that there is so much of that which bears the name of religion that not only men may carry to hell with them, but that pushes them into hell. Hence is it that so many have a form of godliness who are fatal strangers to its power.

Is it not sad to see and hear men who bear the name of Christians playing the philosophers about God's nature and attributes, while, in the meantime, they are utter, yea, contented strangers to the only true representation of God to men in His Son Jesus Christ? All I will say now is to glance at one Scripture in 2 Corinthians 4:3–6: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

"I cannot deny," the apostle would say, "but that for all the plainness and closeness of our preaching, yet our gospel is hidden; but it is so to a lost company."

Question: But how can it be that under such preaching as Paul's the gospel is hidden from any who hear it?

Answer: In verse 4, he names two concurring causes: one sad effect flowing from these causes, and destruction consequent on the effect. The causes are unbelief in their hearts and Satan's working with and securing of it. The sinner is blind by nature. His blindness grows by the abused light of the gospel, and the devil spreads a thick veil over his blind eyes so that even if gospel light shines by an apostle, no ray, no beams will dart in on them.

Now, what is the effect of this double blinding? What does Satan design in all his pains on unbelievers? What is he afraid of, and what does he study to prevent? It is, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It is as if the apostle had said, "The devil,

in his diligence to keep sinners in the dark, thinks and knows that if ever one beam of the glory of Christ in the gospel comes into sinners' hearts, they are lost to him and saved to Jesus Christ." Oh, that sinners knew this as well as the devil does!

But why does this busy devil not have the same power on all? How do any come to have their eyes opened to see?

This he answers in verse 6: "For 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." Observe that the apostle, in speaking of the causes of the perdition of unbelievers, names their own blindness and unbelief and Satan's activity. But as to the salvation of believers, he ascribes it solely to the grace of God and its power and freedom—without which Satan would prevail on all, as he does on many. But blind as unbelievers are, and diligent and powerful as the devil is, God, who commanded light in the first creation, did so to us. And this light so commanded gave us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, by which we are saved.

There are many glorious truths that shine with some beams of light into the minds of natural men, so that they are convinced of them, fall in love with them, and make profession of them. But never is a sinner thoroughly changed and converted to God nor rescued from Satan and the power of darkness till this light, this knowledge, and this glory of God in the face of Christ are given by this great commander and creator. Paul himself, while an unbeliever, had the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the works of creation and providence as a man of sense and reason. He had the knowledge of the glory of God in the law as a zealous Jew. But the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ he never had till it pleased God to call him by His grace and to reveal His Son in him (Gal. 1:15–16). And let me tell you that

unless you have seen more of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and in God's way of saving sinners by Him than ever you saw of His glory in His works of creation and providence (in both which not a little of His glory shines), then the Lord has not yet dealt with you as He does with those He saves. The right saving knowledge of God centers in this one person Jesus Christ. See how the apostle prays: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3). So all who would be enriched with true wisdom and the saving knowledge of God must by faith dig in Christ and find them.

CHAPTER 11

Christ's Glory in Representing God to Us

*T*his great subject, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ that He has received from His Father, is that which His people see something of here by faith (Heb. 2:9) and are called to the hope of fully beholding it hereafter when this prayer of our Lord will be fully answered. It is so deep a theme that it is not easy to enter on it and impossible to declare the thing as plentifully as it is. All I mean to say about it, I will confine to two headings: the glory of Christ in representing God to us and His glory in representing us to God. In the first, He represents God to us, to our saving knowing of God; in the other, He represents us to God, to our saving acceptance with God.

I began to speak of the former last day and proceeded by these three steps:

The true knowledge of God is simply needful for man's happiness in both this life and the next one.

God in Himself is incomprehensible, unbeholdable, and unknowable, unless He is pleased to make Himself in some way known to men.

Yet men in all ages have been still framing representations of God in their own minds. A little of nature's light remains and of the ruins of that estate God made man at first in, but nature's light is so defiled and mixed with the darkness

brought on men by the fall, that natural light and sinful darkness mixed together are but like the chaos in the beginning of the creation (Gen. 1:2). So we may apply that to this case of men's inquiring after God, in Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

A man can think of nothing but in and by that thought there is some idea or representation of it made in his mind. When we think of our souls (by which we think), how dark our idea is of them! But when we begin to think of creatures higher and nobler than ourselves, as angels are, what a dark idea we frame of them! When we say they are spirits, what do we know of what a spirit is? When we say a spirit is an intelligent being, free of matter, how far this is from planting a just representation in our minds of those noble creatures! If we raise our thoughts above all creatures to the perfect former of all things, the great Jehovah, every thought of Him, every name and perfection of His, swallows us up. Job 37:19: "Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech [or our thoughts] by reason of darkness." Our own light in us is but darkness, and the infiniteness of His light and glory is as darkness to us. "Shall it be told him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up" (v. 20)—that is, if a man knows either who He is who speaks, what He speaks or thinks, or who He is who is spoken or thought of. The world has been striving either by their wisdom to know God (1 Cor. 1:21) or in their folly to represent an invisible God to their bodily senses. And this last one has filled so great a part of the earth with idols, an old abomination, that, it may be, will continue till this earth is purged by the last fire.

And these things led me to the only relief in this dismal state of mankind, as to the right and saving knowledge of God, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, clothed with man's

nature and with the office of mediator between God and man, is the only true representative of God to men. That He is such and of His glory in being so I have spoken somewhat. We will enter on the use we should make of Him as the representative of God to His church, after I have given you a little account of the gradual rising of this light in and to the church.

When our first parents had sinned and were ashamed of themselves and afraid of God and ignorantly thought to hide themselves from Him, He called them to His bar and arraigned them for their sin. And when they had no reason to expect anything but immediate judgment and execution, instead of that the Lord, in a threatening against the serpent, brought forth the first promise of salvation by Jesus Christ, called there “the seed of the woman,” who, though He should suffer by the serpent, should yet bruise His head (Gen. 3:15). In the faith of this (and, it may be, of other explanations of it not recorded), the believing fathers before the flood lived and died. Abel and Enoch are noted (Heb. 11:4–5), the one a martyr, and the other translated to heaven. Noah, before, in, and after the flood is called “an heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (v. 7), which none but a believer is. No righteousness is by faith but that which has the Lord our righteousness in it, the light of God’s Word to reveal Him and it, and a promise of the covenant to warrant faith’s apprehending it.

If we go on to the patriarch Abraham, we find the light growing more bright, especially if we read Genesis 12, 14, 15, 17, with Paul’s comments on them in Romans 4, in Galatians 3–4, and in Hebrews 11:8, 19, and what our Lord said of Abraham in John 8:39–40, 56, 58. Who can read these and not be persuaded that Abraham knew the Son of God, and God in Him, and justification and salvation by Him?

Let us next take a view of the church state into which the God of Israel brought His people—first, in a more transient

manner in the wilderness, and thereafter fixed them in it in Canaan. In this state we find that the tabernacle and temple, their ordinances, priests, and sacrifices, and all their ceremonies were all but types and shadows of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9–10). There were many things in that dispensation that had some appearance and semblance of idolatry, but there was no idolatry in them for two reasons: one, because they were all of God's own appointment; and, two, because they were instituted to prefigure the Messiah to come. If therefore anyone in Israel had devised of his own head a worship of this sort, then that man would have been as guilty of transgressing the second command, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any... likeness," as if he had served Baal. And because they were all types and shadows of Christ and of the good things to come by Him, therefore, if any church or person now, after the substance has come and the shadows are gone, should attempt to bring Christians under the Levitical dispensation of the Old Testament church, they might be justly called anti-Christians and deniers that Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:3).

We now come to the prophets, David in the Psalms, Isaiah, and all the prophets, and we find a fair dawning of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God and shining in their ministry to the church. This is so plain that we need not insist on it and so full that it would be too great a digression to insist on it as it deserves. We find Stephen (Acts 7) and Paul (Acts 13) preaching Christ by such a narration, warrant enough for this small account.

Let us now go forward to Christ's coming into the world. The angels proclaim Him to be a born savior, Christ the Lord (Luke 2:11). Old dying Simeon called Him when He was still a babe in arms, "God's salvation, and the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel" (vv. 30–32). Yea, when He was yet in

the womb, Elizabeth called Him, "my Lord" (Luke 1:43). What a great anointing of the Holy Ghost was on this good woman, and how strong was her faith in Christ! When our Lord was to be made manifest to Israel, John the Baptist proclaimed Him to be "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"; to be the baptizer with the Holy Ghost; to be the Son of God; and that all grace is received out of His fullness (John 1:15–34). When He was baptized, what a glorious testimony was given from heaven to Him (Matt. 3:17)! When He lived on the earth and went about doing good, all who knew Him paid Him divine worship in faith, love, prayer, and obedience, and were never checked for it (as Peter did Cornelius in Acts 10:26, and as the angel did the apostle John twice in Rev. 19:10 and 22:9). Yea, when He was dying, one saw Him to be God and dealt with Him by faith for eternal life, the rarest faith in all the Scripture. When He was dead, and supposed by Mary Magdalene to be still so, she called Him, "my Lord" (John 20:13). When He had risen, Thomas called Him, "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Yea, when He had "led them out as far as to Bethany, and had lift up his hands and blessed them; and while he blessed them he was parted from them, and was carried up into heaven [a blessed parting, and there will be shortly as blessed a meeting again], they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:50–52). Strange joy! When at the tidings of Christ's leaving them, sorrow had filled their hearts (John 16:6). But now their Lord had done all His work on earth and was received up into glory, they worshipped Him joyfully still, knowing that though they could now no more worship Him as they did when He was with them with the help of that bodily presence of Christ with them and with that sight they had of Him by the eyes of their bodies terminated on His visible appearance—yet by faith and with joy from that faith they worshipped Him still.

But when Christ was not only ascended into heaven but had sent down the promise of the Father—His Holy Spirit—upon the infant Christian church, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (Acts 2) shone out as the sun in its strength. All believers, all preachers, and all ordinances were filled with Christ's glory. In this gospel temple, everyone, everything, spoke of His glory, as the Hebrew is in Psalm 29:9. All divine worship was given to Him and to God by Him, all grace dispensed by Him. And thus it will be until His coming again. While God has a church on earth, it is gathered together in Christ's name. That church is built on Christ as the rock and foundation (1 Cor. 3:10–11). It grows up in Him and on Him (Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Peter 2:4–5). It worships Him and the Father in Him and by Him. It is fed and nourished by His Spirit and the influences thereof until that blessed state it is to be brought to at the last appearance of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

I will finish this narrative with two singular texts, among many, to the same purpose. The first, in Numbers 12:8, I would labor to explain. What the matter was that occasioned the strife between Moses, Aaron, and Miriam we know but little—whether Moses did right or wrong about the Ethiopian woman whom he married (v. 1). Yet one would think that Aaron the high priest, his elder brother, and Miriam, his sister and a prophetess, might have reproved him for what they thought was amiss without so severe a rebuke from the Lord. But their sin lay in reflecting on the high station God had put him in. And their sin was something akin to that of Korah and his company against both Moses and Aaron: “You take too much upon you” (Num. 16:3).

The Lord puts an end to this strife between Moses and his brother and sister by very extraordinary words. I will read them, because one part of them belongs evidently to our

present purpose: "Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you [as there were seventy set apart in the preceding chapter], I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Num. 12:6). These were the usual ways and means of God's darting prophetic light into the minds of His prophets: either by visions or by dreams when asleep—and both were attended, doubtless, with such signatures of God's interest therein as satisfied and secured their faith. "But my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house" (v. 7). "With him will I speak mouth to mouth [the same as face to face] as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33:11; Deut. 34:10).

So Moses said of God's way of giving the law, "The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire" (Deut. 5:4), even apparently and not in dark speeches, as Psalm 78:2, "I will utter dark sayings of old." Numbers 12:8: "And the similitude of the Lord shall he behold [as much beyond the other as seeing is beyond hearing darkly of a person or thing]. Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Now, what was this similitude of the Lord that Moses beheld and was so dignified by because of this singular privilege? He tells them: "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves" (Deut. 4:15–16). It is likely, if there had been any seen that day, that they might rather incline to make the resemblance of that in their idol than of the Egyptian ox or calf. There are divers opinions about this similitude of the Lord that Moses beheld. But the one I like best and think it nearest the truth in so dark and deep a matter is what you have in the annotations of Mr. [Matthew] Poole, a learned and godly divine, on this place: "That the Son of God appeared to

Moses in a human shape, which He took up for a time so that He might give Moses a foretaste of His future incarnation.” Many grave divines think that most of the appearances of God to Abraham and to the patriarchs and prophets were made by the Son of God in a human shape, foretelling His being made flesh in the fullness of time. “Man was made in the image of God, after his likeness” (Gen. 1:26). If these senses are not approved—that it was so done because God had purposed, that one of the blessed three, even His eternal Son, the natural and essential image of the Father, should in time be sent in the likeness of man—yet this much is certain: that the first man was made in the image of God and by his fall brought on himself and his posterity the image of the devil. And to recover us from this woeful likeness and to bring us to a better likeness to God than Adam was made in and lost, God’s Son took to Himself the likeness of the sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), yet without sin, so that in and by that likeness men might come to know God savingly and be made like God.

The other Scripture is Colossians 2:9: “For in him [Jesus Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” This is a remarkable text, and so is the context. What dwells in Jesus Christ? The Godhead, the fullness of the Godhead, and all the fullness of the Godhead. How does it dwell in Him? Bodily, really, substantially—not typically, as in the temple and sanctuary. The fullness of the Godhead did not only thus dwell in Christ when He was on earth, but it dwells in Him still and forever. Where then can a man find God but in this man Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead really, substantially, and eternally?

The context has two things in it. The first is a warning against seduction (vv. 8, 18–19). Their and our danger lay in two things that then were and to this day are the chief springs of apostasy from Christ and the simplicity that is in Him

(2 Cor. 11:3). The one is adhering to the Old Testament ordinances and ceremonies, antiquated by Christ, who is the end and substance of them all. The other is man's reason, wisdom, and philosophy. Those never could nor can find God so as to direct men to know God savingly and to worship Him acceptably (1 Cor. 1:21). And therefore, by its poor principles and beggarly elements (as Gal. 4:9), this wisdom of man rebels against the saving wisdom of God in His Son Jesus Christ and only serves to puff up men by their fleshly mind (Col. 2:18). From those two cursed springs all the heresies, apostasies, and the grand anti-Christian defection have evidently flowed.

The second thing in the context is the privileges Christians have by Christ that should endear Him to them and engage them to that steadfastness in the faith which Paul had exhorted them to in verses 5–7. Those privileges are many and great. The Christian is complete in Him (v. 10) and needs not hunt after any good outside of Him. All is to be found in Christ and in Him alone. The Christian is circumcised in Him, that is, sanctified (v. 11). He is buried with Christ and risen again (v. 12). He is made to die to sin and to live to God. He is quickened with Christ (v. 13) and forgiven. All the Christian's enemies are conquered, the law is cancelled, and the devil overcome and triumphed over by Christ, at and by His lowest humiliation (vv. 14–15).

Application: Now we come to the application of this doctrine so often named: The Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, mediator, is the only true representative of God to the church. There are three exhortations I would give from it: study God in Christ; content yourselves with this knowledge of God in Christ; use and apply the knowledge of God you have in and by Jesus Christ.

Exhortation 1: Study God in Christ. You must know God if you are saved. You cannot know Him but as He reveals

Himself. He reveals Himself in no other way but in Christ, so as to be savingly known. There are four books (if I may so call them) that many use in their studying to know God. But they are and will be but poor scholars if they have no better, fitter, and plainer books:

1. Some will study an absolute God—God as He is in Himself. An absolute God is a pit and an abyss that all who go near it fall into and will be destroyed. It was a bold saying of blessed Luther: “Let hypocrites and unbelievers do as they please, I will have nothing to do with an absolute God.” God as in His Son, God as in covenant with us in His Son, God as clothed with grace and mercy, shining in His promises in Christ—this is the God we must study to know. And when by His grace we attain to this knowledge, we may glory humbly in it. “Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jer. 9:24).

2. Some study God in His works. And much of His glory shines therein, and we ought to observe it. But what is all the fruit of this alone? Only to render men inexcusable (Rom. 1:20). This light of the knowledge of the glory of God is both dim and cold. It has no heat or power in it. Never did a man come by the saving knowledge of God by the study of the book of creation and providence, though a true Christian may both study and profit much by it when he has known God, or rather is known of God (Gal. 4:9).

3. Some study to know God in His holy law, and in it is a glorious discovery of God. But it is of a holy, just, sin-hating, sin-forbidding, sin-threatening God. Here He is seen as a terrible judge. No man ever did or can know God savingly in the bare light of the law. God can be savingly known only

in that representation of Him wherein He is manifested as a saving God, and that is only in His Son Jesus Christ.

4. Some study to know God in and by His ordinances. These are precious appointments of God, much to be valued and used by us. And their profit is great when they are blessed by their appointer and when they are used by us in the right manner. But we must know that as the virtue of all the Old Testament ordinances lay in their relation to and shadowing for the Messiah then to come, so all the virtue of New Testament ordinances lies in their relation to and showing forth Christ who has come. If therefore a man now shall study to know God savingly in and by the greater light of these gospel appointments, without regard to Christ's interest in them, that man will as surely perish in ignorance of God as a carnal Jew who is yet uncircumcised in heart (see Jer. 9:26; Rom. 2:28–29; Phil. 3:3).

But above all these, if you would know God savingly, study to know Him in and by the only saving representation He has made of Himself—and that is in His Son. For here it is that you have the only true and new place to find God in. Job, in his distress, said, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat,” or throne (Job 23:3). He is only to be found in Christ. God dwells in Christ (Col. 2:9). There, and there only, you must seek Him, find Him, know Him savingly, and “acquaint yourselves with him, and be at peace” (Job 22:21).

There is no creature and no part of the work of God's hands that is so nearly related to God as the nature of the man Christ assumed by the divine person of the Word, the only begotten of the Father. This is “the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8:2). This is “the new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil,

that is to say, his flesh" (10:20). And this is the only way to the holiest (v. 19).

The devil, Christ's great enemy, has done much to darken and disgrace this way for the world. He has done so on the one hand by the gross idolatry of antichrist, wherein a vain show is made by images of Christ, of His flesh, and His sufferings in it—all obscuring and perverting Christ as the ordinance of God for our salvation. On the other hand, when men by their reason see the vanity of this popish pageant and puppet show into which antichrist has turned the true gospel representation of Christ, Satan has brought in a mystical and metaphysical gospel on the pretense of greater spirituality. Therein the flesh of Christ and His saving performances in that flesh are either hidden or turned into allegories, mysteries, and notions that have no room but in the vain minds of those who hatch them and are quite unprofitable to them who harbor and hug them.

But let Christians beware of both as of ways of perdition and by faith fix on the flesh of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that was given by Him for the life of the world (John 6:51). In this tabernacle of His body, by faith we see God the Son personally dwelling, and by the same faith we see the Father dwelling in the Son. And thus only do we savingly know God.

In Christ alone, we have the new names and relations of God in and by which God only can be savingly known. When God sent Moses to Israel and to Pharaoh to bring Israel out of Egypt, Moses said to the Lord, "If they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (Ex. 3:13). (And what a deep answer is given to this bold question in v. 14.) So may we ask, "What is that name and relation of God by which alone He can be savingly known?" It is easily answered: God can only be savingly known in and by that saving name by which He makes Himself known, and that is His name in Christ. The Lord said to Israel in Exodus 23:21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice;

provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him." And this awful word about Christ, the angel of the covenant, that He will not pardon those who refuse Him, is but the same as we have in Hebrews 12:25. But all the saving names and relations of God to us are all in and from His names in Christ and His relations to Christ. He is Christ's God and Father, and so ours (John 20:17).

Exhortation 2: Learn to be content with the knowledge of God in Christ. Seek no more knowledge of God and seek no other knowledge of God, save in Christ. Do not ask Philip's question. Or, if you do, take Christ's answer to it and seek no other. In John 14:7-9, Christ had told them that they knew His Father and had seen Him, to which they replied, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." That is, "Thou hast told us much of Thy Father, of His love for us, and of His mercy in sending Thee to save us. Lord, give us but one sight of the Father, and we will ask no more."

To this Christ answered, "Have I been so long a time with you [and three or four years was no long time, but that one day of being with Christ was a vast mercy], and yet you have not known me, Philip?" He did not say, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet you do not know the Father?" He told the unbelieving Jews in John 8:19, "Ye neither know me nor my Father." And John 16:3: "They have neither known the Father nor me." But He asked them, "Hast thou not known me?" In other words, "You do know the Father because you know Me, though you do not know so distinctly that you know Him." Therefore Christ adds, "He that seeth me hath seen the Father." As John 12:45: "He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me." That is, "You, Philip, have seen Me with both your bodily eye and with the eye of faith." This same Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (John 1:45). "He has been long

promised by God, long looked for by Israel. Now He has come, and we have found Him. Come and see." Thus Christ says, "How sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (v. 10). "If you truly believe in me, this you must believe and do believe." And to this way of believing He exhorts him in verse 11.

It is no easy thing to hold a tight rein on an inquisitive mind and to confine all our knowledge of God's glory to that which shines in the face and person of Jesus Christ. There is enough there to busy us happily in time and to eternity. And no good can be gotten in transgressing this landmark. If men go but one step in studying God outside of Christ, they wander immediately and dangerously—as every man may feel in himself and see visibly in many others.

Exhortation 3: Use and apply this representation of God in Christ. It is our greatest privilege to have it, and our greatest care and diligence should be used in the improvement of it, and our greatest profit comes to us by that improvement. This I would insist on in these particulars:

Apply this representation of God in Christ for fixing and determining your spirits in all your thoughts of God. There must be thoughts of God. His people are called those who think on His name (Mal. 3:16). On the contrary, of the wicked it is said, "God is not in all his thoughts" (Ps. 10:4). There are two thoughts about God in Christ that I am afraid some deceive themselves by:

Some think that they know God in Christ when they know that Christ is God. This is indeed absolutely needful to salvation, but it is not all. A notional assent to this truth that shines so brightly in every page of the New Testament may be in an ungodly man. The devil knows and believes it (Mark 5:7), and he only puts a wicked "if" on it in his tempting Christ (Matt. 4:3).

Some think that they know God in Christ when they know that Christ alone can reveal God to men (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18). This is indeed a work for Christ only, but that pertains to His prophetic office.

But we must go further. We must not only believe that Jesus Christ is true God and the only true and effectual teacher of the knowledge of God, but that all the right knowledge we have or can have of God is of God as He is in Jesus Christ. What Paul resolved on in his office (and it may be that he meant more than relates to his office of apostleship), you must take up in all your religion: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). And if we had more ministers of Paul's spirit in their preaching, we would see more of Christianity in the people's religion. But when some ministers preach as if they had taken up the reverse of Paul's determination—to know and make known anything, everything save Christ and Him crucified—is it any wonder if many of their hearers may say, as they did about the Holy Ghost and His dispensation, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Jesus Christ, and that crucified" (cf. Acts 19:2)? And such may justly say also of the Spirit, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," for the Spirit is received only by believers on Christ (John 7:39) and by the hearing of faith and not by the works of the law (Gal. 3:2).

Apply this representation of God in Christ in your dealings with Him for eternal life. Whoever would be saved must have some heart dealings with God about it and for it. You know that it is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23). Any way and every way of dealing with God for salvation will not succeed. There is one special way, and the only right way, and that is with God in Christ. Can you deal with God as the creator of the world and as a lawgiver? Unless God had

revealed Himself in Christ, no sinner would dare lift up his face before God's throne to beg for eternal life or to expect it.

Apply this representation of God in Christ in all your worship of God. The Word is the word of Christ (Col. 3:16). We pray—but how? We must pray in Christ's name and ask whatever we ask of the Father in Christ's name (John 14:13–14; 16:23–24). The God to whom the apostle prayed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Eph. 3:14–15). And to Him He gives glory by Christ Jesus (vv. 20–21). Oh, that men knew that to worship God outside of Christ is to worship they know not what! As Christ said in John 4:22, “But we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.” Out of them the Messiah comes, and salvation by Him. And in Him God is savingly known and knowingly worshipped.

Let all Christians apply this doctrine in their spiritual exercises and in the actings of the graces of the Spirit. All those graces are from God in Christ and are dispensed and enlivened by the Spirit of grace. And they are (if you take the expression rightly) as so many distinct members and powers of the new man, whereby it acts on its origin. I will name several of them and show of what use this representation of God in Christ is in their acting:

Faith. We “by Christ believe in God, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory” (1 Peter 1:21). Faith is justly called the fundamental, radical grace in the new creature, because it is that grace whereby he is built on Christ the foundation and takes root in Christ, in whom is all the Christian's life, sap, and fatness. There are two acts of faith I would speak of: an act of faith for peace and an act of faith for supply.

First, faith acts for peace. There is a sad quarrel between God and us by sin that must be taken away, or there can be no peace. God has provided the way. The gospel reveals it, and

faith improves and uses it. I will give you four names of God in Christ that you will know and use if you ever know what believing is:

1. The name of God is love for sinners (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8–10, 16). It is impossible that a sinner can act any dependence on God for salvation unless there is some manifestation of His name, as love. Whenever any beam of His love darts in on a poor sinner, the man begins to live and hope immediately. I do not mean that everyone should believe the proposition that God loves him, but only that God has a wonderful, great love to save sinners that He has proved in giving His own Son to be a savior, and that this love runs out to men in and by Jesus Christ. And all who would have it for themselves should strive to get near this sun so that when its light and heat is seen and felt they may be saved.

2. Another name of God that faith acts on is God with His redeeming blood. Do not stumble at the phrase. It is that of the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28). When the apostle counts the privileges of Christians under the New Testament, see how he rises: “Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels [all beyond what the Old Testament church was brought to]; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22–24). But is it not terrible to be brought to God, the judge of all? No, for you have come “to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” It is as if the apostle had said, “Do not fear to come to God, the judge of all, when you see Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and His blood that sealed and confirmed that covenant so near to God. God the judge is your friend and will absolve you. And the blood of the

covenant (as it is called in Heb. 13:20) will speak better things for you, and speak louder for your salvation, than the guilt of sin and the thunders of the law can speak against you." No sinner would have been saved if the voice of Christ's blood had been out-cried by any voice from heaven, earth, or hell.

3. Another name of God in Christ is that He is a God who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). Papists and others in their pretended zeal for holiness and good works either desire that this name of God were not in the Bible or that the true sense of it were taken out of the church. It is plainly that as no man needs the blessing of justification but a sinner and an ungodly man, so whenever God gives this blessing, He gives it freely to a man who is ungodly till he gets it. And when a sinner pleads for it, he pleads as guilty and ungodly. He begs it of God as alms of free grace. The Lord gives it as such, and he who gets it holds it and praises God for it as such alms of mere grace. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," said the justified publican. Let the unjustified Pharisee boast of his fastings, prayers, and good works (Luke 18:9–14).

4. The way by which peace with God is brought about in and by Jesus Christ is a name of God in Christ that faith has much to do with. When God proclaimed His name to Moses in Exodus 34:5–7, Moses had earnestly desired to see the Lord's glory, and God promised it graciously (33:18–19). Let us read this glorious proclamation: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands [of generations, as Ex. 20:6 and Ps. 105:8], forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Here much of the glory of God's grace was discovered, and Moses made good use of it (vv. 8–9). But yet how dark and dreadful

was this name! How hard to understand it! Here is both grace in pardoning sin and justice in visiting for sin. By this name we cannot tell when and whom God will pardon, or when and who it is whom He will not clear—for all are guilty.

By this name we cannot tell how God can do both: how He can pardon and yet not clear the guilty; how He can pardon without reflecting on His justice, or how He can punish iniquity and not reflect on His grace and mercy. In Exodus 33:19, the Lord said, "I will make all my goodness [or beauty and glory] pass before thee." Yet it was short of New Testament light, for the bright gospel name of God in Christ sweetly resolves this riddle (Rom. 3:24–26). In Christ alone "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10). And by this meeting and kiss we are saved. And when we see it by faith we are comforted. By these, God's glorious names of justice and mercy kiss one another, and kiss and save the believer. The believer by faith kisses the Son of God (as in Ps. 2:12) and then kisses the Father as a reconciled God in Him.

I would speak some things of this from two Scriptures, both deep in themselves and yet full of light and comfort to believers. One is 2 Corinthians 5:19–21. In this place the apostle tells us what his gospel was, as committed to him and preached by him. It was this good news that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. But, you may say, "the world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19), and God is holy and a hater of wickedness. How then can such a God as He is be reconciled to such a world as this is? It is by this: "not imputing their trespasses unto them." God outside of Christ judges and condemns the sinful world for their trespasses, and this is the glory of His justice. But God in Christ does not impute their trespasses to them, and this is the glory of His grace. But how can this be? The world is guilty. They have committed trespasses. Sin is not a transient act, no more to be heard of after

it is committed. But as it is in us, it flows from a depraved, sinful nature and contracts a permanent guilt, binding us over into eternal vengeance and is only removable and dissolved by pardoning grace. The nature of God and His law requires that this high crime of sin be avenged on us, satisfied for by us, or by another for us. The just revenge of sin is the eternal ruin of the sinner. And satisfaction to justice for sin is eternally beyond the power of the sinner or of any creature whatsoever.

How then can God be just and not impute sin to the sinner? It is answered in verse 21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The sinless Son of God in man's nature is by God made sin for us so that the sinful sons and daughters of men may be made the righteousness of God in Him. How can this be—that one who is sinless is made sin, and that such as are true and real sinners are made righteous, yea, made the righteousness of God in Him who was made sin, and they are made this righteous by His being thus made sin? Is this not to depress Christ too low and to exalt believers too high? No, it depresses Christ no lower than His Father laid Him for our salvation, and it exalts believers no higher than saving grace designed for them.

How is He made sin? By bearing and being a propitiation for sin. Sin was imputed to Him—not His own, for He had none and could not have been our Savior if He had had any. "For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). But the iniquity of all His flock was laid on Him (Isa. 53:6). For this, He was bruised by law and justice, and by these stripes we are healed (v. 5). Christ was sinless in Himself and made sin only for us. We are sinners in ourselves and far from and void of all righteousness in ourselves. Yet by grace we are made the righteousness of God in Him, not ever in

ourselves. The sanctified believer is made truly holy in himself by Christ's holiness imparted to him by the Spirit of Christ. The glorified are made perfectly holy. But neither of them is made sanctification or righteousness for themselves or for others. The glory of this is Christ's crown and property (1 Cor. 1:30). And the blessing of it is the glory and salvation of His people. Another Scripture, among many to this purpose, is Galatians 3:13–14: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law [a great mercy, but how?], being made a curse for us [how does He prove it?]; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (cf. Deut. 21:23), for he that is hanged, that is, on a tree, as in verse 22, is "accursed of God," or, "the curse of God." Hanging to death on a tree was named in the law as an accursed death (though it probably is one of the easiest ways of putting malefactors to death, as it is generally used in Christian kingdoms) on the account of one Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who was to die this way, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ."

What is the blessing of Abraham? It is that which comes to men by faith in Christ: "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful [or believing] Abraham" (Gal. 3:9). Both are blessed with the same blessing and by the same blesser and in the same way of believing in Christ. These two Scriptures, as Christ Himself was, have been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense and as signs to be spoken against. But can any say or think that the inspired writer of them did not highly honor his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, or that he did not wisely consult the edification of the church in his using these words? No, no mere man excelled him in both. Zeal for Christ's glory and love for sinners' salvation ate him up. If we rank these words among "some of the things that are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16), yet surely

they are most needful to be understood and capable of a very good meaning and are made very plain to many.

Sin against God and the curse of God for sin are the worst things in this and the other world. Sin and the curse for it are inseparable. If sin is committed, it is imputed, and the curse follows in course of law. If the curse falls on a man, sin preceded it and deserved it. Yea, when our Savior bore our sins by imputation, the curse had to follow that charge. But observe the dialect of the Holy Ghost in these two scriptures and see what provision is made for the honor of Christ in this way of speaking, as well as for our peace and salvation in what is spoken.

First, Christ is said to be made sin. This no sinner was or can be. When angels fell, they were made sinners, but not made sin. So when Adam sinned, he became a sinner and a sin and death conveying head to himself and to all his natural posterity. But he did not become sin—though he came nearer to it than ever any other sinner did or can. When we sin (and, alas, when do we not sin?), we were sinners by nature before we commit actual sin. But by sinning we only become greater sinners and are not made sin. “Jeroboam did sin, and made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 14:16). The idols he set up became a sin (1 Kings 12:30). But neither he nor they were made sin. So Christ is said to be “made a curse.” And this is not to be said properly of any but Christ. An unpardoned sinner has the curse lying on him, and he is under it (as Gal. 3:10); but he is not made a curse.

Second, Christ is said to be made sin by God. All sinners are made such by Satan and themselves. God makes no sinners, but to save them, He makes His Son to be sin. So Christ was made a curse, and that by God too. He who laid sin on Him laid the curse also.

Third, Christ is made sin and a curse for others. So it is in both places, “for us.” A proper sinner has both his own sin

charged on him and God's curse laid on him for himself. All this is quite contrary to God's way in dealing with His Son. All the charge on Him was for others.

Fourth, Christ's sinlessness and blessedness in Himself is expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:21 and hinted at in Galatians 3:13–14. He knew no sin, yet was made sin. He was the great blessing of His church, yet was made a curse for it.

Fifth, observe the fruit, design, and effect of this marvelous way of God making Christ. He is made sin so that we might be made righteousness. That imputed righteousness in which believers stand before God is the fruit of Christ's being made sin for them. The blessing we have springs out of Christ's being made a curse for us.

So much for the grace of faith and its acting for peace with God. Whenever you are in good earnest in dealing with God for His favor and reconciliation with Him, one or more of these names of God in Christ—God as love, God with His redeeming blood, God who justifies the ungodly, and God making His Son to be sin and a curse for His people—I say, some of these names of God must either be your anchor, or else you will perish in the sea and storm of your sin and of God's wrath and curse. I know that while men are secure (as the most are) and do not know what God, sin, and conscience are, they may either deride them or wantonly talk either for or against these sacred things of God. But I can assure you that if ever (and woe to you if never) you felt the terrors of God and the power of His law breaking in on your awakened consciences, if you ever think in earnest of death and judgment, you must have your recourse to God in Christ or perish eternally. There is no refuge but in Him (Heb. 6:18–19), no hope but from Him and on Him.

There is an act and exercise of faith for supply. When a sinner is made by grace a believer and has peace with God, he is

yet in a wanting condition. He may be poor and needy not only in his own eyes, but really, one on whom the Lord thinks favorably (Ps. 40:17). Every believer can tell something. None can tell all he wants. How are they supplied? "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (Col. 1:19). And how pleasing should it be to His people that it is lodged in so sure a hand! And how pleasant ought it to be to them to come, ask, and receive till their joy is full (John 14:13–14; 16:23–24)! We all know, by natural light, that God is the fountain of all our supplies from whom comes every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). But gospel light tells us by whom He gives and on what ground—out of Christ's fullness and according to His promises in Christ.

Repentance unto life. Another grace that this representation of God in and by Christ directs us in the acting and exercise of is repentance unto life, as it is called in Acts 11:18. There is a saving repentance as well as a saving faith. Both are given to those whom God saves. No impenitent person is saved—no unbeliever. Two things only I will note about repentance. First, no man ever truly repents but a believer in Christ. Second, no man truly repents but for his sins against God in Christ. If you know nothing more of repentance but what you feel in the twinges of your conscience by the light and heat of God's holy law, you have not yet come to gospel repentance. The notions that most sinners have are poor and confused. They think that all their sins are against God, and all their relief is in Jesus Christ. But they do not know and lay to heart that all their sins are against God in Christ, and that all their relief against sin is likewise in God in Christ. Men sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12), and they are forgiven by Christ (Col. 3:13). "He is exalted with the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

If in the exercise of your repentance you forget that you have pierced Christ by your sins, you are not actuated by the promised spirit of grace (Zech. 12:10). And all expectations of pardon that are not entirely grounded on Christ and His mediation are not only vain, but sinful.

Grace. I might speak of the grace of love, that precious and everlasting grace. Love must act on God in Christ. It is sad to see and hear people busying their heads with speculations about the excellencies and perfections of the divine nature and imagining, by the force of their reasoning on these things, to blow up a fire of love to God. But let men know that till God is known to us as love, no love that is true will ever kindle in our hearts. Now God as love is only discovered as He is in Christ. "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:8-19).

All holy obedience is to be performed to God in Christ. "And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17-24). Yea, relative duties are urged by the most spiritual motives and patterns: husbands' love for their wives by Christ's love for His church; wives' subjection to their own husbands by the church's subjection to Christ, who is its head and savior (Eph. 5:20-33). Even Christian servants' obedience to and serving of their masters is required and sweetened by this: that therein they serve the Lord Christ. It is not unlikely that in those times Christian servants might be slaves and servants of infidels and of such as served the devil; yet, he says, "In your lawful service of such masters you serve Christ, though they do not know him." Surely, the spiritual tincture of true worship is lost when Christ is forgotten in it, and the savor of Christian obedience perishes when it is not done "as to the Lord."

Patience. Patience under affliction is a grace that every saint has need of (as Heb. 10:36) and must use in all his race

heavenward. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). There is not a step on our journey wherein patience is needless. Running and patience seem inconsistent, but he who runs without patience makes but fool's haste. Now, this needful and useful grace can only be exercised by faith in God through Christ. If God afflicts us as our creator, as our judge, and as our lawgiver, reason and morality may afford not a few arguments to patience and submission to His will, but true Christian patience will never be found unless the love of the afflicter is in some measure seen by the afflicted. Our blessed Lord gave us an example to follow: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). If men or devils only had given it (and they had no little hand in it), the matter would have been otherwise. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). Christ's cup was more bitter and His sufferings greater than ever any of His people tasted and felt. His patience was invincible, and that because His faith was perfect (Isa. 1:6–9). David said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Ps. 39:9). When God is seen as an enemy, affliction will rather work fretting than patience. Therefore, when the apostle is directing Christians how to bear God's afflicting hand rightly, without fainting or despising it, his main argument is that in all of them the Lord deals with them as a father with his children (Heb. 12:5–11). And surely no man can have the comfort of this relationship to God of a child to his heavenly Father who by faith does not take up the high foundation of this relation—that God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The hope of glory. The hope of glory arises from and acts on God as God in Christ. This grace is a great mercy, and all who have it know. It should be tenderly cherished. But this is a great fault in many Christians that they do not seek it so diligently as they ought when they want it, nor act on it so carefully

when they have any of it. They smart sorely for this in walking, mourning without the sun so many days, as in Job 30:28. See the exhortation in Romans 12:12: "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer"—and all this is to be done in serving the Lord (v. 11). You all readily think that murmuring under afflictions and restraining prayer before God are ungodly practices, and yet you think it no fault (but a great misery, you will own it to be) to neglect the leading duty, to rejoice in hope and in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2). This hope is in Christ; yea, He is our hope (1 Tim. 1). "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). The hope of glory grows on no root but Jesus Christ. He is eternal life (1 John 1:1–2). He who knows Him knows eternal life. "He that hath Christ hath eternal life" (1 John 5:11–13); and he who has Christ dwelling in his heart by faith (Eph. 3:17) has eternal life abiding in him, which the apostle denies of a murderer (1 John 3:15).

And thus I would conclude this truth of the glory of Christ as the representative of God to His church and of the good use we should make thereof. I have insisted longer on it than I designed. But the importance of the subject may excuse it. But when all is said, we need to begin again so that we may inculcate this truth deeply into the hearts and consciences of Christians. Assure yourselves that God outside of Christ is an idol whom all the world worships (as Demetrius said of Diana in Acts 19:27), except the few who can say, as 1 John 5:20–21, "And 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. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." All representations of God save what is made to you in His Son are idols. And as you love His glory and your own eternal welfare, watch, guard, and keep yourselves from all or any of them.

CHAPTER 12

Christ's Glory in Representing Us to God

*Y*ou have heard at some length of the glory of Christ as He represents God to His church. And I rather insisted on it because it is a point of divine truth of main importance to be believed and of main influence and direction in the whole of Christianity. There are many poor souls who are ruined with irreligion, and not a few are ruined in and by their religion, such as it is. Some do not know that there is a God or live as if they thought there was none or wished that there was none. Some say they know and believe that there is a God, and they make some fashion of worshipping and serving Him. But they do not know who He is and what His right name is. It is only God in Christ who can be known, and savingly known, by men. It is only a saving name of God that can be savingly known by men. This name of God is only proclaimed in His everlasting gospel. And knowing this name can only be attained by Christ's declaring it (John 17:6–26; 1 Cor. 12:3) by the Holy Ghost. All contemplations of God outside of Christ are but vain imaginations that can never bring a man to the saving knowledge of God. And all worshipping of God outside of Christ is but will-worship and provocation.

It now follows to speak of another beam and branch of Christ's glory, and that is in Christ's representing His church

and people to God. It is one part of His glory that He so represents God to His church that all the saving knowledge of God is only in Him and by Him. Another part of His glory (if the word “part” were proper in speaking of His infinite glory—but you know what I mean, and no one can misunderstand me but those who will to do so) is in His so representing His church to God that all the acceptance we have with God, all the saving mercy we receive from God, and all the favorable views God has of us are from our being seen as in Christ and as we are represented by Christ to Him. God outside of Christ is a maze, a labyrinth to men, yea, a dreadful enemy. And men outside of Christ are an abomination in His eyes.

My work on this second heading of Christ's glory will be in three things. I will show you wherein Christ represents His people to God, what Christ's fitness is to make this representation, and what His glory is in making it.

Wherein Christ represents His church to God. By His church I mean a select company of Adam's seed (not excluding our first parents themselves) appointed to eternal life by Jesus Christ. This is His body, whereof He is head and savior (Eph. 5:23). All the favorable appearances they make in God's sight are all as they are represented to God by Jesus Christ. I will now proceed to state a few of the principal ones.

I begin with the first, the deepest of all: election, that sacred eternal purpose of God's grace concerning His church. This grace is in Jesus Christ. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [or things] in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself” (Eph. 1:3–5). It is but little that we do or can know of God—little of His works, little of His Word, but

least of all His thoughts and purposes. But when men think of these thoughts of God's heart and judge them according to their own, no wonder they widely err. For His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways (Isa. 55:8–9), but as far above them are His ways and His thoughts as the heavens are above the earth.

How far is a purposing, decreeing God above the reach of the most discerning of creatures! Yet vain man, who would be wise and quickly dream that He is so (and thereby betrays his folly), will venture to pry into, judge, and reason of the unsearchable counsels of God, when they who have most of the Spirit of God say, as in Romans 11:33–34, "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor?" We cannot be His counselors, but we may and must be His students and learn, adore, and believe what He reveals.

In the Scripture named, we have much to learn about His purposes. For example:

1. All spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus flow from electing grace.
2. This electing grace is eternal.
3. This electing grace is passed on distinct persons.
4. The means, way, and end are all included in this decree and purpose: "that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." The end is "the adoption of children" (v. 5), the heavenly inheritance (v. 11).

That which pertains to my present purpose is that this electing grace, thus expressed, thus qualified and distinguished, is in Jesus Christ (v. 4) and by Jesus Christ (v. 5). "This purpose and grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

Now, what is Christ's interest in electing grace? It is not to be thought that Christ purchased the love of election, as He did all the fruits of it, but only that electing love passed, first, on Christ the head and then, second, on His body the church (though I own that the words "first" and "second" are very improperly applied to the counsels of God, which are but one act in the divine mind; but we must think as a child and reason and understand as a child, while we are as a child). Christ was chosen head to the church, and the church chosen to be His body. He is chosen of God (1 Peter 2:4), and His church is a chosen generation (v. 9). And it is chosen in Him, not without regard for Him. Election determines all the persons. Election determines all the blessings these persons are to be blessed with. And election determines the way in and by which all these blessings are to be given to all these persons—and that way is in and by Jesus Christ.

Further, Christ represents His church to God in redemption. This redemption is "in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). It is in Him that we have it (Eph. 1:7). There is a redeemer: the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There is a price of the redemption: Himself, His life, His blood. There are redeemed ones: a great multitude "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

In speaking of the redemption in and by Jesus Christ, I would consider it in four ways:

1. This redemption is to be considered as required and demanded by the Father from the Son. The work of redeeming was laid on the Son, and the price of redemption fixed, even that the Son of God should in the fullness of time take on Himself man's nature (but as the children's nature, as the seed of Abraham), so that in that nature He should stand in their stead and suffer what His people deserved by their sins and

purchase blessings for them that they could never procure for themselves and without which they must perish.

This price of redemption was required of Christ (John 10:18) and required in honor of God's holy justice, in love and mercy to His chosen, and in a design of glory to His Son. A price of redemption for a sinner was never required by God of a sinner. He well knows that they have nothing to pay. Yea, the damned in hell are not sent there to pay, but to be punished. The proverb that a prison pays no debts is true of God's dreadful prison hell and of the miserable prisoners there. The Lord save you from it and instruct you in the only way to escape it! You are great debtors to God. You can never pay the first penny of your debt, much less the last one. He does not require payment from you, but all He craves of you is that you humbly own your debt and your inability to pay and take to yourselves the surety's payment. It was no improper saying concerning the gospel used by a minister in preaching to an ignorant people: "The gospel is nothing but good news that a rich man has come into the country to pay poor folks' debts." On this errand the Father sent Him, and for this end we should believe on Him.

2. Consider Christ's redemption as paid by Jesus Christ and so wrought out by Him. All the price demanded, He paid fully. The debt was perfectly paid in full measure, heaped up and running over. For when the righteousness of God is paid for the redemption of sinners and of their transgressions (as in Heb. 9:15), we quickly see where the advantage lies—for the demerit of sin is mainly heightened by the dignity of the offended party, and the merit of righteousness by the dignity of the party who performs it. On this, as on other accounts, grace much more abounds than sin (Rom. 5:20–21), and this grace reigns where sin had reigned.

Since sin came into the world, and grace appeared in the first gospel promise (Gen. 3:15), no sinner was ever redeemed and saved, no propitiation was ever made for sin, but by what our Lord Jesus Christ the redeemer did and made by His dying at Jerusalem. The virtue of it, according to the covenant, was effectual to believers before and after His death (Acts 15:11) and will still be till His second coming (Heb. 9:28).

3. Consider Christ's redemption as accepted by God. Though a price is demanded and paid as demanded, yet the redemption is not a concluded bargain unless it is accepted. But the price of the church's redemption was accepted with the highest good will. Christ "loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor" (Eph. 5:2). The sacrifice was offered *to* God, but offered *for* us. The savor of this sacrifice ascends upward and gives satisfaction to divine justice. And it descends downward to the hearts and consciences of believers for their peace and salvation (Heb. 9:14). "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" (Isa. 53:10). And both this way and means and the fruits and effects thereof are the pleasure of Jehovah that prospers in the hand of our dying Lord Jesus, as in John 10:17-18, where we see that the Father loved His Son for laying down His life for His sheep. And this commandment He received of His Father. Our Lord had this commandment in His heart, came to do it, and delighted in doing it (Ps. 40:6-8; cf. Heb. 10:5-10).

This divine acceptance of the price of His church's redemption is demonstrated in two ways especially: first, in the glory that the Lord redeemer was admitted to (Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:3; 2:9; 12:1; and in many other places). Simply consider His own words to His disciples and to His Father. To the disciples, in John 16:10, He said, "He [the Holy Spirit whom I will send from My Father] shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me

no more.” The conviction is deep, and so is the reason and ground of it. Christ’s going to leave them and their seeing Him no more, as before and now, was their main grief. They could not think that any good could accrue to them by this sad parting, much less such great blessings as Christ told them of, and that quickly afterward they knew and owned. “Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). And as Peter spoke this and words to the same purpose in the fulfilling of this promise, three thousand sinners, and great ones too, were convinced of sin, righteousness, and of judgment and made believers. Christ’s words to His Father are in John 17:4: “I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” in it. If Christ came back again into the world (save to judge it, and that will be in the clouds), men might think that He had not done all that He first came for. But He did all, as it was foretold in Daniel 9:24: “He finished the transgression, and made an end of sins [as in Heb. 9:26], and made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness, and sealed up the vision and prophecy, and anointed the most holy.”

Second, as Christ’s glory in heaven on His paying the price of redemption is a demonstration of its acceptance with God, so all the grace and glory on earth and in heaven in time and to eternity that is poured forth abundantly on men (that all flows from the virtue of this price) is another demonstration of God’s acceptance of this required and paid most precious price.

4. Consider redemption in Christ as it is applied to the redeemed. As the price was demanded by the Father, as it was paid by the Son, as this payment was accepted of the Father—all those concern the redeemed nearly; but all is only about them and for them. But application is to them, on them,

and in them. And all the application of Christ's redemption depends on and flows from the design of the Father and Son in this great work of redemption. I would consider redemption as applied to persons and to blessings, and their order.

1. As to persons. Christ's redemption is applied to all for whom it was paid, and none but them. "He shall justify many [whom, how many, and how, and why?], for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11). Universal election is rather nonsense (and a contradiction in terms) than an error, for if there is an election of grace (as there is, as surely as there is a sovereign "God of all grace," as He is called in 1 Peter 5:10), then some are chosen, and not all. And therefore some are passed by. Universal salvation is a gross and damnable error that few or none dare own. But universal redemption has many advocates and patrons. Whoever defends it so as to exclude the special, particular redemption of the elect of God fights against the tenor of the gospel. Christ died for distinct, known persons—for His sheep, whom He knew (John 10:14, 27). He died for them in love for them. And doubtless He knew well whom He loved. His blood, the price of redemption, is the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20) that confirmed this covenant (Heb. 9:15–16). Was not this price paid according to the terms of this covenant? Did not this covenant fix both the price and who should pay it and the purchase and who should enjoy it?

This you all may be sure of, that however men, by their wit and learning, may dispute and talk about Christ's death and its extent in His and His Father's designs in it, yet this precious gospel truth of redemption by Jesus Christ is never rightly known, rightly believed, or rightly used till a particular lost and sold sinner puts in by faith for a share and interest in it. Thus Paul: "The Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). How could Paul know this? When Christ died and redeemed His church, Paul was an ungodly wretch,

a very hypocrite. And after Christ had died, rose again, and ascended up into glory, Paul hated the very name of Christ and persecuted to death all who called on His name. But after God, who had separated him from his mother's womb, had called him by His grace and revealed His Son in him (Gal. 1:15–16), then, and not till then, he knew that Christ died for him, and that out of love for him. And ever after Paul lived by the faith of that knowledge.

2. This redemption by Christ is applied as to blessings also, and that in a wise order. Faith is first and a fruit of Christ's redemption. "And I, if I be [or when I am] lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), that is, "All whom I am lifted up for, them will I draw to Me."

It is no wonder that some men do not look on faith as the purchase of Christ's redemption, who dream of a kind of saving faith that Christ the redeemer is not the object of. But we know that to us "it is given on the behalf of Christ to believe on him" (Phil. 1:29), and that such as have true faith "have obtained this precious grace through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1)—for so it should be read according to the original. And He is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). This leads me to speak of the blessings of Christ's redemption that the redeemed receive by the virtue of it and by Christ's representing them to God.

They are represented by Christ to God for their justification and obtain it when, as, and because they are represented to God in Him and by Him. This justification of a sinner by faith in Christ Jesus is, ever was, and ever will be the darkest riddle and the greatest stumbling block to all the unbelieving world. It is always so, as to gospel truth, that the nearer relation a gospel truth has to the person and undertaking of the wonderful Savior (as He is called in Isa. 9:6), the less a natural man sees, and the more ready he is to stumble at it and to

mistake it. It is but a vain attempt of them (however good their design is, and however learned and wise they are who manage it) who study to accommodate the gospel doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ to the drift, liking, and understandings of unbelievers. Such will never (nor can) know and like it (1 Cor. 2:14). It is (as all the things of the Spirit of God are) dark and foolishness to them. And they who know least of Christ, of faith in Him, and of justification by faith are most bold and daring to reproach all and to speak evil of things they do not know.

None need wonder at what a poor wretch said and wrote, though he bore no small name in the world, "that of all the writers of the New Testament, Paul was the darkest and most obscure author." It was however plainly, though wickedly said. And it is the true meaning of all unbelievers. And the fruit of their unbelief remains in all men till faith comes (as Gal. 3:23, 25). This attempt to make justification by faith in Christ palatable to a natural man is not only vain and ineffectual, but it has no small influence on manifold corruptions of this truth and on men's bringing in another gospel (Gal. 1:6) that a natural man may sooner know and better like.

When natural men hear of the doctrine of justification (by which they understand that a sinner is counted and accepted as righteous before God, is pardoned of all his sins, and judged to eternal life), they all immediately and naturally think that this blessing can only come to men by one or another or both those ways that are both false ways: first, either that God will abate something of the strictness of His law; or, second, that He will in some way enable a sinner to do something and to bring something to God in order to gain acceptance with God—either that God will bring down His law for a sinner or bring up the sinner to obey His law. As to the first, that God will abate the strictness of His law and demand less, it is a vain

and false notion. But it is natural and constant in unregenerate men. Christ's great enemies, the scribes and Pharisees, who were wholly for righteousness by works, to support this Babel necessarily explained God's holy law in such a manner as it was no hard thing to fulfill it—and all their successors are driven to the same shift.

Our Lord (who came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it), to overthrow their rotten foundation, tells all in verse 20: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." This our Lord proved by a true interpretation of the law in its perfection, spirituality, and vast extent, so as that no sinner can fulfill it and get righteousness and life by it. And thus always God's law ought to be preached to men as so holy and perfect a law that no sinner can fulfill it, and as so strong and dreadful that no sinner can escape its reach or endure its sentence. They may look for relief in Christ alone.

The other thought of a natural man is that a sinner must do some good and be made holy so that he may be justified and pardoned. And though the poor sinner is nothing, has nothing, and can do nothing that is good, yet the legal spirit in him and the legal teachers whom he loves to hear use him more severely than the Egyptian taskmasters did the children of Israel. For Israel had earth to make Pharaoh's bricks of and with great pains could gather stubble in the land of Egypt instead of straw. But a sinner under the law is in a worse condition, for there is neither earth nor straw in all God's world for a sinner to make one brick, one good work of. Yet they are called on daily to do a great many works and are severely beaten when they do not fulfill their tasks. Many are ready to say, "Does not God command sinners in His Word to repent, believe, and to do well?" Yes, surely He does. The Old and New Testaments are full of such commands, and ministers may and

must teach men what God commands. But they should teach men those things that God means and intends and that are declared in His Word. They should teach them what God will have them to teach and will have all men to learn—that is, that those things are God's will and our duty, but that the power and will to obey is not in men but must be wrought by grace in them. "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). "For without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4–5).

If such is said of believers and of true branches in the true vine, what must be said of sinners in and of themselves? Those commands are not given to make sinners proud and to think what they can do, but to tell them God's mind and what is their duty to do, so that by hearing God's holy will and feeling their own utter inability to do any good, they may be humbled and take themselves to Christ by faith, on whom all our help is laid.

Objection: Where is justice in commanding what He knows we cannot do and then in punishing us for not doing it?

Answer: Many things have been said to answer such a cavil. I will name but three. First, all were once in Adam able to do God's will. This ability was lost by the first sin. If man by his sin has lost his power to do God's work, God has not lost His authority and power to command man's duty nor His right to punish man's sin. Second, all men naturally think that they can do something that is good and a great deal of it too. The Lord therefore justly tries them and lets them try what they can do. This natural inability in sinners to do any good is what they love and so is doubly sinful as well as miserable. The sinner's "cannot" is inseparable from his "will not." He is a captive to the devil at his will (2 Tim. 2:26). And the captive loves his jailer, his chains, and his drudgery. He neither longs for liberty

nor welcomes the news of a redeemer. Yea, he strives against Him till Christ subdues him by His grace (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

So each of those notions is false that God will abate the strictness of His law or will enable a sinner to do anything pleasing to God before he is justified. Besides, if either of those were true, they would quite alter and invert that mystery of justification by Christ that is revealed to us so plainly in the Scriptures. It is not the justification of a good and holy man but of a sinner, yea, of a sinner under the law, guilty of manifold breaches of this law, for which he is accused, arraigned, cursed, and condemned by it and his mouth stopped. He has no defense and no excuse to make, no shift or way of escape left to him but what the gospel reveals (Rom. 3:9–31).

It is about the justification of a man in this sad condition that the gospel speaks and tells us these good tidings:

The gospel tells us that a perfect righteousness, answering fully all the commands and the demands of the law, has been wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ. He was made under the same law His people are under, whom He thus redeems (Gal. 4:4–5). If we had been under one law and Christ made under another, it would not nor could it have been fitting and profitable for us. You hear by some of the mediatorial law as being proper to Christ only. It is true, never did any but Christ have a command from God to redeem lost sinners. And it is as true that this was in the same command that He should be made of a woman and made under the law. So the work of Christ to redeem and His being thus made for that work are equally peculiar to Christ, for as the work and glory of redeeming the church is His alone, so His being made of a woman and made under the law can be said of none but of Christ as man, any more than it can be said of any but Christ that He is God's own Son sent (Rom. 8:3).

Adam, the first man, was created by God; the first woman was built and made of the man (Gen. 2). Of this blood, all nations spring in an ordinary way. But the Son of God took man's nature from a woman only, and so, whereas all besides are born of a woman, He alone was made of a woman. So we all are born under the law and under its curse by Adam's first sin. Christ only was made under the law. This law demands perfect obedience to all its commands and demands and lays on the sinner God the lawgiver's wrath and curse for the least disobedience. Christ answered the law in both. As the eternal Son of God, He was above the law; and as sinless man, the law had nothing to say against Him. But when He took on Himself man's nature and therein took on Himself the law place of His people, and they being so sinful, obedience was justly craved of Him, and the debt of His people's sins was justly exacted from Him. Both Christ cheerfully and fully performed and endured, and thus we are saved.

The gospel tells us that this righteousness wrought out by Christ was wrought out for others and not for Himself. He wove and made this coat to cover and clothe His naked people. The gospel is full of this, in telling us both the errand His Father sent Him on and the work and business He did when He came. He needed no such garment for Himself but for His people whom He loved and whom He well knew needed it greatly.

The gospel tells us that this righteousness thus wrought out by Jesus Christ is freely and fully tendered and offered to all who hear the gospel, all of it (for it is not divided or divisible) to every man and woman (for gospel offers have no exceptions). Thus Peter made the offer to every one of them who heard him (Acts 2:38). He does not except the very murderers of Christ, nor those who mocked Him on the cross when Christ was working out this righteousness. So his beloved brother Paul (as he calls him in 2 Peter 3:15) preached: "Be it

known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [alas, this man is little known by most men] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38–39). Then believe on Him and be justified by Him, lest that word be fulfilled on you: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish" (Acts 13:41). And no longer than the next Sabbath day was it fulfilled (vv. 46–48). And if the company were ever so great or so bad, a gospel minister may make this large offer, as Christ Himself did: "In the last day, that great day of the feast [when the great convocation of the people was], Jesus stood and cried [that He might be seen and heard by all], saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37). This coming to Him and drinking is believing on Christ (vv. 38–39). When He was in heaven, sending a letter by John His messenger to a sorry church and in a sad case, He said so to them, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

To name no more of the large offers of Christ in the gospel, I will conclude with the last one in the Bible: "And let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

The gospel tells us that this large offer made of Christ in the gospel is the ordinary and appointed means of working faith in Christ. Thus, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), and, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ [and never did an honest preacher make a poorer living in worldly things off the gospel than Paul did]; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is

written, "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16–17). I need not insist on so plain a truth.

The gospel tells us that this righteousness of Christ is on all who believe. It is offered to all to be embraced by faith. And it is given and conferred on all who believe, and that on their believing. Whenever the hand of the Lord is on the hearts of hearers of the gospel and draws them forth to take to themselves this righteousness of Christ to embrace it and to trust all their acceptance with God on it alone, they are justified by it. "The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22–23). This is a blessed saving and a singular reason to confirm it. Are all sinners alike? Are all believers alike? No, surely. Are not some sinners greater sinners than others, and some believers better believers and greater saints than others? Yes, surely. But in this matter of Christ's righteousness, there is no difference. All sinners are alike in this: that they are equally in a condemned state and equally past all relief, save in and by Christ and His righteousness. All believers in Christ are alike in that saved state they are in by Christ's righteousness being on them. All sinners are equally needy, and all believers are equally partakers of this righteousness of God.

The gospel tells us that on this righteousness of Christ being on a believer in Him, these three things follow: the believer is justified; God is justified in justifying him; and the justified man's mouth is stopped as to all glorying, save in the Lord. The believer is justified, counted, and reputed as a righteous man through the righteousness imputed to him. On account of this same imputed righteousness of Christ, all his sins are forgiven and blotted out, and he is "passed from death to life, and shall not come into condemnation" (John 5:24;

Rom. 8:1, 33–34). He is reconciled to God and is dealt with as a friend of God.

God is also justified in His passing this sentence of justification on the believer. In all things, and above all, we should be tender of God's glory. There are especially three acts of God's righteous judgment that are censured much by the ungodly and in which Christians should be careful to justify God. One is His just judgment on the first Adam and his posterity. How full are most men's hearts, some men's mouths, and too many pens with censures of this awful but just sentence! The second is the Lord's way of dealing with the second Adam, Jesus Christ. He was not spared, but put to sore sufferings. Anyone may see amazing mercy—but who beholds and glorifies God's righteousness and justice in the death of Christ? The third is this that I am on, the justice of God in justifying a believer. And the cause of men's censures and mistakes about all three is much the same, and the censures are usually in the same sort of persons. The true cause of these challenges of God's judgments, which are a great deep (Ps. 36:6), is men's ignorance of the justice, majesty, and greatness of God. To such arguers against God the words of Elihu to Job may properly be applied: "Behold, in this thou art not just. I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not account of any of his matters" (Job 33:12–13).

In these three instances we may easily see how the ignorance of these work. In the first act of justice in God, we find one man's one act of disobedience conveying guilt, condemnation, and death to all his natural offspring. In the second instance, we find all the sins of many sinners charged and laid on a sinless person and justice dealing with Him as with a criminal. In the third, we find the righteousness of Christ, which He wrought out in making propitiation for sin, imputed

to the justifying of a believer—and in this God is justified. “To declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). Last, in this justification the justified man’s mouth is stopped as to all glorying but in the Lord. For as vast a blessing as it is, there is no place left for glorying. Therefore, in verse 27, he says, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.” The law, when it condemns, stops the sinner’s mouth from replying to justify himself (Rom. 3:19). And the gospel, when it absolves, stops the believer’s mouth from glorying in himself when justified.

But does not the law of works sufficiently exclude boasting? That law that commands more than the man can do—does it not shut out boasting? Can any man say that he has fulfilled that law?

No, surely. No man who in any measure knows the holiness of that law and knows himself, his heart, and doings will say so. But besides that, many are so blind and ignorant of both God’s law and themselves that they are ready to boast without any cause. All men who seek justification by the law and by their doings design boasting, though they never reach it. Though they cannot reach glorying before God, yet they would. But the justified believer, as he never reaches it when he is justified, so he never designs it when he seeks justification. The righteousness by which he is justified is wholly wrought out by another, and one so great that none who know Him will venture to put in for a share in His crown. He is “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). Yet the blessing of it is given to His church, and she is called by her husband’s name (Jer. 33:16). The revealing of this righteousness is from the Lord by His word and Spirit, without which no man could ever find it. The faith by which he lays hold on it is the work of God and

neither grew up in his heart, nor was acquired by his industry, nor conveyed by the power of any creature.

The imputing of this righteousness unto justification is God's act of free grace (Rom. 3:24). Nothing in man moves God to impute it, and nothing in God but His grace in Christ Jesus. The sinner, when he seeks it by faith, looks on nothing but this grace. And when he has it and knows it, he heartily owns that this spiritual blessing (as all others are, Eph. 1:3–7) is "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

It cannot be denied that a man may be proud of his justification and his faith. But in that case I am bold to say that either it is a false justification and a false faith that this man boasts of (and these are too common among professing believers), or that true justification is out of his sight and his faith out of exercise when any boasting rises in the heart of a real believer. For let a believer set himself before God, the judge of all. Let him read God's law and test his own heart and conscience. Let him see what he has to boast of, and he will see that he has all reason for fear and shame when he stands before this tribunal.

Let him next by faith see Jesus Christ at this same judgment seat, charged with this man's sins, discharging that man's debt, and buying all grace and glory for him by the price of His precious blood. Last, let him, by the same faith, behold God justifying him freely and fully and only on account of this satisfaction given by Christ. And then, and thus, let this man see and own that as there is no room left for boasting, so he will find no inclination to it in his heart. It is the character of a true Christian in Philippians 3:3: "For we are the circumcision [true Jews, as in Rom. 2:28–29] which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice [or glory] in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." So that whereas righteousness by the law is both sought by men in pride, and when they dream that they

will either reach it, or that they have got it (and such dreams are not rare, though groundless), pride and boasting increase so much that not only are their hearts puffed up within, not only do they glory before men—as Christ tells us of such hypocrites in Matthew 6—but they dare boast before God, as the Pharisee did in Luke 18:11. So, on the other hand, the justifying righteousness of God, wrought out by Christ and applied to the believer on Christ, was appointed by God, brought in by Christ, revealed in the gospel, and given to the believer for the highest glory of the free giver and the deepest humbling of the happy but unworthy receivers. And thus is that prophecy and promise fulfilled from Isaiah 45:24–25: “Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

What then is God's justifying a believer in Jesus Christ? It is nothing else but God's gracious looking on a man, judging him and dealing with him as in Christ and as represented by Christ to God for justification of life. There is a similitude commonly used, taken from Jacob getting his father Isaac's blessing in his brother Esau's raiment (Gen. 27). All similitudes, even in Scripture, taken from men's ways to express God's ways, want some grains to make them pass current—and this one especially, for old Isaac was deceived in bestowing his blessing. “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come” (Heb. 11:20). Though Isaac did so by faith, yet the blessings he gave his sons were not only greatly different, but he was also at first deceived in the persons whom he blessed. Yet though Jacob deceived his brother of the birthright (Gen. 25:29–34; Gen. 27), of the blessing by his mother's cunning and his own lying, yet neither of these hindered Isaac's faith nor the lightening of the blessing on Jacob, according to the election of grace and the oracle that declared it when they both were in the womb (Gen. 25:23). But though Jacob deceived his father

in the way wherein he sought the blessing, yet, in giving his blessing by faith to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Heb. 11:21), he guided both his hands wittingly and his words wisely and gave the blessing by the spirit of prophecy (Gen. 48:14–20). But the Lord always knows who are His (2 Tim. 2:19). He always knows whom He blesses and what blessings He gives. All our acceptance with and justification before God comes by the representation Christ makes of us to God. He was charged at the bar of justice for our sins. He answered this charge by a perfect satisfaction and thus was justified in the Spirit (1 Tim. 3:16). And when this satisfaction is put to our account, we are justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9). So much for the first blessing of justification.

Also, Christ represents His church to God for their sanctification. Election in Christ is an eternal purpose in God's heart and counsel about His people. Redemption by Christ is a divine bargain for them and their salvation between the Father and the Son. Justification is a gracious sentence of God in Christ on them who are represented by Him for acceptance. By this act and sentence, the state of their persons is favorably changed. But sanctification is a divine work on them that changes their heart and nature. The Spirit of sanctification is a precious gift of divine love and is only given to them who are in Christ and because they are in Him. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). All the anointings of the Holy Ghost that believers receive are but some drops that fall down from the head of our high priest onto the skirts of His garments (Ps. 133:2–3). "He received the Spirit without measure" (John 3:34), so that to His people, even to every one of them, grace may be given according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7)—not according to the measure that Christ got, but to the measure that Christ gives, and all of

them receive it. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Let him not name the name of Christ (as his lord and master) who does not depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19). All whose iniquities Christ bore for their expiation, in due time Christ blesses them in turning every one of them away from their iniquities (Acts 3:26).

This blessing of sanctification is of pure grace; for as there is nothing of worth in man or regarded by God in justifying, so there is nothing of goodness or of fit matter for God to work on His sanctifying. God's Word is as clear about this as about the other. The account that we have of the natural state of all men without Christ is sufficient to show the absolute necessity all stand in of God's grace to save them and to declare both the freedom and power of that grace in all its applications to men. Grace is the spring of salvation and of all its parts. Christ is the root of all, and eternal life and glory is the ripe fruit of all the grace of God that reigns through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21). See these texts, read them, and conclude this truth (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 2:1-7; Titus 3:3-7). In all these places, justification and sanctification are joined (as they are certainly and constantly in all who partake of them); unworthiness in the receivers overcome and passed over by the grace of the giver; and the interest of Jesus Christ in God giving and in His people receiving both these blessings is plainly told to us.

Further, all the communion, fellowship, and familiarity with God that a believer receives and is admitted to is all by Jesus Christ and by His representing him to God (Rom. 5:1-2; 1 John 1:3; John 14:23). Blessed be God that there is a great deal of it—and more might be attained if we were painstaking and diligent. This is so great a mercy that "come and see, come and taste" is the best counsel that can be given (Ps. 34:8). And such as taste it know its worth better than an apostle can tell

them, and that it all comes by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He is not only the only mediator of reconciliation and of intercession, but of fellowship with God. "For through him we both [Jews and Gentiles, if believers] have an access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18).

Last, the crown of glory and admission to heaven are granted to believers on account of the righteousness of Christ on the believer. "But now, being made free from sin [from the condemning and commanding power of sin, in justification and sanctification, of which the apostle had been speaking in chs. 5–6] and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:22–23). Sanctification by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18) is a precious gift of God. The perfecting of it by faith on the promises is a blessed design and exercise throughout the whole life of a Christian (2 Cor. 7:1). It is most pursued after, but never attained by the best till they attain the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:13–14). But when this prize is attained by them and bestowed on them, it is not given them because they are holy (though none but the sanctified inherit it), but because they are in Christ, members of His body, and because He is made all things for them for their salvation (1 Cor. 1:30), and because they are represented by Him and presented to God for this last, greatest, and everlasting acceptance. "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. 2:13).

The righteousness of Christ is the eternal robe of the glorified, and their most glorious one. It is the cause of their perfection in holiness and of its eternal duration. The glory and whiteness of their robes is in their being washed and made white in the blood of the lamb (Rev. 7:14). If Christians are careful to give God's grace in Christ its true use and praise

while they are on earth, no doubt but all who get to heaven will sing the song of the lamb with everlasting joy: "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever, Amen" (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10). And though some true Christians may possibly (either by the snare of dark or unsound doctrine or by a mistaken zeal for inherent, personal holiness) have less exercise by faith on Christ's righteousness than some others, and though some may advance by grace further in sanctification than others (and it is a very valuable attainment), yet all of them, when they come to die and to knock at heaven's gate for entrance into their master's joy, mind far otherwise the blood that bought the inheritance than anything wrought in them to make them fit for it (Col. 1:12), or than any pains they have been at in walking and running their race toward it.

We now move to the next thing: what Christ's fitness is for making this representation of the church to God. It is, first, in the constitution of His person. He is a rare, singular person: God-man, God's Son made man. And because He is God-man in one person, He is a person only fit and highly fit to represent man to God, for God sees our nature in His Son. We see God in Him, and God sees us in Him. We can never see and take up God rightly and by faith but as He is in His Son Jesus Christ, nor can God ever graciously look on a sinner but in His Son.

Christ is fit for making this representation of His church to God by His office of mediator. None is fit for this office but Christ. None is put in it but He (1 Tim. 2:5), and none but God-man can discharge it. The greatness of the work that is to be done in this office and the greatness of the glory that follows on its discharge are far too high for a mere creature. Such as deny that Christ is true God, who deny that He is true man, or who deny that He is God-man in one person (and

from the apostles' days to ours, the enemy has been sowing such tares in God's field) deny a fit mediator between God and men and thereby strike at the rock the church is built on.

Now, the office of a mediator is to deal with two parties. "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one" (Gal. 3:20), but he is so between two. The high priest under the law in his office was a type of Christ in His priesthood. Aaron and his successors, as high priests and typical mediators, represented all Israel (then God's only church) to God, especially in the solemn day of atonement (Lev. 16), when the high priest offered the sacrifice after confessing and as a type imputing Israel's sin to the innocent creature to be sacrificed. And he went with its blood into the holiest of all (a piece of earth most like heaven of anything or place made with hands), there to make atonement. This high priest was also to bear their names (whom he represented) before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial. Exodus 28:12, 29: "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment, upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." Aaron bore but the general names of the tribes of Israel, but Christ our high priest has a larger heart and breastplate and bears on it all the particular names of His people and represents them all to God in His offering Himself as a sacrifice for them, in His entering in with His own blood into the true holiest place of all, and in His appearing in heaven in the presence of God for them (Heb. 9:12–24). And, by the way, I may say that the epistle to the Hebrews is a key to all the Old Testament, and especially to the book of Leviticus and Old Testament worship.

What is the glory of Christ in making this representation of His church to God? We can easily conceive that there is much glory in His representing God to His church, but His glory in representing them to God is not so easily seen by us—but it is

surely a great glory. So the apostle said: "Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest, but he that said unto him" (Heb. 5:5–6), as in Psalm 2:7 and 110:4. He glorified Him and made Him a high priest. But what glory was there in this when He was to be the sacrifice Himself who was made the priest and to make this sacrifice in all the lowest and most humbling circumstances, smitten of God, despised of men, and abased even to death and the curse? Where was the glory in this? At first view, nothing appears but shame and dishonor.

A few things will conclude this matter at this time. Consider whom He did and does represent to God for acceptance: they are all sinners. The vilest thing is sin. The basest creature is a sinner. Yea, sinners are not properly creatures of God's making but are vile things of the devil's and of their own making—the only shameful things in God's world. Sin would never have been permitted to enter into the world if God had not resolved in Himself to gather in a rent of glory to His justice in punishing it in many and to His mercy in pardoning it in others. And this glory to pardoning grace comes by the redemption in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:7). Many of these pardoned sinners are of the worse sort of sinners (1 Cor. 6:9–11). And all of them think of themselves as such (1 Tim. 1:15–16), and therein they do not think amiss. They are a great many, as will appear in the day of their last gathering together to Christ, as it is called in 2 Thessalonians 2:1. Hence we read of a lost world and a saved one in the Word. When a sinner has his eyes opened to see himself, he loathes himself and thinks that he is enough to pollute, defile, and burden the whole creation of God. He abhors himself and thinks that everyone, especially the godly, should abhor him too. But mainly he judges himself most justly loathsome to God. Must it not be a great and glorious thing in that person who can and does represent such vile creatures to a gracious acceptance with God?

Consider to whom they are represented for acceptance, even to a holy and just God—a God who hates all iniquity wherever He sees it (Hab. 1:13) and sees it wherever it is and punishes it wherever it is not covered and pardoned. All discoveries of God's glorious holiness and our own sinful vileness render this representation for acceptance the more needful to be obtained, the harder to be believed (as all exercised Christians know), and the more glorious to Christ when it is obtained.

Consider what a glorious acceptance this representation by Christ procures. Those for whom it is made are accepted (Eph. 1:6), are beloved, are received into all friendship with God, and in that love are adjudged to all blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus.

Application: I have been speaking to you of Christ's glory in representing His church to God. I would only ask your consciences this one question: How do you think to appear before God? You all know, or profess to know, that there is a God—as certainly there is, and, I may say, more surely than that there is anything else, for God alone is the necessary being, and all creatures are but contingent beings (Rev. 4:11). You know that this God always sees you; that as He thinks of you, so is your state in His sight; and that God will at last judge you and proclaim to you and all the world His thoughts and judgment of you. You daily worship and serve Him. But how do you appear before Him? That is a question few ask. Many never think of this till it is too late. By what means and ways will I make such an appearance before God so as to be graciously accepted with Him? This seems to be on their hearts in Micah 6:6, though they did not know the right way. And so is it at this day with many sinners. I would warn you of some of those false ways in which men think to appear before God.

Some think to appear before God in the same poor state that their father Adam left them in. They own that they are not as good as he was, nor as good as they ought to be; but they think that, since men are so impoverished by Adam's fall, God will now accept a man with a little, if it is his all. But such deluded people do not know that as Adam left them nothing at all that is pleasing to God, so he has left them in a state of sin, wrath, and condemnation in which all his posterity are born, live, and perish at last, unless they are delivered from it by Jesus Christ.

Some think to appear before God in the best dress they can make for themselves by their good meanings and purposes and their good duties and works. They labor hard and long to amend their ways, to adorn their duties, and to adorn themselves by them. Thus they think to present themselves to God for acceptance. This garment of their own righteousness is beautiful in their own sight, for self-love naturally makes men prize their self-doings. It is a garment that is beautiful also in the sight of men—and of them they have their reward, as Christ told such men (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16). This dress is all the more praised when it is in fashion. Hypocrites praise hypocrites, and the church is full of them. So, from their own valuing, and others' praising them, in their ignorance they think that God will be as well pleased with them. But, alas, this is no better than the sad state Paul speaks of: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3).

Some think to appear before God for acceptance with their sufferings. If they can do but little, they think they suffer much. This is a strange vanity. Of these sufferings, some are voluntary, sinfully imposed on men by themselves. Of that people speak strangely: "Wherewith shall I come before the

Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old [and these were commanded in the law]? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil [those were more than God ever commanded, or than they could bring]? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul [a strictly forbidden abomination]?" (Mic. 6:6–7). When you read of this practice that some were left to offer their children in sacrifice, do not think that they hated their children. Nay, they loved them as well as you do yours—but they loved their souls better and feared God's anger more. They thought that what was dearest to them, and what they were most loath to part with, God would most accept. What a conviction may this give to many Christians who find it so hard to submit to the Lord's taking away their children, either by a natural or violent death, when a blind idolater is so mad upon his idols that he will voluntarily make a sacrifice of his children to their false gods, or devils, as they are called in Psalm 106:37!

So natural is it to men in their ignorance of God to think that what they impose on themselves, especially if it is troublesome to their flesh, is pleasing to, yea, meritorious before God. From this spring all the voluntary self-scourgings and the like among papists. These have no better example in God's Word than Baal's prophets did in 1 Kings 18:28 and have no better acceptance with God than they had.

What will a sinner not do? What shift will he not take himself to, who sees his sins, feels or fears God's wrath for them, and is ignorant of the only city of refuge, Jesus Christ? Many mock at the folly of both pagans and papists in their ways of seeking pardon and peace, who, if they were as much awakened in their conscience and as ignorant of Christ as they, would either take themselves to the same poor shifts

or to others that are just as vain. Again, some sufferings are commanded, as in James 4:9: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." There is a time to mourn, and there are calls to it. And we should discern both and set about this duty. There are many merry and jovial professing believers who never mind mourning for themselves or others except when God makes them suffer by His rods. And it is well if they do so then. But when a man with great pains has labored with his heart and has afflicted it with grief and sorrow, and when this storm within breaks out in tears and he pours them out before the Lord, as they did in Judges 2:4–5, and may call his bed (as David did his, Ps. 6:6) or chamber or closet a *Bochim*—then how easily a man grows proud and vain and thinks within himself: "Now I have offered an acceptable sacrifice to God!" It is true that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. But we must always remember these three things about all our spiritual sacrifices:

1. As they must all be of His requiring, so they must all be of His providing. We have nothing that God will accept till He gives it to us and till He first works it in us. David's broken heart was first given to him. Dreadful sins lay quiet in his hard heart till God broke it.

2. A broken heart is always a humble heart. It begins to grow whole again (and quickly it will, unless the one who breaks it keeps it broken) when it begins to be proud. Such as have a good opinion of their own hearts do not know what a broken heart means. He who has a broken heart is broken with his whole heart, as the Lord speaks of His grief at men's whole hearts (Ezek. 6:9).

3. All our spiritual sacrifices, including a broken heart, must be offered to God for acceptance on the right altar and by the right high priest, Jesus Christ. As He in dealing with

God for our redemption was altar, priest, and sacrifice, so in all our dealings with God by Him we must be furnished with our sacrifice out of His store. We must offer up all to God by Him as our priest (Heb. 13:15), for they are only acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). We must have and use Christ as our altar to sanctify our gifts (Matt. 23:19). It is grievous to hear what sad ground there is to fear that some professing believers think more often and think more highly of their own tears than of the redeeming blood of the Son of God.

Last, there are afflictions of God's inflicting and laying on. They are always laid on justly and righteously. No man should complain of them or of God when under them. No believer should despise or faint under them (Heb. 12:6-7). But no man may think of appearing before God with acceptance merely because he is afflicted. God afflicts His children in love. And He loves them no less because they are afflicted. But affliction itself and our own cross must not rob Christ's cross of its glory in making peace with God for sinners (Col. 1:20).

I should not mention this, but that you know that there are some so ignorant as to say when greatly afflicted, "I am now enduring the punishment of my sins." Yea, when dying, they think that the very agony of death is a punishment of, yea, an expiation for all the sins of their life. So grossly ignorant are many who live in a land of light. It is true that all the miseries of this life (yea, death itself, to an unbeliever) are the punishment of sin. Yet they are but a small and short part of that punishment. But, alas, where is the payment for sin and the satisfaction that God demands and will only accept? Nothing a sinner can do or suffer can ever amount to that.

I will conclude this exercise with these remarks. All who venture to appear before God as they are in and of themselves are ignorant of both God and themselves. They neither know how holy and just He is, nor how vile they are. If they did, they

would never venture to present stubble fully dry before this consuming fire.

All who dare not venture on Jesus Christ and on His representing them to God for acceptance know neither the Father nor the Son. This is the glorious contrivance in His eternal counsels and is delivered to us in His Word as the record of God (1 John 5:10–11) and extracted out of these counsels that a great number of sinners, vile and unworthy in themselves, will be accepted in the beloved and will be beloved for His sake and in Him. How hard a thing believers themselves find it to believe this firmly and constantly! What a glorious representation Jesus Christ can make of such vile creatures as we are in ourselves, when He clothes us with His righteousness! It is no easy thing for a true Christian, when he is digging into the dunghill of his own heart and loathing himself for all his abominations, at the same time to believe that he stands accepted before the throne of God as found and seen in Christ, clothed with Christ's garment of a spotless righteousness, that no fault can be found with him even at the highest tribunal, nor any condemnation can come from thence to the happy man who wears it. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, because it is God who justifies all who believe on Him (Rom. 8:1, 33–34).

Why Christ Prays for This Blessing

I am yet on the third thing in the matter of our Lord's prayer in this verse. The first was the description of those He prays for: "those whom thou hast given me." The second was the blessing He prays for on them: "that they may be with me where I am." The third is the end for which Christ prays for this blessing on them. What will they get by being with Christ where He is? What will they do, and how will they be employed? "That they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." That will give them enough work and enough bliss for eternity.

On this I proposed two things to be handled: the glory of Christ and the beholding of His glory. On the first of these, the glory of Christ, I have spoken a little on two headings: Christ's glory as He represents God to men and Christ's glory as He represents men to God. There are two most important questions that rise in the mind of every serious man, and he is a sinful and miserable person who never found them in his own heart and does not know how to answer them rightly. First, how may a sinful man so take up God as to know Him truly and savingly? And, second, in what way may God look on a sinful man graciously? Both are answered in one way: only in His Son Jesus Christ. If we look on God outside of Christ,

we are confounded. If God looks on us outside of Christ, we are destroyed. We are not able to behold the glory of God but in the face of Christ. And we are not able to avoid His wrath unless we are found in Christ and accepted by God in Him.

Wherein Christ represents His church to God, how fit He is to make this representation, and what Christ's glory is in making it, I spoke of last Lord's Day. The representation that Christ makes of His church to God is for their acceptance with God. And that acceptance never fails where this representation is made. It is acceptance with that God who knows all things and judges rightly of all things and persons. How then can a just God accept a man who in himself is a sinner, and therein do justly? That is a hard question that is only answered in the gospel. It is because Christ represents a sinner to God for acceptance. And this acceptance must be where this representation is made by Christ for these reasons: first, because Christ covers all that is sinful and loathsome in the man by His righteousness; and, second, by the same righteousness He not only covers his nakedness and deformity but puts a beauty on the man. Though that beauty is not in the man, but in Christ, yet it is put on him by grace. Ezekiel 16:14: "Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord." By this imputed righteousness of Christ put on a believer in Christ, his own sin is covered. The believer stands clothed and so is beautiful in God's sight in this gifted righteousness and is justly justified by God the judge of all. See Psalm 32:1-2, with Paul's comment on it in Romans 4:6-8: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

I will make a few remarks on those two Scriptures, and that will be all I will say on the doctrinal part and then proceed to the application.

The first thing I remark is this: that the apostle names only those words of the psalmist that belong to his present purpose. He is handling the doctrine of the justification of a sinner. This blessed doctrine he had taught in the preceding chapter with so clear a light that all the darkness of hell will never be able to put out or quench in the church of Christ. This blessing, he teaches, comes by the free grace of God in and by the redemption made by Christ. It is given by God and possessed by men by faith in Christ's redeeming blood, without any interest of the works of the law therein. Christ indeed dealt with the law and fulfilled all the righteousness thereof for our justification. But we have nothing to do with the law in our dealing with God for our justification but to come with its condemning sentence in our guilty conscience so that we may lay hold of Christ's righteousness. This righteousness, as it fulfilled the law when wrought out by Christ, so it sprinkles our consciences, when applied to us by His Spirit and grace, and when it is applied to us by faith. Those two applications are inseparable, and both are the fruits of the saving grace of God. This doctrine Paul confirms by two instances in two eminent saints in this fourth chapter: Abraham before the law (vv. 1–5) and afterward in this chapter; and David under the law (vv. 6–8). Whatever difference there was in the dispensations they were under (and there was a great one), yet there was none in the way of their justification before God. Both were by God's grace, without the works of the law, without work, without hire, without any glorying before God.

Now David had said in Psalm 32:2: "Blessed is the man also, in whose spirit there is no guile." But this pertained to the blessing of sanctification, though inseparable from that

of justification (which is the apostle's distinct theme in this context), and is therefore wisely omitted by the apostle.

The second thing I remark in comparing these two scriptures is this: Whereas David lays the blessing on the pardoned man, the man whose sins are covered, the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, Paul tells us that herein David described the blessedness of the "man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," when he said so. David said nothing of the imputing of righteousness, but only not imputing sin. Paul teaches that not imputing sin is the same as imputing righteousness, and that without works also. A few things will serve to clear this:

1. Every man's state before God is as God judges and reckons him. His account and reckoning of a man is always right and true. And it is always decisive and determining, for it is the highest judge's sentence. Thus is it now; thus will it always be.

2. The supreme judge's judgment concerning them is always about sin or righteousness. His condemning sentence is for sin. His approving sentence is for righteousness. For an earthly judge to clear the guilty or condemn the righteous are both an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 17:15). And who without blasphemy can charge the judge of all the earth with it (Gen. 18:25)? Every man therefore, even now, is in God's sight under a sentence, either of condemnation because of sin or of approbation because of righteousness. That is, in the dialect of the Holy Ghost, every man either has sin imputed to him for condemnation or righteousness imputed to him for the justification of life, as Paul calls it in Romans 5:18.

Sin and righteousness are contraries. They expel one another and cannot consist together. Everyone is either guilty or not guilty and must be in the eye of God and at the bar of God's law and judgment. If guilty, then they are not

righteous and are therefore condemned. If not guilty, then they are righteous and therefore are absolved and acquitted. This alternative, sinful or lawful, reaches to all our thoughts and actions. And thus are they judged by God as contrary or consonant to the law, the rule. And also guilty or not guilty, or righteous, reaches to the state of all persons before God. Thus we are all judged and accounted of by the Lord as we are either under sin or under righteousness.

Now, when man has fallen, and there is nothing but sin in man, and no righteousness can be found in him, God has provided a righteousness outside him in and by which he may only, surely, and justly be justified before God. Of this we have been speaking. This is that righteousness of Christ in which all believers on Him stand accepted before God. It is imputed to them, and therefore their sin is not imputed to them. And thus are they judged and absolved at God's throne of grace in Christ Jesus. So to conclude this, unless all that we are and all that we have done is covered by this righteousness, unless there is a reckoning of this righteousness of Christ to us by God—sin, our own sin, will be imputed to us for condemnation. It is only this righteousness that is justly precious in the judgment of God and makes sinful man accepted with Him.

Inference 1: Behold here the wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in thus representing His church and people to God. The apostle said, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). He supposed that all true Christians knew Christ's grace, and justly, for God knows, and all men may judge them to be unworthy of that name who do not know it. Christ's grace is a lovely theme to hear of and to think on by all who have tasted of it and live by it. This grace shines brightly in His representing His people to God for acceptance. It was a great

condescension of His grace to take the office of a representer of His church. He knew His own divine dignity. He knew the vileness and unworthiness of those whom He was to represent. Yet neither of these things hindered His cheerful undertaking of this office. And as it was condescending grace in Him to undertake it, so was it costly grace to Him to go through with it and discharge it. Blessed Jesus laid out all His estate (so to speak) to redeem the lawful captives of justice. Before they can be represented to God for acceptance, He must die and shed His blood. And in His garments, dyed with His own blood, He must present Himself as a perfected mediator to God and in the same garments present His church to God for acceptance.

This matter of our acceptance with God is not brought about by the prayers of Christ on earth nor by His intercession in heaven—though we are apt to think that the prayers of such a supplicant might do anything. Yea, anything but this! “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). And no blood but Christ’s can bring an atonement (Rom. 5:9–10). He had no sin of His own, but when He was charged with the sins of His people, He must shed His blood as a sacrifice for propitiation. When Christ stood thus charged at the bar of justice, He was not spared but was dealt with as strictly as another sinner. When law and justice take a sinner by the throat, it says to him, “Pay me what you owe,” as in the parable in Matthew 18:28. And this charge is still on all who are outside of Christ, though they are now deaf and do not hear it.

This charge is on all the prisoners in hell: “Pay your debts to God, or there will be no getting out of prison.” But this charge was on Christ alone: “Pay what Thou owest as surety for a multitude of beggars and debtors. They have nothing to pay. Thou art rich and able to pay. Thou hast undertaken to pay, and therefore full payment must be made before Thou enter into glory and Thy people be presented to God with

acceptance.” And this charge Christ obeyed and answered, by which His church is saved. So great was His obedience to His Father’s commandment, so great was His zeal for His own and His Father’s glory, and so great was His love for His church that He gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25–27).

Now, as it is the duty of all Christians to behold this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—and it is their great advantage to do so—so the best find it no easy thing to believe it with application to themselves, so as to say, as in Galatians 2:20, “Christ loved me and gave himself for me.” For when they see a little of themselves (and but a little is seen, and all bad) and a little of His glory (and it is but a little of that which believers can see, with such bad eyes as the best have, and in so dark and distant a place as this is where we are), then they find it hard to believe that Christ will clothe their filthy nakedness with that garment of salvation which He wrought out and in it present them to God’s favor and love and to all the precious fruits of it. But hard as it is, all the true worshippers in the New Testament temple are bound to believe that their great high priest over the house of God represents them to God for acceptance far more really (for that was but typically) and much more successfully than Aaron did Israel on the solemn Day of Atonement. But it is as truly as commonly said that such as think that believing is easy do not know what believing is.

Inference 2: Here we may see the excellent way of our acceptance with God. We are accepted in His Son Jesus Christ. The salvation we get upon our acceptance with God and the blessed way in which this acceptance comes are equally to be beheld with wonder, praise, and faith. This excellent way is the only way of a sinner’s acceptance with God. There was another way, but that was of the acceptance not of a sinner but of a sinless man with God. But that is gone. In commending this only way now, I would have you consider that there have been two ways

of man's acceptance with God, both of God's making. One way was that in the first Adam, but that is past. The other way is in the second Adam. This stands and will remain forever. There is also another way of man's making that is neither in the first nor second Adam. This is a dream that the greatest part of mankind dream to hell in. They dream of it as long as they live. And when they die and go to hell they awake, and behold, it was a dream—for neither the mourning of the law nor the piping of the gospel awakens them out of it (Matt. 11:17). And this way is by a sinful man's own doing in trying to please God.

Of each of these ways I will speak a little:

The first way of man's acceptance was fixed in the first Adam and in God's covenant with him. Obedience was required, and death was threatened for disobedience. But God graciously furnished him with endowments that were sufficient for his work. The Lord, by this way, therein signified that mankind should stand accepted by Him as represented by his covenant head. So, in Romans 5:14, the first Adam is called the figure (or type) of Him who was to come, that is, Christ. The apostle, from verse 12 to the end of the chapter, shows the vast unlikeness, yea, contrariety between these two heads of mankind in what each did (obedience and disobedience) and in what they brought in. The first man brought in by his disobedience sin, condemnation, and death; the second man brought in by His obedience righteousness, justification, and eternal life—all as contrary as light and darkness, heaven and hell.

How and wherein is Adam then said to be the figure, the type of Jesus Christ? Is it not in this: that as the two were true men, and so they were single persons, yet they both were federal, covenant heads and representatives of a great many? Adam was the representative of all his natural offspring; Christ, of all His spiritual offspring given to Him by the Father. And as the first Adam stood accepted with God in the righteousness

of his obedience, so his posterity stood on the same account. If Adam had continued in his obedience, all his posterity would have been accepted in him; but because he became a sinner by his fall, the first Adam thereby became a destroyer and brought in sin and death on all his posterity by the justice of the curse of the broken covenant. Adam had the guilt of his sin imputed, and the depraved nature which by his sin he contracted propagated to all his posterity. So that the best of saints is conceived and born in sin (Ps. 51:5), and all are by nature children of disobedience and of wrath (Eph. 2:3). So this way is quite unpassable. A covenant between a holy God and a dead, defiled sinner was never intended by God. And it is dishonorable to God's holiness, wisdom, and justice to imagine any such covenant.

The other way of God's making for the acceptance of sinful men is by His Son Jesus Christ and God's covenant with Him for His redeemed offspring. If our father Adam had stood as God had placed him, there would have been nothing required of us or needed by us in order to place us in the favor and friendship of God. Whatever had been needful for our continuing in it, Adam's obedience, if continued, would have entailed and conveyed it to us in our various generations. So now in Christ, the second Adam, the favor of God was bought for us by Him (for it was lost by the first Adam). It stands in Him and is conveyed to us through Him when the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). These are all the ways of God's making.

But there is a way of man's making and devising (as fallen man is full of foolish inventions), and it is to obtain God's favor by their own doings and obedience. The Lord never put anyone on this way, though many think that He has put all men to it. There never were but two sinless men in the world—Adam and Christ. The obedience God required of Adam was

not to place him and bring him into God's favor and friendship (for that he was created in), but it was only to continue him in it and to convey the same friendship with God to all his posterity. But how to regain God's favor when lost by sin, what way to make up the breach when made, Adam did not and could not know till God revealed it after man's fall.

So Christ's work and business in the world was not to obtain God's friendship for Himself, for He from eternity was the Son of His Father's love and His Father's everlasting delight. As man, when conceived in the womb of the virgin, He was that holy thing who was to be born of her (Luke 1:35). And while He lived in the world, He always did those things that pleased His Father (John 8:29). As to His office of mediator, He was installed in it most honorably and glorified by it (Heb. 5:5). His discharge of it was the pleasure of Jehovah (Isa. 53:10). He made it His meat to do the will of Him who sent Him and to finish His work (John 4:34). He was straitened, pained, till His baptism in His own blood was accomplished (Luke 12:50). He desired with great desire to eat His last passover (Luke 22:15). After that, He appointed His Supper as a memorial of His death and for an ordinance or seal of that New Testament which He was the next day to confirm and ratify by His blood.

And when all this was done, He opened His heart in love to His disciples about His death and the good they would get by it in His absence with a firm promise of their happy meeting again in a better place and state than He either found or left them in (John 14:15-16). Last of all, He opened His heart to His Father in John 17:4: "I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." When all things stood thus between Christ and His Father, what need then was there of all the heavy sufferings that He was put to and that He must endure, as He often told them before? That necessity He was under of suffering was from this: that He

came to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28) and was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world to redeem His people with the price of His precious and spotless blood (1 Peter 1:19–20).

But this invention of man's heart in seeking God's favor and acceptance by their own works and doings is not only not appointed by God and was never successful for any man (for that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, says Gal. 3:11; but no evidence is convincing to a blind and proud legalist), but also this way perverts both the ways of God's appointment. If men choose God's old way with Adam in innocence, then they must be sinless and in God's friendship, as he was. They must have all the abilities Adam had for obedience to maintain that friendship. But though sinful man is proud and vain, yet none have the audacity to pretend to innocently standing in Adam's covenant state and ability.

As for the only way of regaining God's favor by Jesus Christ, this new and wicked way overthrows it: "For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," and Paul would frustrate the grace of God if he sought to live by the law (Gal. 2:19–21). But the unbelieving world runs after this invention, for they are too poor to answer the exact, perfect holiness of God's true law and too proud to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. They do as the cunning knave did in Luke 16:3–4. They cannot dig with old Adam and are ashamed to beg of the second Adam. Therefore they strive to live by tricks and cheating. But God is not mocked. And thus multitudes perish, not only in the heathen and anti-Christian world but in that which is called Christian, for this damnable error is natural and is in the heart of everyone who is an unbeliever, profess what he will in words and principles.

But the only gospel way of sinners' acceptance with God by the representation that Christ makes of them to God has these

things to commend it above God's first way with Adam and his seed in the first covenant:

1. It is a most glorious way of acceptance, far higher and better than what Adam had while he stood or than his posterity would have had if he had stood. For, on this supposition of Adam's standing, sin would have indeed been kept out. But the acceptance continued to Adam and his posterity would have had no better and nobler foundation than that of the obedience and righteousness of a creature, a mere man. But believers in Christ stand accepted by God in the obedience and righteousness of Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever, so that every one of them may say, as Isaiah 45:24, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." I own that this way stops all glorying in ourselves, but it is fitted for raising and keeping up eternal glorying in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:29-31). It is not the least but rather the greatest of the honors of the crown of glory in heaven that the crown itself and the kingdom and the heirs of it were all bought with the blood of the lamb, and that their title to it now and their possessing of it to eternity has no other or lower foundation than the righteousness of God, the righteousness of a man who is the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). And thus God's Israel will be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation (Isa. 45:17).

2. This way is a more safe and sure way than Adam's way or God's old way with Adam. The uncertainty of that way was seen in the event quickly. The stock of mankind was all in his hand. He was furnished with sufficient grace to keep him standing (his case is enough to make us hate the popish distinction and sense of sufficient and efficacious grace, with reference to fallen man), but he was a mere man and was left to the freedom of his own perfect will. That was enough to disgrace the false name of free will in a sinner, who is a slave to his will and lusts and a captive to the devil at his will (2 Tim. 2:26). But

it pleased God (and against that no man should reply) not to give him establishing, preserving grace. It seemed fit to God that establishing grace should only be dispensed in and by Jesus Christ, who was to restore fallen man and to be the head of a new and better covenant, of which Christ is mediator, and that was established on better promises (Heb. 8:6).

Establishing grace was given to the standing angels. Christ is their head (Col. 2:10), and they are called elect angels (1 Tim. 5:21). Now, if it had been asked of Adam or an angel concerning him, "How long will Adam stand in God's favor?," the only answer could have been, "As long as he is obedient to his maker and covenant party." Ask again, "How long will Christ the mediator stand in God's favor?" It is answered, "Forever. And it is impossible that it should be otherwise." But if it again is asked, "How long will a believer in Christ, whom Christ has represented to God for acceptance, stand accepted?," this has several answers, but only one good one. And that is this: "A believer stands always accepted with God as long as Christ is accepted with God as the representer. As long as the believer is represented by Christ, so long does his state of acceptance with God continue." Adam, in his first state, had all grace but establishing grace in his good state. The elect angels had it and thereby stood and always behold the face of Christ's Father who is in heaven (Matt. 18:10). They needed no other grace but establishing grace to make them well, more grace to make them better, and preserving grace to keep them in the heavenly kingdom. All this grace is out of Christ's fullness and secures the happy state of all who are in Him.

3. By this way of our acceptance with God in Christ, a greater blessedness comes to men than could have come by Adam if he had stood. The first mention of eternal life is made after his fall (Gen. 3:22). It is indeed a deep and dark text, but what I name it for is that in it living forever is first

named that afterward is so frequently promised in Christ to His church. To this Revelation 2:7 plainly relates: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." We need not trouble our heads about the extent of the blessings in the first covenant of God with Adam and mankind in him. The Spirit of God speaks very little thereof, and that wisely, for why should He reveal blessings which no man was to partake of? But what is plainly revealed is that this covenant was utterly broken by Adam's sin, and by that breach, guilt, wrath, and death came in on the world, for which the only relief is by Jesus Christ. The first dawning of this our first parents saw in that first gospel (Gen. 3:15) and expressed their faith of it in that worship which was appointed them (Gen. 4). They recovered the favor of God by this new way and covenant that they had lost by their sin under the first one. There was doubtless something singular in that communion with God that our parents and Abel and who else of mankind were then born had. That is called "the face of the Lord" in Genesis 4:14 and the "presence of the Lord" in verse 16 that the reprobate Cain counted it his misery and punishment to be banished from—for he thought that when he was cast out of God's presence he was also cast out of God's protection and then was afraid lest every man or beast might prove to be his executioner. Therefore God gave him a pass and a protection, and it is likely that was all he sought or got.

But now, in Christ Jesus and on account of His righteousness, not only is all the curse of the first broken covenant removed, but greater blessings are conveyed to us and bestowed on us and a better paradise provided for us than that which Adam sinned in and was driven from. He sinned in it almost as soon as he was put in it and was driven out of it as soon as he had sinned—and both of them concern and affect all of us his posterity as much as they did him. We are sinners

in and by his sin and cast out of God's favor in and by his being cast out. And there is no relief for us but in Jesus Christ. But this relief is with vast advantages (Rom. 5:12–21).

Examine your hearts, then, as to how they stand affected toward this new and living way to the holiest of all by Jesus Christ. It is a good rule for one to judge his own state by, even by his true, fixed, and approved thoughts of Jesus Christ as the only way to God's favor and friendship (1 Cor. 1:23–24; 1 Peter 2:7). How blind must that man be who has hopes of heaven and has no hearty savor and relish of God's only way to heaven! If men mind heaven and seek it and hope for it in ways of their own devising, they are never a whit nearer to it nor the surer of it.

That you may not be deceived now and disappointed woefully at last, I would show you some thoughts of men's hearts that are common, sinful, and dangerous so that you may beware of them:

Some say within themselves (and it may be to God too), "Oh, that God would accept me with His great mercy and look graciously on me!" And is not this a good wish? Is it not a frequent prayer of saints in the Word? And is it not to be still used by all? Yes, all this is true. But it is only good when it is well meant. In many it is ill meant and therefore is a faulty wish. All the mercy of God flows to men only in and by Jesus Christ. If Christ is forgotten in your prayers, you can never put up one good petition nor get a good answer. The mercy of God without Christ is a dream that the greatest part of the world dream their way to hell in and all the while think that they are on the right road to heaven. How often have you heard that there is no God to be savingly known and rightly worshipped but in Christ! And that there is no saving mercy to be found from God but in Jesus Christ!

Some say, and think they say something better, "Oh, that God would make me perfectly holy so that I may be accepted by Him!" Is not this a fine desire and prayer? True holiness is indeed an excellent blessing, a main part of the image of God in standing Adam, utterly lost and defaced in fallen man, renewed again by Jesus Christ in regeneration, and perfected in heaven. The study of holiness is an excellent study and a study for all our days. We should be still perfecting it (2 Cor. 7:1), but cannot in this life be perfect in it (Phil. 3:12). Perfect holiness is an excellent aim and design and is in the heart and eye of everyone who is truly holy. Diligence, continuance in it, and to grow in holiness are a saint's best exercises, and success therein is his choicest mercy. The holiest man on earth is surely the happiest man on earth, and the perfection of holiness in heaven is a necessary constituent of the happiness of heaven. A patron of sin, a despiser of holiness, and he who desires only a little of it does not have the Spirit of God.

But for all this, there may lurk some evil thing in this wish for perfect holiness. To search it out, I would name a few things to you. There is no true holiness but what is from Christ, who is made of God to us sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). None are sanctified but by faith in Him (Acts 26:18). It is Christ's image in them. All the moral virtues of the heathen, for all their splendid luster, did not have the least true holiness in them. And so is it as to the morality that is so prized and praised by many.

As all that are truly holy would be perfectly holy (for no man is void of this desire, but such as would sin more and love sin), so no man is truly holy but he who has a mean and low esteem of his own holiness. And the most happy proficient one in holiness is surely the humblest saint. Whenever holiness is sought to recommend us to God's acceptance without faith in Christ, there is no holiness in that desire, nor will it ever be granted. For in this case the language of the heart is, "Oh, that

I were so holy that I might not need Jesus Christ!" What an ungodly wish is this! I hope you all abhor the thought of it.

It is also common with many to say, "Oh, that God would accept me and my good works and duties for Christ's sake!" Many poor creatures take pains to do all they can in obeying God's will, and when they find it is but little they do, and that also full of sinful mixture and imperfection, then they bring in Christ to help them out. But this is to abase and affront Christ—for Christ was never appointed to help men under the first covenant of works, but only to bring them out of it and then save them by the new and better covenant, wherein the mediator does all the redeeming work for them by Himself alone; and by His Spirit given to them, He works in them what is pleasing in His sight.

But this carnal wish of having our works accepted for Christ's sake says that the man thinks he can do something (and that is no small thing in this vain man's eyes) without Christ. This is contrary to the well-known word of His: "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). This was spoken to and of them who were already in Him, and much more may it be said of them who are not in Him. Yet there is hardly to be found a natural man who does not think but that he can do something that pleases God and may further his acceptance with God. But because it is not as much and as good as it should be, he would have help from Christ to make it better and more effectual with God. But the bottom of all this is self.

Christ's righteousness was not wrought out by Him and tendered to men in the gospel as a rag, a patch, or an ornament to be put on a part of the shameful nakedness and deformity of a sinner, but as a perfect and entire garment to cover all. So that those who do not have it all on them have none of it. And he who does not receive it at all and does not trust Christ's righteousness alone as the only screen from the

holy justice of God and the only ornament of beauty in God's sight is still stout-hearted and far from righteousness.

The acceptance of our service and obedience to God is indeed a precious thing and much desired by all sincere Christians. But the way it is obtained is little known by many who seem earnest for it. The Lord's way is this: first, by Christ and union with Him, the believer's person is accepted by God; and then through Christ, the fruits of his faith (as all true good works are) become accepted also. So in the beginning of the world (Gen. 4:4–5), when the two brothers offered their sacrifices to the Lord (both offered to the same true God; the offerings in themselves were lawful; and afterward were required by the written law), yet it is said that "the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Wherein lay the difference between their offerings? "By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh," or, "is spoken of" (Heb. 11:4). And from distinguishing grace, as Abel was received and accepted, so Cain was enraged and turned into a murderer of his brother (1 John 3:12). This made Luther say that Cain has been murdering Abel in all ages to this day—that is, the zealots for the righteousness of works still hate and persecute the heirs of the righteousness that comes by faith, as Noah is called in Hebrews 11:7.

But the only right breathing of the heart of one who truly knows and believes this truth that Christ is the only representer of His people to God for acceptance is that of Paul in Philipians 3:8–10. Therein three things are noted: first, that he might win or gain Christ (v. 8). Then Paul counts himself to be rich enough and despises all losses for this gain. Second, that he might be found "in Christ (v. 9). It is as if he had said, "I

know the day is coming when God, the judge of all, will find out every man and me also. My design and desire is that I may be found in Christ, and then I am sure I will be found in peace.” But how would he be found in Christ? “Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law. I am afraid and ashamed of appearing before God in that. But that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that righteousness which is of God’s providing and accepting, that which is of Christ’s working out, and that is applied and put on by faith.” It is this righteousness that the apostle desired to be found in in order to be accepted by God, and so will every person do who has the Spirit that Paul taught this doctrine by. Third, that I may know Christ (v. 10). “If I win Christ, I am rich toward God; if I am found in Him, I am safe; if I know Him, I am wise to salvation.” Blessed is that man or woman who feels in his or her heart something of that deep humility, strong faith, and warm love that was wrought in Paul’s heart when he, by the Holy Ghost, wrote these words. Then they would be easily and plainly understood. But when men know and feel nothing of themselves and their own unrighteousness nor of Christ and His righteousness, no Christian should wonder at such men’s blundering about and mistaking such evangelical expressions of faith in Jesus Christ. These shine as daylight to an exercised believer, while the unbeliever, though a master in Israel, can see no light in them, but gropes as if he had no eyes and stumbles at noonday as if it were night, as it is said in Isaiah 59:10.

So much for the two inferences from this doctrine. I would now further apply this truth in two exhortations: one to unbelievers and another to believers. The first I will give here; the second, afterward.

Application—Use of Exhortation to Unbelievers: By unbelievers, I mean such as never had any business with Christ to obtain by Him acceptance with God for themselves. He is an unbeliever,

call him by what name you will, who never employed Christ to represent him to God for acceptance. Of such there are many sorts who seek the acceptance of their works, not of their persons. Some beg communications of grace and mercy from God and do not use God's way of giving all in and by Jesus Christ. Some beg the pardon of their sins and the washing away of their defilements but do not ask how a sinful man can stand so beautiful in God's eyes that God may look on him and not be angry, may look on him and love him. The sort of pardon that many seek is never given, and, if given, would not answer the end. A mere pardon of sin (if it were possible) without a garment of righteousness on a man might deliver him from wrath and hell, but would not make him lovely in God's eyes or entitle him to eternal life—for it is grace that reigns to eternal life through righteousness, and that grace, that reign of grace, that righteousness, and that eternal life are all by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21). But true gospel forgiveness and the imputation of Christ's righteousness are inseparable and indivisible.

Of those unbelievers there are especially three sorts:

1. Secure, sleepy unbelievers. These have no heart concern about this matter and never think in earnest how they will stand accepted of God, nor of Christ's concern in procuring it, nor of their own concern in obtaining it by Him. Such men are much like that great man (though a blind pagan) in Acts 25:19: "They had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Little did that poor Roman know that he must perish forever if he did not know this Jesus, the virtue of His death, and the power of His resurrection. Just as indifferent and careless are many sinners this day who, when they hear of Christ and the necessity of His righteousness to sinners for their acceptance with God, are ready to say that

there are certain hard questions about things and persons that they have no concern with. Whether Jesus was dead or alive, whether the Jews or Paul were in the right—all was alike to Festus. So it is with many now. Whether a sinner can weave and work for himself a garment to stand accepted with God in, or whether he must have one made for him and given to him by Jesus Christ or perish forever—these are counted merely as questions for ministers and scholars, and such as they have different and contrary opinions about. The careless unbeliever does not trouble his head about them, and that only because his heart never felt the weight of sin and the vast concern of eternal salvation. All such are gross unbelievers. They may sometimes ask what ministers and what Christians think of them, but they never ask this: “What does God think of me? How will I stand accepted before Him?” Assure yourselves that all other cares, concerns, and inquiries about yourselves are mere trifles in regard of this, and that all such persons are but triflers in religion, pretend and profess what they will, who do not regard salvation in the first place as the one thing needful (Matt. 6:33; Luke 10:42).

2. There are awakened and roused unbelievers, like many of John Baptist’s hearers, at whom he wondered: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matt. 3:7). Such men come to know and feel from the light and power of God’s Word that their eternal state and lot stands in God’s judging, and that so it will and must fare with them to eternity as they are accepted or not accepted with God. That man comes to know that as yet there is nothing in him to procure this so necessary acceptance with God; yea, he sees that this God in whose hands is his eternal lot is in many ways provoked to wrath against him for his sins. In this condition, the native shift that all men take is a new course of obeying and doing the best they can, not knowing Jesus Christ.

They take the first water, and the next one at hand, to wash away the filth that is on them. But, alas, their filth increases by this washing. Their soul-disease grows on them by false means of cure. There is no physician for sick souls but Jesus Christ, no balm for a wounded conscience but His blood, no washing from sin but in it, and none recover of the mortal disease of sin but His patients.

3. There are desponding, despairing unbelievers. And there are such at all times and in greater numbers than many are aware of. This sad frame rises thus by clearer discoveries of the holiness and purity of God and of the righteousness of His holy law. It comes by further discoveries of their own vileness and sinfulness—when they see sin within them, sin without, sin round about them, and that they are under sin (Rom. 3:9–19). A man may be said to be full of the sea when he is cast into it and lies at the bottom of it. This sad frame comes by a discovery of the utter impotence a man has to do anything to help himself out of this woeful plight. He has tried many ways, and all ineffectually.

Thus, when a sinner sees a holy God threatening ruin, feels conscience condemning him as deserving ruin, and all refuge failing him, in this case despair is natural and would be the result of all sound awakenings, if the Lord's mercy in Christ did not interpose and reveal itself in this extremity. It is no sin for the damned in hell (but their great misery) to despair of ever getting out, but it is their sin to blaspheme God. But for a sinner outside of hell to despair is a grievous sin, but too infrequent: "If our sins and our transgressions be upon us, and we pine away in them; how should we then live?" (Ezek. 33:10). "If we are so guilty, and God is so exact on us by His judgments, must we not perish?" To them the Lord says, "No, turn to a gracious God and live."

To such despairing unbelievers, I have nothing else to say but what Paul and Silas said to one in this case: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). And to back this exhortation to such, I would recommend four things to be considered by them:

First, consider how greatly Jesus Christ is accepted by God His Father. You may think that this is remote from your concern, but it lies nearer than you are aware of at first view. He is highly accepted and beloved of God not only as His own Son, but as our Savior. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1). It would be a great encouragement to faith on Christ to think what a great favorite in heaven Christ is, how graciously, yea, infinitely He is beloved of His Father. His person, His office of mediator, His performances, His actions, and His sufferings in that office are all of a sweet-smelling savor before God. Unbelief has in its root low, mean, and sorry thoughts of all these. But they say, "However vile and abominable I am in God's sight, yet Jesus Christ is precious in His sight with whom I have to do."

Second, consider how great the acceptance with God is that Christ procures to sinners for whom He undertakes. Many have found it, and such know it best. But it is only little that the best of them can tell of it. And what the gospel declares of it, believers themselves admire rather than fully know or firmly believe. If you have not found it yourselves, believe that others have obtained this acceptance.

Third, consider how many Christ has made highly accepted with God who were just as unworthy and vile as you are or can think yourselves to be. What were the Corinthians, of whom the apostle speaks? If the Holy Ghost had not written it, we would be ashamed to read over such a list of abominations: "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves

with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” (If it is so, what then will become of them?) “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9–11). Every instance of Christ’s grace to great sinners (and every age is filled with many of them) should be an encouragement to every sinner to put in for a share of the same grace whereof Christ has so great an abundance and as great a good will to show it.

Fourth, consider that Jesus Christ never refused any sinner who employed Him to do this great business with God for Him. It is His proper office. He has given His word and promise for it (John 6:37; 7:37). And He has been as good as His word to all who ever trusted in Him—none of them were ever put to shame (Rom. 9:33).

Let therefore hope come in and spring up. Say, “Though I see myself as vile and lost as ever a sinner was or can be outside of hell; though I can do nothing to relieve myself—yet there is help in Christ, and many have found it. I am commanded by God to come to Him, and to the Father by Him. And therefore I will try and trust Christ in my forlorn state.” Do so, and you will prosper. Christ will undertake your cause and concern, and you will quickly find the blessed fruits thereof.

I will conclude with an allusion to Matthew 14:22–33 and Mark 6:45–51, wherein we read that Christ sent, yea, constrained His disciples to go to sea without Him. They met with a contrary wind in this commanded voyage and toiled all night to little purpose. Our Lord knew their difficulty and not only remembered them on the mountain at land but made them a visit at sea, and that walking on the sea. Doubtless, He who made both sea and land could use either of them as He pleased. His disciples saw Him and were troubled, saying,

“It is a spirit.” They all saw Him, as in Mark 6:50, and were troubled; for none of them knew Him, but all mistook Him and cried out for fear till He said, “Be of good cheer; it is I. Be not afraid.” At this, Peter, always a forward disciple, said, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water.” Christ gave the command, “Come,” and Peter obeyed. But when he saw the boisterous wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, “Lord, save me.” Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Christ saved him and then rebuked him for his unbelief.

Is not your condition something like this? Christ comes to you as on the waters, in the night and in a storm. You are afraid of Him. He calls you by the gospel to come to Him. You attempt it, but the winds and waves frighten you. So cry to Him, “Lord, save me.” Assure yourselves that He who calls you will hear your drowning, dying cry. He will stretch forth His hand, catch you, and save you, and then chide you kindly for your unbelief. Yea, you will then chide yourselves for it, when you find (and find you will) that Christ is more merciful than you did or could imagine. How vastly the first experience of Christ’s grace surpasses all the desires and expectations of the first adventures and adventurers on Christ’s tender heart and His mighty, saving arm!

The First Exhortation to Believers

Last day I spoke to unbelievers, the true name of many who will never own it till they get their portion with them in Luke 12:46, unless the Lord opens their eyes to see their disease and stretches forth His hand and heals it. Faith is wrought and acts where unbelief is seen, bewailed, and prayed against. “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24), said a newly begun man in faith. I ranked unbelievers into three sorts:

1. The secure and stupid unbeliever, who never saw and felt any quarrel between God and him, nor any necessity of Christ as a peacemaker.

2. The awakened and roused unbeliever, who begins to open his eyes and to see the importance of salvation, the danger of God’s wrath, and the bad state he is at present in. Such people, unless God’s Spirit works true faith in them, naturally take themselves to themselves for relief. That great speech of the jailer (“What shall I do to be saved?” [Acts 16:30]), however it was meant by that distressed sinner, it has been as much mistaken by man as has the apostle’s answer to it in verse 31. The true meaning is, “I am a lost undone creature and have no help at home. If there is none abroad, I am quite undone.” And they take these words in vain who use them

while they vainly and proudly think they can do something, if they only knew it.

3. They are discouraged, despairing unbelievers who know that they are in a bad case and cannot believe that it can ever be altered for the better. This is a very great sin and all too common. Many live and die and perish in despair who do not go down to the pit roaring. We think their case is sad who die in expressions of despair, and yet their case is worse who destroy their own lives in despair. And indeed, this last case is exceedingly dreadful if they are not distracted from it. As for the former, there may be more charity due to such as have given good proof of their faith in their lifetime, though they die in a cloud and utter heavy unbelieving complaints. Of this sort I have heard of a Christian near death making a heavy complaint of the Lord's withdrawing from him in that season of his greatest need, who said that he did not think that ever the Lord did so with any of His children. The wise and good minister to whom he made this complaint gave him this answer: "Do you not know that it was thus with the Son of God when, on the cross, a little before His death, He cried out, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me'?" These words were so blessed that the storm ceased, and the good man died in peace. But there is a silent despair in many unbelievers that goes along with them many days and years, and they perish in it without noise or complaint. They inwardly think that their state is bad, and they have no hope that it will ever be better. It is like an inward wound that a man may bleed to death of as well as of an outward one. But can Satan and unbelief prevail to that degree in a man not in hell, as to make a perishing sinner look on Christ's saving gracious face and say, "Either Thou cannot or will not help me"? No, Christ is surely out of that sinner's eye in whose heart despair has the dominion. A glance of Christ's glory as a savior will expel despair and will

beget and nourish faith in Him. Never did a sinner see Christ's face but he looks for some good from Him, and that not a little also, and that never in vain.

That which remains now is to give two exhortations to believers. The first one of them will take up our time here. As I told you in the former exhortation who were unbelievers, so now I would tell you who are believers so that the exhortation may be rightly taken and not snatched at by those to whom it does not belong.

By a believer in Christ, I mean a man who knows in heart and experience these two things. First, he has seen so much of the holiness of God and the strict purity of His law and has seen so much of his own vileness and impotence that he despairs of ever making himself accepted with God by anything he has or can do. And this sort of despair (if we may give so ill-sounding a name to so good a thing) is so far from being inconsistent with true faith that no true faith in Christ can be or be acted without it. That sinner who indulges any hopes of getting matters between God and him mended without Christ will never and can never believe on Jesus Christ.

Second, a believer is one who has so heard and so believed God's record concerning Christ in the gospel and His ability and good will to save sinners, as voluntarily and deliberately to lodge all his acceptance with God for salvation on Jesus Christ alone. He sees it to be his only hope and a good one too.

To such believers, I would give these two exhortations from the doctrine: study in the light of the Word and by the eye of faith this glory of Christ in representing His people to God for acceptance; and improve this truth by the activity of the same faith.

Exhortation 1: Study and behold the glory of Christ in representing His people to God. None see it once but they will desire to see it again and again, and more and more of it. None see

it rightly but they wonder and admire that not only our salvation is brought about by this representation, but that Christ's glory is great in making it. Whenever a man sees anything of the glory of God, before whom the representation is made, anything of the vileness of the persons represented, the divine dignity of Christ the representer, and the great acceptance those represented by Him obtain from God—then will the man stand amazed and cry out, "Oh, the depths of grace in saving a lost man!" See Hebrews 1:3, where the apostle teaches us three things concerning Christ: what He is, what He did, and what He got. "He is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person"—of God the Father's glory and person—"and upholds all things by the word of his power." The whole creation owes its origin to Him and is preserved by Him and His powerful word. Who can doubt His Godhead who believes that these and many such expressions are indicated by the Spirit of truth? Who would think what follows? This divine person, this equal with the Father, this creator and upholder of all things, when He comes into the world, what is His business? What does He do? "By himself he purged our sins." His work was to purge sin and to save sinners.

Observe the phrase. It is not said that by Himself He made the world, but only that God made all things by Him (v. 2). It is not said that He by Himself upholds all things, but only that He does it by the word of His power. There is no need for the interposing of Himself or of His person (if I may use the word). His word of command was enough to do both. But when our sins are to be purged, a word of power was not enough. He Himself must come in and be a sacrifice, as in Hebrews 9:26: "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Nothing less was needful, nothing less craved by God who was offended by sin, nothing less was offered by the Savior of sinners. In and by this purging our sins, how low this divine

person, the Son of God, is brought! But what became of Him when He had done this work? He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” He was high in His divine person, was brought low in His work, and was exceedingly exalted when He had done it, as in Philippians 2:6–11.

In order to raise your thoughts about the glory of Christ in representing His people to God, I would offer you some general things about it and some particular things to the same purpose. The general things about it will only be divine counsels and divine acts about it.

Divine counsels. It was the eternal purpose of God to have a remnant of Adam's offspring represented to His favor, and its fruits by His own Son made man and dying in their stead. This eternal purpose was purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:11)—His good pleasure, “which he hath purposed in himself” (Eph. 1:9–10). It was in Christ Jesus “before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 1:9–10). It is to this highest spring that your faith must rise by all the lower steps it takes, even to the deep design of God in purposing salvation by Jesus Christ to His chosen ones. And it is revealed to us in the Word as purposed by Him to the eternal praise of His grace, to the exalting of His Son Jesus, the undertaker of the work of saving, and to bring in a great salvation for His people.

Divine acts. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son into the world. When He came, Isaiah 9:6 was fulfilled: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” He was born and given to us, for He came to die and to be given for us. On this I would offer four things:

1. When our Lord came and set about the work He came to do, He looked on Himself, preached and declared Himself, to be a representer by His office of His people to God, that He was the sacrifice for sin and sinners (Heb. 10:5–10), and

that His flesh and blood was the meat that came down from heaven that He must give for eternal life to His people and that all must feed on by faith who had any mind to live (John 6:35–58). Yea, when He was first made manifest to Israel, John the Baptist, the first preacher of Christ as come, preached and pointed Him forth to be “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He was a lamb for purity, a lamb for sacrifice, and the lamb of God sent and provided by God (as His type was, Gen. 22:8) and acceptable to God. But what was spoken in closets in Christ’s time on earth was proclaimed on housetops (as He bid them, Luke 12:3) when Christ had done His work and had gone to heaven. His apostles and all His servants in all ages have made it their business to set forth Christ as the only sacrifice for sin and the only high priest to introduce sinners into God’s favor in and by the virtue of His sacrifice. They have not begun to preach Christ rightly who have not first of all declared “how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3), and then of His resurrection (v. 4). Ministers must neither leave Christ in the grave nor preach a glorified Jesus without remembering His death.

2. We find that the law and justice of God dealt with our Lord, when He had come, as with a representative of sinners. There was nothing in Him that justice and law should exact on Him for. He owed no debt of His own contracting, yet law and justice dealt severely with Him. The Lamb of God was without spot, yet His life must go and His blood be shed for sin. There would have been no justice in the Lord’s bruising of His beloved and spotless Son if He had not been answerable at the highest bar for the sins of others, for which He was stricken (Isa. 53:8). In Isaiah 53 (in which it is something strange that a Jew cannot see Jesus, but far more that any who bear the name of Christians should make the eunuch’s

question in Acts 8:34—"I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself, or of some other man?"—and will not take Philip's answer (v. 35), who from that Scripture preached to him Jesus), we have the prophet preaching Christ like an apostle, concerning His work, His death, its cause and fruits, with New Testament brightness and glory, and this several hundred years before Christ came into the world.

I will touch on a few things in that passage that belong to my present purpose. Verse 4: "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Every man is not charged with the sorrows of others except in common sympathy, and all owe that to others in distress. Christ not only had this, but a near and close feeling of and pressure by them that was proper to Him only. Yea, He bore the sorrows of many whose sorrows were over before He came and of far more whose sorrows had not begun till long after He came to bear them. Yet He bore them to save them, for that grief and sorrow that men have that Christ did not bear will be everlasting sorrow.

But what did Christ have to do with their sorrow? Verse 5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." His wounds and bruises were very heavy, but not without a cause. Only the cause is strange: they were for transgressions, for iniquities—but these were not His, but ours. The wounds were His, but the sin was ours. We deserved the blows. And thus it is that our peace, our healing comes.

But what did Christ have to do with our iniquities? Verse 6: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He took the burden on Himself, and He alone was able to bear it and bore it away. The Lord has resolved that sin and sorrow will go together. So was it with the Savior. If sin is laid on Him, sorrow will follow it. So is it with sinners. Their sin will bring dreadful sorrow unless Christ takes away both.

Friends, you have formerly known, or do at present, or will hereafter know, what a heavy burden sin is—how insupportable it is, and how surely that soul must sink into hell who has this burden lying on himself. And indeed, until the burden of sin is felt to be too heavy for them and a burden that all the world cannot bear for them, men will think lightly of Christ's undertaking and will never employ Him. Know this, and accordingly choose your course. It is resolved in heaven and declared in the gospel on earth that every sinner's iniquity will either be borne by the sinner himself to his eternal damnation or by the surety Jesus Christ to the believer's eternal salvation. But well did the prophet preface to this doctrine: "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (v. 1). This gospel doctrine will never be welcome to an unbeliever. And none are made believers but by the revealing of the arm and putting forth of the power of the Lord in their hearts. Till then, sinners will mock God in both their contracting the debt of sin and in their devices for paying that debt—and both are very sinful works. God has fixed His way of satisfying His justice and will not alter it. Men must either take themselves to Jesus Christ by faith or lay their account with hell. That sinner is blind and ignorant of God's justice and of the strictness of His law who thinks that sin against God can be expiated by anything but the blood of Him who is God. And he who dares not trust the sufferings and virtue of Christ's atonement made for sin does not know God's mercy nor "the truth as it is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21).

Let all sinners therefore take heed what course they take in the matter of the burden of sin. Take heed that you do not mock God in studying to pay it in false coin. All your own coin, all creature coin, is but reprobate metal in heaven's court and kingdom. It may pass on earth, and in a deluded conscience—but how little that signifies! And how short a time will that

little last! It is but hay and stubble, and Christ has many fires to burn it up with.

But as for Christians, I advise you, in reading the prophets and apostles concerning Christ and His sufferings, to make use of this as a key to open up all as a light that enlightens all. All the sufferings that Christ underwent were laid on Him, endured by Him, and presented to God as He represented His guilty people. Otherwise justice could not exact on Him, nor His people be saved by them. See how Christ expressed this in the celebration and institution of His last supper. He took, blessed, broke, and gave bread, and called it "my body given for you. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19–20). I have no regard for the anti-Christian synagogue (for a church it is not, except in a usurped name or in a vain notion) that has abused and perverted these plain and easy words more than devils or men ever perverted any words of God or man before, and have, on that abuse of them, set up the grossest idol that ever a heathen worshipped—for such as worship sun, moon, and the host of heaven have God's glorious workmanship before their eyes. Yea, the Egyptians' garden and herb gods are greatly preferable to a bit of paste, kneaded and baked by a baker in his oven, conjured into a pitiful godhead by the mumbling of a priest, and first worshipped and then swallowed down as other food by the besotted people. Nothing less than the dreadful wrath of God can be in men believing this lie that a man's reason and all his senses militate against (2 Thess. 2:10–12).

But many who are not infected with this strong delusion understand no more by Christ's words in this sacred ordinance than that the bread and wine, so used as Christ appointed, signify the sufferings unto death of our Lord Jesus Christ, cruelly handled by wicked men and severely dealt with by the

justice of God, but the cause and end of His death they do not think of. This Christ puts us in mind of with these words: “For you, and for your sins, and for the remission of them—you and your sins are the cause of My death; and My death is the cause of your forgiveness.” Christians, if you keep out that word “for you,” if your faith does not echo Christ’s “for you” with your “for me,” I assure you that the bread and wine on the Lord’s Table and the same food on your own table will be of equal significance as to soul nourishment—and that is, none at all.

3. We find that when Christ had thus been dealt with as representing His people, there was a high acceptance of His sacrifice. The Father who put Him to all this was mightily pleased with Him and with His death. Here behold the depth and mystery of God’s saving men by Jesus Christ. God’s justice against sin squeezed out Christ’s life and by that squeezed out eternal salvation for those He died for. Here is wisdom, and here is love (1 John 4:8–10).

4. Hence it is that all believers on Christ are graciously accepted with the Father. Whenever this blood shed for them is sprinkled on them, whenever the virtue of this blood is applied to them by His Spirit and applied to them by their faith, they are represented to God in it and with it and are therefore accepted.

Let us in the next place look into this chapter (John 17) and learn something of Christ’s representing His church and people to God. It is as fit a portion of the Word as any for that end. And in it I would look into two things: first, what is in it about Christ, the representer; and, second, what is in it of His people whom He represents in this solemn address to His Father. About Christ, the representer, we find these things:

Our Lord notes the time in which He was to do the great work He came into the world for: “Father, the hour is come. The hour of My dying for My sheep is at hand. Now is My soul

troubled, and what will I say? Father, save Me from this hour, but for this cause came I to this hour" (see John 12:27). It is as if our Lord had said: "I would lose the main end I came into the world for if it was not for this hour." This was that special hour in which Christ was to make the grand representation to God of all His people for their redemption and of all their sins for their expiation. This was Christ's dying hour and the church's redemption hour.

Our Lord prays for the united and mutually influencing glory of the Father and of the Son: "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (17:11); as He prayed: "Father, glorify thy name," and was answered, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28); and as He foretold it, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him" (John 13:31–32). What is this glorifying He prays for? It is of large extent. "Glorify Thy Son in making Him a sacrifice. Glorify Him in accepting the sacrifice. Glorify Him in slaying Him. Glorify Him in raising Him from the dead. Glorify Him in exalting Him and making Him head over all things to the church, His body, His fullness (see Eph. 1:20–23)—and all this that Thy Son also may glorify Thee; may glorify Thy justice and Thy law in satisfying both by My blood; may glorify Thy grace and mercy to Thy chosen by redeeming them to God by My blood; and may glorify Thy wisdom in contriving this way of redemption that is to be accomplished by My death, the hour of which has come."

This that our Lord desires of His Father was according to the everlasting covenant: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (17:2). "Thou hast given Him universal power and dominion, but a particular charge of the elect. To them He is to give eternal life in and by this redemption hour now come."

See how our Lord named this eternal life that He was to give and they who were given to Him were to receive: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (v. 3). This is a most spiritual description of eternal life given by the author of it. It is begun in the saving knowledge of the Father and of the Son and in the begun fruits of that knowledge. Eternal life is perfect in the perfect knowledge of the Father and Son and in its perfect fruits, as in Ephesians 4:13; 1 John 5:20; and John 14:20.

Our Lord, in verse 4, gives a faithful account of His discharge of the work His Father had given Him to do: “I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work thou gavest me to do”—all but dying, which He was now as ready and willing to do as anything He had done before.

And, last, Christ prays again (what He had prayed for in v. 1) in verse 5: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

Let us see what Christ said here of His people whom in this prayer He represents to His Father. It is not doubted by all Christians that this prayer of Christ as really concerns all believers in all ages as it did the apostles themselves. This Christ tells us in verse 20: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” It is the prayer of our great High Priest. All His Israel were on His heart when He made it, and they will reap the blessing of it.

Concerning His people, we find that our Lord names them rightly. They are “the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them” (vv. 9–10). Well does the Good Shepherd know, count, and tell His flock. And He sees His Father’s

mark of election on them and His own mark of His redeeming blood on them. Therefore, He cares for them, prays for them, and gives them eternal life (John 10:28–29).

Christ tells all the good He can of them and covers their failings: “They have kept thy word” (v. 6). “Now have they known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee” (v. 7). “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me” (v. 8). How poorly had they received Christ’s word! How weak and staggering was their faith! And how often had Christ reproved them sharply for their unbelief and other faults! Yet not a word of these is to be found in Christ’s representing them to His Father. They had spoken one good word in John 16:30: “Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” Christ remembered this and told it to His Father in verse 8, but there is not a word of what He said to them: “Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone” (John 16:31–32). This is the constant, gracious way of our High Priest: He makes no mention of His Israel’s faults in heaven, but for their expiation (1 John 2:1–2). Whatever reproof and correction He sends, He does so only to humble His people and to amend them (Rev. 3:19).

Christ here represents His people to God His Father with their necessities and dangers and prays for help and supply: “They are in the world” (v. 11). “The world hateth them” (v. 14). There is evil in the world that they are endangered by (v. 15). And therefore He prays for their preservation (vv. 11, 15) and their sanctification (v. 17). To be kept from evil and to increase in true holiness are the main blessings believers need till they come to heaven. So Paul’s faith acted: “For the

Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18). So he prays for others: “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1 Thess. 3:13).

Christ here declares to His Father that His undertakings and sufferings were for His people’s sake: “And for their sakes I sanctify myself” (v. 19). Christ needed no such sanctification as His people do and as He gives to them by the virtue of His death by His Spirit. His sanctifying of Himself is His separating and devoting Himself to death as a sacrifice for His people. And in this sense a very learned foreign divine understands those dark words in Hebrews 10:29: “And hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy [or common] thing”; whereas commonly it is taken as if the apostate had been ever in some senses sanctified by the blood of the covenant. This learned expositor naturally enough from the Greek text takes it thus: “He that was sanctified by the blood of the covenant”—this is but another name of the Son of God who is trodden under foot by such desperate apostates. So the sense is plain and easy and a great aggravation of their apostasy that they not only despise the Son of God but also His sacred blood by which He was sanctified and the covenant confirmed to His people and made to be His testament and last will.

To this same purpose are the other words of the same apostle in Hebrews 13:20: “The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” So the apostle in Hebrews 10:29 describes this dreadful apostasy in three things: open contempt of the person of the Son of God; contempt of His sacred, redeeming blood, the only price of redemption; and spite to the Spirit of grace, who works by

the gospel on men's hearts. Such must fall into the hands of the living God, who lives to revenge such bold affronts done to the most gracious and only saving appearances of God to men—that is, in His Son and His blood and in His Spirit by the gospel. All is openly and deliberately condemned and despised by such wretches, and they must perish. And though it is hard to make an application of these sad brands of ruin to any man in particular or any sort and body of men, yet I may venture to say that open blasphemers of the Son of God (as all are who count Him to be a mere man), all who count the blood of the covenant a common thing (as they must do who count it but the blood of a mere man), and all who despise the Spirit of grace—such, I say, if they have been once enlightened, as Hebrews 6:4, and have had the Spirit of grace striving with them, and if this contempt of such sacred things of God is in malice, then they have far more reason (though I know that such have no inclination) to fear their interest in this dreadful Scripture and in such like than any of the many poor souls who, upon their falling from their first love and first works, or on their falling into some gross conscience-wasting sin, have applied this awful sentence unjustly to themselves. But all such are far from it to whom the Son of God, His redeeming blood, and His Spirit of grace are sacred and adorable, though they have no comfortable view of their interest therein at present; for though the case of such is sad, yet there is a door of hope for them in renewing repentance and faith.

But to return again to the exhortation given to believers to consider this glory of Christ in representing His church to God, I would offer a few things to engage them in studying it:

Consider the necessity of this representation made by Christ in order to sinners' acceptance with God. Christ saw this necessity when He undertook the office. No sacrifice but that of Himself was required. No high priest but Himself was

called or able to offer what was effectual to satisfy the justice of God and to save sinners (Heb. 10:5–10). A sinner must see the necessity of this representation that Christ alone can make to God, or he will never renounce all vain shifts on his own and take himself to this one only. And a believer must see the necessity of this representation made by Christ so that he may admire it more and trust it only.

Consider the glorious excellency of this representation that Christ makes of His church to God. It is glorious in itself and glorious in its fruits and ends. It is the ministration of righteousness that exceeds in glory. “For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth” (2 Cor. 3:10–11). And all this glory is in the face of Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and that for two ends: “that no flesh should glory in his presence,” and that he who glories might glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:29–31). If a man could have any saving wisdom but in and from Christ to know God and the way to heaven, he would glory in that. If he had any justifying righteousness to stand accepted before God in but Christ’s, he would glory in that. If he had any sanctification but what is derived from Christ as its root and fountain, he would glory in that. If there was any redemption but what Christ the only redeemer brings in, he would glory in that.

Yea, so proud and so inclined is flesh to glory in God’s presence that sinners vainly hunt after and as vainly imagine that they have attained some matter of glorying before God. But, says the apostle, “Christ is so made of God to us as to cut off all pretensions to any glorying but in the Lord.” So that a Christian, when he finds he has been made wise to salvation, must say, “This is from Christ.” When he sees any justifying righteousness on him wherein he stands safe and accepted before God, he must say, “None of this is my righteousness, but Christ’s.”

When he finds any sanctification in him in his heart, his way, and his worship, he must say, "This is but a few droppings from the fountain, Christ, a little of the ointment that was poured in all fullness on my High Priest, Jesus." When he gets any piece of redemption or acts his faith and hope on complete redemption, all his acknowledgments and all his expectations are and must singly center in Christ the redeemer.

Yea, the Spirit of God expresses this thing most strongly. He does not say that Christ is made to us the prophet, teacher, and giver of wisdom, nor the justifier and bringer in of righteousness, nor the sanctifier, nor the redeemer—all which are true of Christ and of God's making Him and are often spoken of Him in the Word. But He is made to us the things themselves: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. All of these are in Christ, and nothing of any of these is outside of Him. Wisdom outside of Christ is condemning folly. Righteousness outside of Christ is guilt and condemnation. Sanctification outside of Christ is filth and sin. Redemption outside of Christ is bondage and slavery.

I would recommend considering Christ's glory in representing His church to God from the profit and advantage believers receive by this exercise. If I were to ask you the question, "What is the best exercise and thought of the heart?," I believe most of you would answer, "Surely it is that which has the most grace in it." Now, what are the best graces of the Spirit? Are they not repentance, faith, and love? And all those in their lively acts and exercises natively flow from rightly studying Christ's representing us to God for acceptance.

Repentance—what do you take it to be? There is too little of it with many professing believers, and that because it is not well known in its true nature. Many take repentance to be that which is little better than what the devils have. We read of their faith and trembling in James 2:19. And this is a greater

length than many have who are angry if they are not called good Christians. Repentance is not a bare fit of sorrow and shame for sin committed, nor fear of God's wrath for sin. This may be in ungodly men. Few malefactors go to the gallows without something of this. Cain, Pharaoh, Saul, and Judas all had this. But true repentance unto life, though it may begin with a discovery of some particular sin or sins that God sets in order before a man's eye (Ps. 50:21), yet is not "godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10) till the sinner looks on himself as so loathsome and abominable in the sight of God that it becomes one of the greatest riddles and mysteries to him how such a God and such a sinner could ever be made friends, how God can look on him without abhorrence, and how such a sinner can stand before this holy God with favor and acceptance. And when the glory of Christ as the peacemaker is revealed to and seen by him in this case, and when he is drawn to trust to it, this faith is acted in the sight and sense of his own vileness in himself. They are unhappy people and unskillful teachers who take up "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21) and think of them and study to act them as if they interfered with one another—as if repentance were the fruit of the law; and faith, the fruit of the gospel; and as if they could be acted separately and apart. All these are gross mistakes. There is no saving grace in our heart but that is Christ's work by His Spirit blessing the gospel. Repentance without faith is the devil's repentance. And faith without repentance is the hypocrite's faith. If they are true, they go together. If rightly acted, they act together. And as this sense of sin and self-vileness is inseparable from first believing, so it continues in all the life of faith in all true growing believers. David died with the acting of repentance and faith (2 Sam. 23:5).

Now let us turn to faith in Jesus Christ. Bring true faith to a narrow point, to that act in which its nature properly stands; for faith is a large, comprehensive grace, much spoken of in the world, more talked of than acted by many, and least known and most mistaken by those who do not have it. This faith I speak of is not a bare believing or giving an assent to divine truth on the evidence of a divine testimony. Nor is it believing and expecting good from God on the ground of His faithful promise (though these are acts of true faith). But faith in Jesus Christ, in its closest, nearest nature, acts thus: The self-condemned sinner, loathsome in his own sight and persuaded that, as he is in himself, he is far more loathsome in God's sight, on the gospel call and promise tries and trusts Jesus Christ for making him accepted with God. This is proper believing (Gal. 2:16). And according as the measure and degree is of our knowledge of sin in us and of the law's condemning us for sin, and as the measure is of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, so is the measure of that faith which sees our need of and takes up the glory and safety in Christ's representing us to God for acceptance, and that trusts in it.

The heavenly and everlasting grace of love that is planted in the heart of a believer and is nourished by the grace of the new covenant grows in true Christians as the new creature does and is the only grace that the glorified act in heaven. Other graces of the Spirit are the Christian's armor that is laid aside when they get the perfect victory. Now, what raises love for Jesus Christ to the hottest flame? Is it not when Christ's loveliness in Himself and His love for us are best seen by us? And are not both most conspicuous in this matter of His graciously representing us to God, covering us with His own righteousness wrought out for us by His precious blood shed, counted to us freely by His grace, and entitling us to the love of God and all the great fruits of that love?

To press the duty of studying in your hearts Christ's glory in representing His church to God, I would add four things:

1. By the representation that Christ makes of you who are believers to God, you who were enemies are reconciled to God (Col. 1:20–21). You are beloved of God. Not only is there no condemnation to you who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1), not only are your sins blotted out and your natural deformity covered from the eye and hand of law and justice by the covering of Christ's righteousness, but you are so adorned with that garment that the Father loves you. Christ tells believers, "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16:27). You are not only saved from wrath and the curse of the law but possessed of God's love and have a sure right and title to glory by this grace of Jesus Christ that has come to you.

2. By this representation of you to God, you are made as accepted of God as ever any believer was. This many do not rightly understand and therefore are ready to reproach it. There are degrees of grace on earth, and there may be degrees of glory in heaven. But neither here nor there are there any degrees of acceptance. Accepted or not accepted divides and distinguishes all mankind in both worlds. Acceptance with God relates to a man's state before God and not to his frame. We do not say that every or any believer is so good a believer or so great a saint as Paul, but yet every true believer, as to the state of his person, is as accepted as Paul was as to his personal state. The reason is this: The acceptance of all believers with God is only on account of this representation made by Christ for them to God. And this is made by Christ for all equally. All the tribes of Israel are equally on the heart and breastplate of our great high priest Jesus Christ. And thus we find in that triumph of faith (Rom. 8:31–39) that all God's elect are included, and the grounds of that triumph lie equally fair for any believer. Christ

is given, has died, has risen again, sits at the right hand of God, and makes intercession for them. Every believer may say so as well as Paul, though we cannot say so with as strong a faith as Paul had. The ground is the same and common to all believers, but they do not equally build on this foundation. If our state of acceptance stood on anything believers themselves have or do and not singly on what Christ has done and daily does for them, then indeed all believers who differ so much from others in their inherent grace and in the improvements, exercise, and fruits thereof could not be equally accepted.

[3.] You who are believers are, even now, as much accepted of God as ever you will be. I do not say that you enjoy God as much or that you are as near and as like Him as ever you will be, but that you are as much accepted as ever you will be. Believers are not called to glory or brought to it for acceptance. That is past and fixed for eternity to all who are in Christ by faith before they come there. Only their acceptance in that day is more gloriously declared and proclaimed than it was on earth (Matt. 25:34). And the fruits of that acceptance will be bestowed by the Lord and enjoyed by the glorified in heaven, vastly beyond what believers can know, receive, or enjoy on earth. A state of acceptance in Christ Jesus is the common privilege of all believers. He is all in all to all of them without difference (Col. 3:11). And as it admits of no difference in them who are in Him and are represented by Him for it, so it admits of no gradations or increase in any one believer, save as to the evidence, comfort, and fruits of an accepted state. After building by faith on Christ the foundation, all the remaining work of a Christian stands in seeking those blessings that flow from our state of acceptance with God by Jesus Christ.

[4.] I will venture to add, in the last place, that which to some seems a hard saying, but it is not as hard in itself when rightly understood as some would make or mistake it to be. A

believer on Christ who is represented by Christ to God's acceptance is as accepted with God as Christ the representer is. The same acceptance that Christ the mediator has with God, that same acceptance is given to all believers. See John 17:23 and 26: "That the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.... I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." If we consider Christ and His people asunder and apart, then there is as great a difference between Christ in Himself and His people in themselves as there is between light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial. But if we consider Christ, the head, and His church, His body, as one and inseparably united in this mystical representation before God, then the divine acceptance on this representation is one and the same towards the representer and the represented—just as the high priest Aaron was within the veil in the holy of holies, and all Israel outside the veil on the day of atonement. The high priest was accepted as representing all Israel, and all Israel accepted as represented by him. Indeed, the difference was very great between the Old Testament type and shadow and the New Testament substance. But all that difference is only to the greater glory of our "great High Priest, the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens" (Heb. 4:14; 9:24) and to the greater advantage of His spiritual Israel outside the veil (Heb. 9:13–14). The same acceptance the Father gives to His Son, the mediator, the representer of His people, falls on all those for their happiness who are represented by Him. And it is to be feared that such as cannot receive this truth have a secret respect to some other way and sort of acceptance with God than that which comes by Christ representing them to God. And the danger of such delusions is as great as their souls are worth.

The Second Exhortation to Believers

*T*wo greater, deeper, and larger themes are not in God's Word than the glory of Christ and the beholding of this glory by His people. They are such as cannot be fully known by any on earth, yet it is very useful to Christians to be exercised in the study of them while they are here.

On the first of these, the glory of Christ, I have spoken at some length under these two headings: Christ's glory as He represents God to His church, to be savingly known by them; and His glory as He represents His church to God, to be graciously accepted by Him. The former I have finished, and I would dispatch the latter at this time. After I handled the doctrinal part, I made some application, and in that spoke to one exhortation to believers to study in the light of the gospel with the eye of faith the glory of Christ in His representing His people to God for his gracious and eternal acceptance.

Exhortation 2: Believers should apply by the activity of their faith this glory of Christ. There is nothing sweeter to the eye of faith than this glory of Christ, and nothing more useful to a believer than to have his faith well exercised about it. This glory of Christ as our high priest in representing His church to God is a matter of pure revelation. It would never have been known unless it had been revealed. All truths that are of

pure revelation can only be managed by faith. When a truth is discoverable by reason, it is also improvable by reason. But if the truth transcends reason and the discovery of it is made only by divine revelation, the right improvement of that truth can only be made by faith grounded on that revelation and that faith wrought by the Spirit of the revealer (Matt. 16:17). This truth about the glory of Christ is not only of pure revelation, but it is “the great mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16), and in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

In applying this truth, faith alone can do anything to purpose. And there is much work for faith in using it. I will therefore in this exhortation handle these two things: in what cases especially believers ought to use and improve Christ’s representing them to God’s acceptance; and in what way and manner they should improve it in any or all cases.

First, in what cases especially believers ought by their faith to improve this glorious representation of them to God. I will name some particular ones:

Be careful to improve this glory of Christ in all your daily approaches to and appearances before God. Whenever you come to the court of heaven and into the presence of the great King, do not forget Him who alone must introduce you and make your address acceptable. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19–22). The apostle is writing to Christian Hebrews who were well acquainted with the Old Testament sanctuary and worship, and he speaks to them in that dialect. They knew what “the holiest” was in that dispensation, and that the high priest alone, and but once a year, and not without blood, might enter into it (Heb. 9:7). And this holiest to us in the New Testament is heaven itself (Heb. 9:24), into which our “High Priest is entered by his own blood” (Heb. 9:12) and

made an entrance for His people—"for the way to the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (Heb. 9:8). Christ by His blood made an open door to heaven, and by that door we must always enter and climb up by no other way lest we be as a thief and a robber (John 10:1, 8).

What is the blood of Jesus? It is the blood of the Son of God, the blood of Him offered up as a sacrifice by Him as our high priest for the sins of His people, the blood whereby He brought in that everlasting righteousness in which all His people stand accepted before God. Now, says the apostle, that privilege which only the high priest under the law had of entering into the typical holiest of all by the blood of the typical sacrifices, every believer in Jesus Christ now has under the gospel and has a daily entrance into the true holiest of all by the blood of the true sacrifice, Jesus Christ. And he adds in Hebrews 10:20, "By a new and living way [or a new slain and living way] which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." We do not need a door of entrance into heaven only, but a way to walk in. And that way is provided by Christ, and He is that way, as in John 14:6. Christ as slain has by His death consecrated it for us, like that passage in John 17:19: "For their sakes I sanctify myself."

The apostle calls Christ's flesh "the veil," alluding to the veil of the sanctuary (Heb. 9:3) through which the high priest passed into the holy of holies. There was a double use of the sanctuary veil. It kept the holiest of all from being seen by all the people and yet made an entrance for the high priest through it to the holiest of all. So is the veil of Christ's flesh: It veils and hides His divine glory (as in Phil. 2:6-7), and yet it gives a passage into the glorious presence of God to believers. What more is needful for a believer's access and acceptance? "And having an high priest over the house of God" (Heb.

10:21). We not only lacked a door and a way, but an authorized introducer into heaven—and Christ is all these things. He is the high priest who by His office is the introducer, the representer, and the presenter of His people to God. Upon this comes the exhortation, “Let us draw near” (v. 22)—that is, “Let us all go to God and to heaven together—you, Christians, and I, an apostle. We have the encouragements common to us. Let us jointly improve them.”

But, alas, most unbelievers think it is an easy thing to draw near to God, though they never think of Christ or of using Him in their approaches to God (if they may not rather be called departings from God). They neither care for making them aright, nor care whether they are accepted or not. Nor do they fear taking God’s name in vain, as all do who do not come to God by Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Christ-less Christians and Christ-less worshippers of God (if it is proper to call Christ-less men either Christians or worshippers of God) are an abomination to God. But what is so easy to such careless triflers is far otherwise to a serious soul. When such a person sees anything of his own sinfulness and meanness and anything of the holiness and majesty of God, it is no small difficulty to resolve this question: “How is it possible that such a defiled creature as I am can make any acceptable appearance before so glorious a God?” The only resolution is in this: “Christ our high priest represents me to the Father.”

He did all our business with God as our mediator, in our nature and in our name and place. And all that we do in worship to God is to be done by us in His name—and thus acceptance comes to us. Christians, when you pray, when you read and hear God’s word, when you sit down at Christ’s table, when you perform any worship to God, if you would have it acceptable to God and profitable to you (and these two are inseparable, for no accepted service is unprofitable to us, and

if profitable to us, it was first accepted of God), then let your faith be exercised on this: "Jesus Christ makes another sort of figure for me in heaven than I can make for myself on earth."

Improve by faith Christ's representing of you to God in all your judgings and examinings of yourselves. Self-examination is a great duty and a necessary one (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5). Happy are they who regard it much, who manage it rightly and issue it well. I believe that of all duties required in the world of all men, that duty is the one in which the fewest unbelievers and hypocrites are employed. It is very doubtful whether it is possible that a hypocrite can be at the pains of self-examination. Of all companies, an ungodly man likes least the company and conversation of his own conscience. Psalm 4:4 speaks of communing with our own hearts, that is, dealing fairly and freely with our own conscience and not only allowing but charging them to reply and to deal freely with us again.

Taking well with this freedom seems to be above the reach of a hypocrite, at least of an ordinary one. But when a Christian sets about this work of self-examination, by and in the light of God's Word, he should search his heart, his sins, his wants, and his graces. But the main thing is his state in God's sight. And the designed end and issue of this trial is to have and pass the same judgment on himself that God does so that he may not, as many do, commend himself when God condemns him or condemn himself when God approves him. Now we all know that God's judgment of men's state is as they are or are not in Christ. So says 2 Corinthians 13:5. Surely you must think they were bold and saucy professors who sought a proof of Christ's speaking in and by Paul (as v. 3). To them he said in effect, "Instead of you trying whether Christ speaks by your ministers, inquire if Christ is in you or not. If Christ is not in you, they have spoken to little good purpose to you. And if Christ is in you, you will quickly know who they are who speak

in Christ's name to you, and whether Christ speaks by them to you."

Improve this truth of Christ's representing His church to God in all the misrepresentations that are or can be made of you to God, to men, or to yourselves. They are false if they differ from what Christ makes of His people to God. I will here name some of them.

The devil misrepresents believers to God, to men, and to themselves. "Doth Job fear God for naught?" said the devil to God in Job 1:9. "He has been a good servant to Thee, but Thou hast been a good master to him. Take from him what Thou hast given him, and he will serve Thee no more, but will curse Thee to Thy face." Impudent slanderer, and lying prophet! God, to try Job and to prove the devil a liar, gave the devil permission. He readily used it, and Job was made a poor man in one day. But he blessed God in taking as well as in giving (Job 1:21). Yet Satan did not give up, but in Job 2:5 begged for one trial more of Job on his body. That was also given and yet was not successful (vv. 9–10), though the trial was strengthened by his wife's bad words.

It is a sad but true name of the devil in Revelation 12:10: "The accuser of the brethren, which accuseth them before our God day and night." They are brethren. God is their God. But yet Satan will accuse them before their God. There is little or no doubt to be made but that the devil knows who are truly godly. Such a watchful and cunning jailer as he is cannot be ignorant when any of his prisoners are rescued by Christ and make their escape (2 Tim. 2:26). And though he does not know the hearts of men immediately and perfectly, yet, having so much craft, long experience, and intelligence in ways unknown to us of what is in men's hearts, how can we think that his works should be destroyed (1 John 3:8) and

Christ's new work be begun in the heart of a man, and the devil know nothing of it!

But as to Christians advancing in godliness, Satan knows and hates them, and they know him and resist him. Friends, there is not a Christian among you so strong in grace and experience but the devil can draw such a picture of you by his hellish art from what he knows of God and His law and from what he knows of your heart and ways. And he can set it before your eyes so as to confound you, if the Lord does not seasonably interpose for your relief. This is what the devil drives at: that if he cannot hinder the believer's salvation (as it is certain he cannot, and it is most probable he knows that he cannot), he may yet disturb his peace—for this picture and representation of a poor believer is so artfully drawn and so cunningly exposed that when the man sees it, he is ready to think and say with horror, "This is the picture of a devil rather than of a man or of a Christian." Take all the evil that is in the best and expose that, and hide all the good that is in him as if it were not (and this is Satan's way), and you then expose a hateful object.

Now, this truth of Christ's representing His people to God is of great comfort to a believer, for by faith he may say, "My blessed advocate in heaven gives another account of me than my malicious accuser from hell does, and I will trust the one and despise the other."

The world misrepresents believers. The world hates them because Christ is kind to them (John 15:19). We are forbidden to marvel at it (1 John 3:13). And because the world hates them, therefore they say all manner of evil falsely against the godly (Matt. 5:10–12), and thereupon we are bid "to rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for so they persecuted the prophets before you," as well as the apostles, yea, even Christ Himself. How little did Paul care for the world's opinion of him! "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or

of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:3-4). "I stand at His bar, depend on His sentence, and trust His approbation."

The law makes a representation of believers that they must not receive, but set Christ's representation against it. Whoever sees his own face in the glass of God's holy law sees a hateful, spotted face. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Now, if a believer thinks that he appears in the presence of God just as he sees himself in this clear glass of the law, that would be dreadful indeed. But there is another representation that Christ makes of them to God that the law knows nothing of. The more a man knows of the law, the more he knows of his own sin and danger. And this sad condition remains till he looks beyond and above the law to the righteousness of Christ, who has satisfied and fulfilled the law by Himself, gives this to a believer, and represents him to God as clothed with it.

Believers themselves are often misrepresented by believers also. Blessed be God that His thoughts of us are not as men's are. Such men as seek after and value themselves on good men's thoughts and approbation seek a thing of small worth and what is quickly lost. Many who stand accepted by God are condemned at the bar of good men. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10:18). How was Judas any better than the eleven apostles, who had a better opinion of him than of themselves? When they heard Christ's warning of a traitor among them, each said, "Lord, is it I?" Believers are never the worse if other men, worse or better than themselves, pass another judgment on them than God does.

The last misrepresentation that the faith of Christ's right representing us to God should support us under is the one our consciences makes of us. This is nearer to us than all the others. The devil and the world are round about us. The law is

above us. Believers are nearer to us. But conscience is nearest of all. Conscience never condemns a believer but at the bar of the law (from which condemnation Christ has redeemed him), and always in and by the working of unbelief. And in a believer, his remaining unbelief acts this way: It looks on the disease and forgets the physician; it looks on the debt and forgets the surety and His payment of it.

Conscience says, "You owe many thousands of talents to the law and justice of God. Is it not true, and can it be denied?"

"No," the believer must say, "the debt is not to be denied by me; nor will Christ's payment of it be forgotten by me." The law, as a court of judgment, condemns for sin; but Christ's new court of grace acquits the believer in Christ. To this court every believer appeals, and at it he stands.

Improve this privilege under all dispensations of providence that you meet with. Are you afflicted by the Lord's hand? And would you have sound consolation under it? All are sensible of afflictions, and all would have comfort under them. Sometimes the Lord sends in an extraordinary measure of this comfort to His people that is above the usual activity of their faith; but though this is very pleasing and useful, it is seldom of long continuance, nor is it fitting that it should be. But there is a rejoicing in tribulation that is a duty that Christians should make conscience of, and there is a joy of the Lord that is their strength (Neh. 8:10) that they should seek and value. This rejoicing is only by faith. And this faith that produces the joy is acted on Christ and on our interest in Him.

"I am heavily afflicted by the Lord's hand," the believer may say, "but I am a member of Christ's body. Christ my head is concerned in it and will support me under it. He keeps up the peace between a correcting Father and a corrected child. And as long as the peace stands, no real hurt can come to me."

Are you tempted of the devil? Indeed, the biggest part of most Christians' lives is taken up with affliction and temptation. And the whole armor of God is provided for and to be used in and under them (Eph. 6:10–18). It was an odd remark of a minister of great learning and grace: "I never knew an eminent saint but he had either singular afflictions or singular corruptions to wrestle with." The apostle tells us, "I knew a man in Christ, caught up into the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2), doubtless meaning himself. You think it is no strange thing that a man in Christ, one like Paul, should be so dealt with, especially when he said that God "hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). But this is more strange that this man in Christ, this new man come down from heaven, should immediately after be buffeted by Satan.

If you are so dealt with, how is it to be borne? The devil has many things to say against us—some things that are true that we cannot deny, and some things that are false that we may justly deny, and yet we do not do so through our weakness. But when Satan charges us with sin truly that we cannot deny, I would not have believers reason and parley with him (he is too cunning a sophister for us), but only tell him something of Christ that we too often forget and that the devil can neither bear nor answer. "If the devil speaks against me as a sinner in myself, I say 'amen' to all that is true; but if he says anything against Christ the Savior, I dare say he is a liar." If the tempted believer can but say, "I am in Christ, and therefore I will prevail. Christ has overcome the devil, and therefore I will resist him"—then the victory is near at hand.

Improve this privilege of Christ's representing you to God in all the service and obedience you perform to God. All men owe all service to God. All true Christians are in heart devoted to His service, and the best Christians mind it most and perform it best. But when they review their performances,

they see them so faulty and short of what they ought to be that they see more reason to mourn over the iniquity of their holy things than to glory in their holy things. Yet, notwithstanding all the failings in the sincere obedience of a true believer (and he alone is the man in whom sincerity is and by whom any act of sincere obedience can be performed), yet are they acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). Their fruits of righteousness (though far from being fully ripe and perfect) are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God (Phil. 1:11). Far be it from me to encourage any believer (much less an unbeliever) to put any confidence in his own works or obedience. But I am sure that it would greatly promote a believer's peace and joy to look rightly on the fruits of his faith. The right way of judging them for a believer is when he says, concerning his obedience, these things: "I, the worker, am one in Christ. The work I do is the fruit of my faith in Christ and my being in Him. The work is done in Christ's name, and as such is put in His hand, to be perfumed and presented to God by Him." Must not the conclusion of faith be that Christ will procure a gracious acceptance thereof?

Improve this privilege of Christ's representing you to God as to your peace with God and the acceptance of your persons. Build all your desires, expectations, and hopes of acceptance with God on this alone, even on this representation that Christ makes of you to God. God's favorable acceptance of a sinner never had nor can have any other foundation. We are "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). But how does this peace, this justification come? It is by Christ, "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). How the peace of believers would flow as a river if their faith were active this

way: "As Christ represents me to God, so I stand accepted surely and eternally!"

Improve this privilege by faith in all the views and prospects you have of your last appearing before God. Our appearances before God now are many and considerable. We are always in His sight. We often draw near to Him in His ordinances. He is sometimes pleased to admit us into His special, gracious presence, and to manifest Himself to us—but all these are small things compared with the last one, which is far greater than all that went before it.

The natural question that starts up in the mind of a man who thinks seriously on this appearance is this: "How shall I be found of Him in peace?" And the only gospel answer is: You must be found in Christ (Phil. 3:9). "Abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). None will be found by Him in peace on that day, without spot and blameless (as all should labor for, 2 Peter 3:14) but they who are found in Him (Phil. 3:9) and who are presented spotless by Him (Jude 24).

I know that the deep and serious thoughts of this awful appearance before God are sufficient to make a sinner see the vanity of all refuges, save that of Christ's righteousness. How much more will the glory of the last day do it! Proud men who trust in their own righteousness will then find too late that such covering of their nakedness is too narrow, and that the beauty of their works which they valued themselves on here will be but deformity before that tribunal. If there is but one blot, one hole in that robe in which a man appears before God at last (and all that is a man's own is but rags, and filthy ones too, Isa. 64:6), the sword of justice will enter in and destroy that man.

But to believers, those found in Christ and covered with Christ's righteousness, there is no danger. The righteousness is perfect, and their acceptance in it perfect and eternal; and

the crown of righteousness given to them will be given by Him and received by them with exceeding joy (Jude 24). We read that there is "joy in heaven, and in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7-10). How much more joy will there be when all Christ's children will be brought home to His Father's house, when He will give this account of them: "Behold I and the children which God has given Me." Did Christ lay down the dear price with joy, and that "for the joy set before him" (Heb. 12:2)? And will He not receive His full purchase with exceeding joy? It will be the marriage day for Him and His church (Rev. 19:7-9). And never were there such lovers as Christ and His bride. No such lover in heaven as He, and no such love on earth as that love the church has for Him. And must not the joy be great about their everlasting union and communion on that day? So we may say that when a believer kneels to receive the crown of glory from His hand who bought it for him by His blood shed in love, he cannot say, "Oh, how glad am I for this day of my receiving this crown!," with any more joy than Christ will say, "I am more glad for the day on which I give it"—for "in all things he must have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

Christians, think justly and joyfully of this great and notable day of the Lord, when He will make the greatest and most public representation of His church to God as the glorious head of His glorified body. See what food your faith can gather from Zephaniah 3:17, that, whatever fulfillments it has had or may yet have in time, is to be perfectly fulfilled (like many other Scriptures) at the last day: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Who of you has faith to believe this? Where is the believer who dares apply these words with the confidence of faith to himself? Who is so bold as to say (and yet all in Christ

ought to say so), “The blessed day is coming, and will surely come, when Jesus Christ will be as glad to see me in heaven as I can be to see Him or myself there. He will rejoice over me with joy—that is, He will exceedingly rejoice. He will rest in His love—that is, He will love forever, without wearying or change. He will joy over me with singing—that is, His love and joy will break forth into a song”? Indeed, the joy of Christ in heaven is the best part of heaven’s music. One cloud or frown on Christ’s face in heaven would put an immediate damp on all the holy and happy mirth there. But there is no danger of any interruption, for when the imputed righteousness of Christ is on the glorified in all its glory (and that is when it appears with all the blessed ends it was wrought out for and applied for by Christ), when inherent holiness is perfect in them and immediate communion with Him is enjoyed in this true paradise of God, then neither the tempter, nor temptation, nor sin, nor wrath can enter. The pillars in heaven, as Christ promised to make him who overcomes (Rev. 3:12), are more fixed than those of the old heavens and earth, which He will shake and remove (Heb. 12:26–28). Many doubting Christians get safely to heaven who often feared that they would never get in. But all who gain entrance are immediately assured that they will never be turned out again. On the other hand, many flatter themselves with vain hopes of heaven who—when they find at last to their dreadful surprise that heaven’s door has shut them out and hell’s door has shut them in—know that the latter door will never be opened to let them out, nor heaven’s door be opened to let them in. Remember that you will be lodged in your everlasting habitations by the sentence of the great judge on that day—that your sentence will be as is your interest in Christ and as His interest in you appears. Do you believe in a day of judgment? Then quickly run to Christ. Abide in Him as your only refuge. Let the last day find you in

Him, and you will be safe now and will know and find your safety more in that day.

We now come to the second thing: In what manner is this improvement of this privilege to be made?

It is to be improved with the deepest humility and self-abasement. We are so prone to pride that not only are natural men proud of their rotten and filthy rags, but believers are not out of danger of being proud of borrowed raiment. The loathsome, naked infant who had no eye to pity it and no hand to help it but the Lord's, when its beauty was made perfect through the Lord's comeliness put on it, yet trusted in its own beauty (Ezek. 16:3–15). I know that there the prophet, in a figure, points at the low state the Lord found Israel in and the high state He had advanced them to of His mere grace and mercy, and from both he is aggravating their sin in forgetting both and the dreadful wickedness that people fell into from that forgetting. But, by a just parallel, it may be applied to particular persons.

Question: Is it possible that a man can be proud and vain of Christ's righteousness imputed to him for his acceptance with God?

Answer: A man may imagine that he is in Christ and accepted with God on Christ's account and may be proud and puffed up. Of this there is no doubt, for false notions in men may make them proud. If the legal Pharisees "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9) when they had no ground nor reason for it, why may not a hypocrite make a groundless boast of his faith and interest in Christ and in his righteousness and be proud and secure in that imagination? Much of this was the case with Laodicea in Revelation 3:17–18.

If a true believer finds any vanity rising in his heart on account of Christ's righteousness reckoned to him, at that

time that person has the notion of this privilege in his mind and memory rather than a right sight and sense of it on his heart by faith. For this great privilege, as it is given by God so that no flesh may glory in His presence, so where it is seen and pondered by faith it always humbles the happy partaker of it; for he still remembers what he was without it before he got it and what vile nakedness in him is covered by this gifted righteousness. See the latter part of Ezekiel 16:60–63, where the Lord, after all the enumeration and aggravation of Israel’s sinfulness, comes in with that God-like statement: “Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.” It would be but a short-lasting covenant if it stood on us keeping or were dissolved by us breaking it.

What is the end of this marvelous grace? “That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame.” A sad exercise. But when is it to be done to purpose? When the Lord plagues and rends Israel? When He sets their sins in order before them and writes bitter things against them? No, but when He is pacified toward them for all that they have done. Likewise is the promise in Ezekiel 36:31, as if God were saying, “When My quarrel against you for your sin is laid aside by Me, it will be taken up by you in judging and condemning yourself. When your sins are forgotten by My grace, they will be remembered by you for your self-abasement.”

The pardoned man is only the true penitent, and that is the best repentance that is exercised in reading our sealed forgiveness. Therein a man sees that dreadful roll blotted out, but only by free grace in the blood of Jesus. No sin is forgiven but in the virtue of that blood. When therefore a believer sees the vilest of all things, his sins, and the most sacred of all things, the atoning blood of the Son of God, joined together

in this charter of pardon, what thoughts the pardoned man must have of sin, of grace in forgiving, and of the way in which this forgiveness comes. It would be happier for you and me to feel than it is easy for me to express or for any to think but the happy soul who feels it.

We have an instance of a great sinner being greatly forgiven in Luke 7:39–50. May the Lord send us her blessing and her frame. A proud, pardoned sinner is a monster. Are you a sinner and proud of your sin? Then you are an open rebel against an offended God. Are you a sinner and proud of anything? You are a fool. How can you be proud when the most debasing thing lies on you! But are you a pardoned sinner and not humbled? By what name should such a creature be called? Can you be proud of your pardon when your conscience tells you truly that you deserve to be damned as justly as anyone God ever condemned, and that only free grace made the difference between you and them in your sentence, when there was no difference between their deserts and yours? Can you be proud of pardon in Christ's blood, when both the guilt and vileness of sin is so discovered in the only way of its expiation, and when the glory of grace in contriving, using, and applying this expiation shines so brightly?

Believers, whenever you read your charter of pardon in the new covenant, remember who and what is forgiven, who He is who forgives, and on what account He forgives, and see if these will not lay you low and keep you low in His sight.

This great privilege should be improved by believers with confidence and assurance of faith. Trembling believers may be true believers. But trembling and doubting believing is never due believing. It neither gives the glory due to God nor brings in that peace and fruit which is needful to the believer. Does Christ represent you to God for acceptance, and do you doubt whether you will be accepted? Is not this very sinfully

to question His interest at the highest court? Do not say that you doubt your acceptance because of your great unworthiness, for there is no worth but Christ's that is regarded in your acceptance.

The question is not, "Am I in any way worthy of God's gracious acceptance?," but it is, "Is Christ worthy and able to make such an unworthy sinner as I am to be accepted? And is His worthiness for this to be fearfully or confidently trusted in by me?"

See two Scripture passages about this. The one is in an exhortation to all believers; the other is in the triumph of faith of one great believer, in the name of all and for a pattern to all. The first is Hebrews 10:19–23, where we find the apostle, on the solid and common grounds of every believer's faith—Jesus Christ and His office—urging us to draw near (and to God, as in ch. 7:19) with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Having such a door, such a way, such a high priest as Christ is, let us draw near, never doubting our welcome.

The other place is Romans 8:31–39. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is an unanswerable question. But how do we know that God is for us? Thus: "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (v. 32). The "all" he spoke of in verses 29–30. But are there not many things justly chargeable on the elect believers? No, he says in verses 33–34. Nothing by anyone can be laid to their charge. Why so? Are they not by nature children of wrath, even as others? Yes, but "it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" He is a bold devil, man, or conscience who condemns whom God justifies. But how does God justify? Is He not the lawgiver against whom they have sinned? Yes, but yet He justifies, and justly. It is Christ that died. It is Christ's interest in them, His representing them to God that is the ground of their justification before God, of their acceptance with God, and of their joy of faith. Romans

5:11: "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Believers, look on yourselves as often and as narrowly as you can. Judge and condemn yourselves as much as you will. But when you look for acceptance with God, mind Christ alone and give Him glory in trusting confidently for acceptance in Him.

Improve this privilege with diligence and painfulness. It is well worth our diligence, and diligence is needful for us. Use diligence to keep this privilege of Christ's representing you to God for acceptance steadfastly and constantly in the eye of your faith. The peace of Christians would not ebb and flow with every tide, as often it does, if this duty were more minded. This is what is called "holding fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," and "holding the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:6, 14). This is what is required of all in Hebrews 6:11: "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." The shield of faith, as it quenches all the fiery darts of the devil (Eph. 6:16), so his most fiery darts are flung against it. Such as do not know the trials of faith never had the truth of faith. An evil heart of unbelief (and some roots of it are in the best believers) will often assault true faith. Great watch and ward should be kept by faith about our precious faith, for faith watches itself. Faith prayed in that man, "Lord,...help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Has the Lord once or more often caused you to hope, as in Psalm 119:49? Has He taken you and made you sit down and rest on the precious foundation, Jesus Christ? Hold yourself there. "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23). But "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith" (Col. 2:6-7). If you try this work, you will quickly find

that diligence is needful. If you give diligence in it, you will quickly find the rich profit of it.

Use diligence in improving this privilege by studying likeness and conformity to Jesus Christ. Has He blessed you with this great grace of representing you in His righteousness for your acceptance with God? Should you not study to get Christ's image in true holiness more and more increased in you? True gospel holiness is only planted by gospel grace and nourished by gospel arguments. And these arguments have neither light nor power on any but such as have received the spirit of faith. "Every man that hath this hope in him [it should read "on Him," that is, on Christ] purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). He is still doing and purifying, but we are not perfect as yet. Thus a carnal heart is apt to say, "Since I cannot be perfectly holy in this life, and since I hope I will be so when Christ appears, I will let the study of holiness alone till that day." No, the apostle says, every man who has this hope on Christ of being like Him when he will see Him as He is will study that likeness, although he cannot attain to it as he would. That man's state is nothing, and his faith unsound, who does not find his hopes of glory purifying to his heart and life.

Now, set about the study, love, and practice of holiness, all you who are favored with Christ's grace in representing you to God's gracious acceptance. And I have no doubt that all who have obtained this grace and see it by faith will be so exercised. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1-2). This is a plausible objection and easily drawn by a carnal heart from what was said: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). But if the objection is obvious, the answer is mysterious: "God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" It is as if he had said, "I do not wonder that those who are alive to sin make this objection, but all who are dead to sin see no weight in it."

But how are believers dead to sin and alive to God? By the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection (vv. 3–6), into which every believer is planted. And thence he bids them: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 11). If Christians were more skillful in these reckonings of faith, they would abound more in the fruits of holiness. All true holiness is the fruit of faith. All true faith produces this fruit. And the strongest believer brings forth the most abundant fruit (John 15:4–5).

Beholding Christ's Glory

You may remember that when I first began to speak from this sweet, long, and great verse in Christ's prayer, I took it up in two parts: the manner and the matter of it. The manner of it is in these words, "I will"—a way of praying that we do not find Christ using but here, and a way of praying that no Christian should use, for our will is so foolish and sinful a thing that the less room it has in our prayers, the better our prayers are. Our prayers are to be according to His will, not ours.

In the matter of Christ's prayer in this verse, I purposed to take up four things:

1. The denomination and description He gives and makes of those for whom He prays: "those whom thou hast given me." We cannot direct our prayers as Christ did, for He prayed for the elect as elect and as persons particularly and exactly known to Him.

2. The blessing He prays for regarding those persons: "that they may be with me where I am."

3. The end of His praying for this blessing on them: "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me."

4. The argument by which Christ backs this prayer: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

I am still on the third part, which I will conclude at this time. In handling this I propounded two headings of discourse: first, what the glory of Christ is that is to be beheld; and, second, what it is to behold it. Of the first I have spoken at length. And because the theme is very large, I comprehended all in two particulars: the glory of Christ as He represents God to His church to be savingly known by them; and His glory as He represents His church to God to be graciously accepted by Him. There are no saving views of God but in Christ, and there are no gracious views God has of men but in Christ. If we look on God outside of Christ, we are dazzled with an overwhelming, confounding majesty. If God looks on us outside of Christ, He sees hateful and hated sinners. To both of these particulars I have largely spoken, both doctrinally and with application.

I come now to the second thing—what it is to behold Christ's glory. His glory is a divine glory, but the beholding of it is a creature's action. And because His glory is divine and therefore infinitely great, it is a deeper theme in itself than the beholding of it. Yet in some way beholding His glory is darker to us than His glory itself. We are able to know a little more of His glory than we can know what the beholding of it is that Christ here prays for. But, indeed, both the glory of Christ as manifested in heaven and the glorified saints' beholding of it there are themes too deep and too dark for any man to conceive or express. My way therefore of speaking to this subject of beholding Christ's glory in heaven must be by way of comparison, comparing it with such beholdings of His glory as saints on earth have had or may have. And of such we find especially these three:

Some, like Abraham, beheld Christ's glory before He came into the world, before He took to Himself man's nature. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). And John 12:41: "These things said Esaias

[Isa. 6] when he saw his glory, and spake of him.” This was by faith. And the light that faith was begotten by and acted in was that of diverse ways and manners in which God communicated His mind to His people before the law. Such doubtless carried such credentials with them that satisfied the faith of believers at that time as really as God’s written Word now does a New Testament believer’s faith. If we think that the Spirit of God by Moses’ pen in Genesis gives but a small and short account of the patriarchs’ faith and of the grounds and actings of it in them both before and after the flood, yet He, by Paul in the New Testament, gives a fuller account of it, as in Hebrews 11, of many of them, and of Abraham more largely in Romans 4 and in Galatians 3:8, where Paul tells us that “the gospel was preached before unto Abraham.” He says it in these words: “In thee shall all nations be blessed.” “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (v. 16). What an exact and spiritual commentator Paul was on Abraham’s gospel: “In thee and thy seed shall all nations be blessed,” repeated again to Isaac, his son (Gen. 26:4); by Isaac given as his blessing to his son Jacob (Gen. 28:4), which he calls “the blessing of Abraham,” as Paul does in Galatians 3:14. This blessing the Lord gave to Jacob (Gen. 28:14).

How many read these few words in Genesis who never would have found out that deep gospel in them that Paul does: That this promised seed, of whom Isaac was only a progenitor and a type, was Christ. This blessing to be gotten in Him and by Him was justification. This justification implied a prior condemnation and curse that men were under, and that only this blessing could remove. All the families of the earth to whom this blessing was designed to extend were the heathen (v. 8), Gentiles (v. 14). This blessing is only received by faith (vv. 7, 9). The law, which was 430 years after, could

not disannul this promise and covenant of grace (v. 17). Every believer on Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, who partakes of Abraham's blessing are all Abraham's seed and are heirs according to the promise, yea, are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (v. 26, 28–29). How much despised by many would such a comment be on so few and such dark words, and words that have so fair an appearance of a less evangelical sense than the apostle puts on them! But strangers to that Spirit who dictated the Scriptures will ever prove to be poor commenters on the most spiritual part of the Scriptures. By this short hint it appears that the patriarchs before the law beheld the glory of Christ though it had not yet come—not to speak of the prophets who, all of them from Samuel and those who follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days, as Peter said in Acts 3:24.

The next beholding of the glory of Christ was when He came and lived on the earth and His people lived with Him, when God was manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This beholding of His glory was only by faith, for many who saw with their bodily eyes this appearance of the Son of God in man's flesh, who saw His works that no other man did (John 15:24) and heard His words such as never man spoke (John 7:46), yet saw no glory in Him nor in anything He did, said, or suffered. Rather they despised and hated Him, and all because they did not believe (John 6:36). And on them was fulfilled what the prophet foretold in Isaiah 53:1–3. Our Lord's humbled state was a great, thick, dark veil over His glory, yet His glory shone in it and through it, and faith beholds it (1 John 1:1–2). Do not envy the happiness of such believers as conversed with Christ when He was on earth—though there was a great blessedness in it

(Luke 10:23–24; Matt. 13:16–17). Christ gives the preference to them who have not seen and yet have believed (John 20:29; 1 Peter 1:8).

We may justly think that never was the eye of faith more tried than by the mean and low appearance that so great a person as God's only begotten Son who came with the high character of the Messiah on so great an errand and work as redeeming His church made when He came and was made manifest to Israel. And therefore faith in Him then had a special difficulty in its way that ours does not have when we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).

This difficulty of believing increased as Christ's low state did. He was at His lowest on His cross and in His grave. Unbelief in Him and contempt of Him grew to a dreadful height in His enemies. Faith in Him in them who had it and had professed it was brought to its lowest point. "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). They had once so believed—but what did they do now? They were astonished (v. 22). They could not tell whether they should repent of their faith or of their unbelief. And thus they spoke to Christ Himself, but veiled from them. But blessed Jesus, though entered into His glory (as v. 26), had the same pity and tenderness He had so often before expressed and gently rebuked them, taught them, and recovered them.

When He was on His cross, His enemies saw no glory in Him, and His friends saw little else save matter of sorrow. Yet one, a thief, and a dying man too, saw His glory and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." It is not as Christ's enemies and this man's companion in both his crime and punishment said, "If thou be the Christ." But it is as if he had said, "I know Thee to be the Son of God; and though Thou art dying, yet Thou art going to Thy kingdom. Give me a share in that kingdom that Thou art now buying by Thy blood." And

he was answered, the rarest believer that ever was, the greatest faith that ever was acted, and the most gracious answer that ever was given (Luke 23:43). Well did Jesus, dying for sinners, know how to receive a sinner into heaven.

Christ's glory is beheld when He is in heaven and His people are on earth, and this is by faith also. In this case, though there is not a veil of infirmity on the glory of our Lord as there was when He was on earth, yet there is a vast distance between Him and us, as great as between heaven and earth, as between the right hand of the Father, where He is in His glory, and our weak eye of faith, who are on earth. Yet this eye, in the light and glass of the gospel, can and does behold with open face the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). Of this beholding Christ's glory, I would speak in two instances:

First, at the first conversion of a sinner when he is made a believer in Christ. None are truly converted to God but such as are made believers in Christ. And none are made believers in Christ but those to whom the glory of Christ is revealed. It is by the power of this discovery that faith is wrought, and in the light of it, faith is acted. Some think that a man is converted when the secure sinner is awakened by the light and heat of God's law, when a profane person is made sober in his conversation. But if there is no more than this, he may be still as far, yea, farther from true conversion than before. "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31). And yet the scribes and Pharisees thought themselves in so much better case for heaven than they were that they would not entertain common conversation with ordinary sinners and boasted that they were better than such. Yea, they turned Christ's grace to His reproach. "They murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). Who were they

that said such a thing? Were they not sinners? Yes, but they did not see or own themselves to be such.

What should a sinner do but go to Christ? What can come on a sinner if Christ does not receive him? Yea, what is a savior of sinners for but for receiving sinners and saving them from their sins (Matt. 1:21)? And yet sinners coming to Christ and Christ's welcome of them makes unbelievers murmur against both Christ and believers. It is certain that no man can see any glory in that grace of Christ when he has no sight or sense of his own need of it. But when was Paul converted, an eminent Pharisee, the best student in Gamaliel's school (Gal. 1:14–16)? It was when God revealed His Son in him. It is very likely that Paul had heard of Jesus Christ while still a Pharisee, but it is certain that he hated Him, His very name, and all who belonged to Him. But when the Lord's time had come to call this chosen vessel by His grace, when He intended to subdue and conquer Paul's rebellious spirit, a revelation of Christ was made to him, and the rebel yielded and was made a loyal subject all his days. Would you know when you were converted? If ever it was, it was when you had the first view of the glory of Christ as a savior. When this sight is obtained, the sinner employs Christ in His saving office, trusts Him in it, and is saved by Him.

Also, Christ's glory is beheld by believers when Christ is in heaven and they are on earth in the following manifestations of Christ and of His glory to them. Whenever Christ is seen, it is by His manifesting Himself. No torch, no candle nor fire could make one see the sun if its own shining did not. His people to whom He has once manifested Himself need to have it repeated again and again. And this blessing He promises in John 14:21, 23. It is very suspicious that that man's state is bad who never had but one discovery of Christ's glory. Those manifestations of His glory are various in measure, duration,

and their seasons, sometimes on special diligence in seeking of the Lord by faith in prayer.

What Christian is there who is not able to bear witness to this: that the times of his special seeking have been the times of his special finding? If there was more of Moses' spirit (though, it may be, there was something in it that was above both what is either allowable to ask or attainable by ordinary believers) in Exodus 33:18, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," then it would be better with us. If we were more importunate in begging new and clearer visions of the glory of Christ and renewed visits from Him for that end, He would not deny us. If we went to Him with that desire that some came with to one of His disciples, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21), can any think He would be displeased?

But, alas, we do not receive because we do not ask. Sometimes Christ manifests Himself in a special manner to His people in the furnace of affliction, especially if it is for His sake. Yea, in the easiest of those sufferings, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:14).

Sometimes the Lord manifests His glory to His people at their death, and it is then very desirable. Old Simeon had a gracious promise that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. He chose a sweet season of dying. And when the promise was fulfilled, and when he had Christ in his arms and faith and love in his heart, he burst out into a song (Luke 2:27-29). The first martyr Stephen died happily. He died witnessing for Christ. And Christ witnessed for him when that martyr said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56). This was better than Moses' dying (Deut. 32:49-50; 34:1-5). It was a strange journey and call to "go up and die," and he was to take only a view of the land, but he was not to enter into it. He saw

the land of Canaan, and that was all. But he saw by faith the true Canaan, entered into it, and there abided still, save one errand Moses was sent on with Elijah to wait on their master on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:3).

These are a few instances of the seasons in which the Lord manifests His glory to His people and in which they behold it. But this text and theme I am on relates to something far higher and greater than all the beholdings of His glory that any saint on earth ever received. What it is, I cannot tell you, and I am sure that none can, though many may easily tell more of it than I can. There is both a danger and snare in prying within God's veil. I will therefore content myself with comparing the beholding of Christ's glory by believers on earth with this beholding of it that our Lord here prays for to all His people in heaven.

This only I would premise to this discourse: that such as are wholly unacquainted in their own experience with beholding the glory of Christ by the eye of faith in the gospel glass will, can, yea, must understand nothing that can be said of beholding Christ's glory in heaven.

These two beholdings of Christ's glory, the one on earth and the other in heaven, may be compared and yet differ in several things:

They differ greatly in the measure of glory manifested by Him and seen by the beholders. Christ's glory is infinite, and no creature in its most exalted capacity can take a full view of it all. Therefore, though the glorified beholders of it are eternal beholders thereof, yet they never see it all fully, nor can they comprehend it. Our beholding His glory on earth is according to the small measures of its discovery and suited to our small capacity. Our old bottles are not fit for this new wine. Believers know this well by their experience. Sometimes they have more

and sometimes less of Christ's glory manifested to them, but always less than what they think they need and would obtain.

This is so universal in the spiritual sense and experience of Christians that these two seem to be as established from the Word of God as from the common experience of believers. Those whose views of Christ's glory are constantly the same, without any changes and vicissitudes of light and darkness, day and night, and those who see as much of Christ's glory as they desire to see, never truly saw anything of it at all. Was ever true faith in the same activity? Do not all experienced believers witness by their spiritual sense that sometimes in the word read or heard there is a beam of light, life, and power that darts on a word that they often before had read and heard without any such enjoyment, and which they may remember and think again on afterward, without any power to recall the same mercy to their taste again?

So it is in prayer and in all ordinances wherein we seek communion with Him. Some have less; some have more. And some believers at some times of their life have such manifestations of Christ's glory in His love, tenderness, and familiarity with them that they can hardly contain it. But the best enjoyment for kind and largest for measure is far short of what the smallest vessel in Christ's upper house is fit to receive and does receive. Seeing the Lord's power and glory in His sanctuary on earth is something that is greatly and justly desired by His people (Ps. 63:2) and is well made to be their one thing (Ps. 27:4). And when they obtain communion with Him, they all say as one did, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10). He was a great man and a great saint who said it. But one hour in the court of heaven is better than a thousand years in God's lower courts. There are days of heaven on the earth (Deut. 11:21). Such are clear and

bright days, but the days of heaven in heaven are unspeakably more so. What we now receive is, as Song of Solomon 2:9 says, "Behold, he standeth behind our wall; he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattices." But then, all walls and windows, all means of communion with Him will be removed, useful no more. "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it" (Rev. 21:22). Christ Himself speaks of this last day: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31). Then will His glory appear, and His people will appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

The way whereby we behold Christ's glory on earth and that whereby we will behold it in heaven differ greatly. As they differ in measures, so in the manner and ways of beholding. "For now we see through a glass darkly [or in a riddle], but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). There are three ways of knowing things that God provides for us. Our senses, for sensible things; our understanding, for such things as do not fall under our senses; and faith, for such things that are beyond the reach of both senses and reason. When Christ was first on earth, He was the object of men's senses, but few knew Him. Few could say, as 1 John 1:2, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

And when He returns again, every eye will see Him (Rev. 1:7), but all will not have a comfortable view of Him. Everyone will hear His voice and rise when called, but to a different sentence (John 5:28–29), by the wisdom that God has put in the inward parts and by the understanding that He has given to the heart (Job 38:36). "For he teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven" (Job 35:11). By this noble power men know clearly and

surely many things that are beyond the reach of our outward senses. But beyond both is faith, which is as the eye of the new creature, planted by the Lord, whereby the things of God that can neither be taken up by our external senses nor can be traced by the eye of our minds are yet, in the light of God's Word revealing them, seen and embraced by faith (1 Cor. 2:9–10; Heb. 11:1). And this exercise of faith with its fruits is the utmost that believers reach or can attain while they are on earth. But this beholding of Christ's glory by those who will be with Him where He is is unspeakably beyond all.

To begin with the first, our bodily senses, they will be perfect in the resurrection state in all "the children of the resurrection," as our Lord calls them in Luke 20:36. The apostle, in disputing about, proving, and explaining this article of the Christian faith in 1 Corinthians 15:44, calls the body that is raised a spiritual body. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." The raised body is a real body and not a spirit. It is the real true body of every saint that he lived in, that he served Christ in and by; that very body that he departed from at death and left to the corruption of the grave that is raised again in glory, in power, and in "incorruption," as verse 42–43; that same once vile body that is then changed so that it may be fashioned like Christ's glorious body (Phil. 3:21). As the body is, so are its senses and powers. A natural body has natural powers, and, as it decays, those powers decay also, as elegantly described in Ecclesiastes 12:1–7. But what a spiritual body is, and what its powers are, we do not and cannot know. But this we know: that there will be a glorious appearance of Christ in that day that will fall under and will be taken up by those spiritual senses of the raised bodies of saints and will be no small part of their happiness. The bodily eye of John, though it was used to beholding Christ and His glory on earth, could not bear a little beam of Christ's heavenly glory (Rev. 1:17).

How strange that John should need Christ to tell him who He was (v. 18). But what John while in his natural body could not bear, every saint in his spiritual body will not only be able to bear, but will, with delight, behold more than what was likely to have killed that beloved disciple.

As for the powers of the mind, in that day they will be perfect, so that all the glory of Christ that will be discovered will be beheld by them perfectly to perfect their blessedness (1 Cor. 13:11–12).

But faith, as needful and useful as it is now, will then be laid aside as being useless. A believer now takes up a little of Christ's glory—but how? In the Word, as in a glass (2 Cor. 3:18). No other glass but the gospel glass reveals Christ's glory to us now. And it is not faith, but dreaming and doting, to study Christ except in that glass. But when both the glass of the gospel and the eye of faith will be laid aside (the two most useful and needful blessings to a believer while out of heaven, and useful and needful to bring him to heaven), what will make up the want of them? Even Christ Himself, seen in His glory. As Christ, come in the flesh, rendered all the types and shadows of Him in the Old Testament no more needful, so Christ, appearing in His glory, will do as to the New Testament dispensation.

Let us consider and compare these two beholdings of Christ's glory by believers on earth and saints in heaven, with respect to the case of the beholders thereof. How vastly they differ! There are three things in a believer that all the glorified beholders of Christ's glory in heaven are perfectly freed from: sin, infirmity, and affliction.

Sin dwells in us, in the best, and always while we are here. There are no sinless beholders of Christ's glory on earth, and there are no sinful beholders of His glory in heaven. And this makes a great difference between them. When the believer's day is fairest, when his eye is clearest, when his faith is

strongest, he yet has sin in him and a body of death hanging about him. Sin, in being in him, is like a film on the eye of faith and mars clear seeing.

Brethren, there was never a sinless believer on earth but one, and that was Jesus Christ. And it is as far above us to know how He believed (save that He did so perfectly) as to tell what it is to see Him as He is in heaven. The first Adam, while he stood, was not a sinless believer, but a sinless worker. And when he fell, he and all his posterity became sinners. When God's grace falls on any of them, they are made believers through that grace and believers on it. Yet sin remains in them still. Though its guilt is forgiven, its filth washed away, and its power subdued, yet its being and indwelling remains—and this is a great impediment in the acting of faith. If any believer had that privilege (which I think none ever had, and none should desire) to be but a little while in the exercise of faith without any indwelling sin in him, surely that man would believe wonderfully and would think that he never believed before. It is true that all true believers are sanctified and that all true acts of faith are sanctifying. Yet no believer is perfectly sanctified on earth. But it is certain also that the first acting of faith on Christ is in the sight and sense of our ruin by the power of sin in our nature. And the later actings of faith are from the same senses of remaining corruption in us. Proper faith is a sinner's dealing with the Savior of sinners for salvation from sin. Till we obtain perfect salvation from sin, we must act faith for it. And while we act that faith, sin is mixed with our very believing, so that we must pray as that man did, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

There are infirmities in believers in all their beholding the glory of Christ while they are on earth. There are infirmities in our bodies that all are sensible of, and such have no small influence on the actings of the soul. There are also infirmities in

our souls and darkness and dullness in our intellectual powers. But above all these are the infirmities of the new creature. Although it is created in Christ Jesus, although it is supported by His power and is maintained and fed by influences from Him as its head and root, yet is it still a weak and infirmed thing and is like a newborn babe (1 Peter 2:2). But none of these infirmities are in those who behold Christ's glory above. They have outgrown them all and are become perfect in Christ Jesus. Whatever other times that word has or will be fulfilled in, its main fulfillment will be at Christ's appearing: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days" (Isa. 30:26). If such a dispensation in the course of nature were that the moon shone by night as bright as the sun by day, and if the sun by day shone sevenfold brighter than now it does, where would there be eyes to endure it? Surely none such as ours are. So is it as to the light of that glorious day. The best eyes that we now have and use would fail us, but the Lord provides eyes suitable to the light He will make to shine.

Besides the infirmities we labor under, we have manifold afflictions also that the glorified beholders of Christ's glory are free from. No affliction can have room in heaven (Rev. 21:4), yet, through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Afflictions are trials of faith. Faith is to be acted in and under them. And often faith is shaken by them. Sometimes believing is strongest when the believer is in greatest distress. But though this is a duty laid on all, it is not the attainment of all believers; but still, affliction is an evil in itself, though the Lord turns it into good. Now take all together: Sin is in us; infirmities compass us about; and affliction is laid on us. Must not all together make a great difference between us in our beholding Christ's glory now from their beholding of His glory who are fully rid of all these things?

Consider and compare the difference between our beholding Christ's glory on earth and theirs in heaven, as to the fruits and effects thereof. These fruits are of the same nature and kind and so are expressed in the Word. I will name but three of them: conformity, satisfaction, and expression of that satisfaction.

Conformity to Christ is the native fruit of beholding His glory. As it is beheld, this conformity is wrought in the beholder. The natural eye in seeing takes in the visible objects, species and shape, by its faculty. The mind in knowing takes into itself the intelligible species of the things known, but, above these, faith takes in Christ's glory in the gospel; and, beyond faith, the seeing eye of the glorified takes in Christ's glory as it shines in heaven and is conformed thereto. Compare 2 Corinthians 3:18 that relates to believers on earth with 1 John 3:2 that relates to the glorified in heaven. The object is the same: Christ and His glory. The effect of conformity is the same in kind, but not in degree, because the object is not seen by both in the same light nor with the same eye. The one sees Him as He is; the other sees Him as He appears in the gospel glass.

Let us consider how any likeness and conformity to Christ begins. We all, by nature, bear the image of the earthly Adam (1 Cor. 15:49). And this is a vile image of sin, flesh, and death—nothing like but quite unlike and contrary to Christ's image. Yet, through rich and free grace, many who have borne this sad and sinful image are blessed with the image of the heavenly man, the Lord from heaven. When and how is this great change made? Only when Christ is formed in them (Gal. 4:19), when He is revealed to them, and when they by faith see the glory of Christ as a savior. They begin to live when they first look on Him as lifted up as God's only ordinance for saving (John 3:14–15). There are two discoveries of Christ made to beginners. One is to all; the other, only to some. The general

discovery to all believers is that such is both the cause and the ground of faith in him. And that is such a discovery of Christ's ability and goodwill to save as engages their heart to trust Him and Him alone with this great concern of their salvation. The other is such a discovery of Christ's glory as produces peace in the believer, for in this he not only sees Christ's all-sufficiency for saving, so as to trust Him with it, but he sees also that this trustee is so good and faithful that this concern must be safe because it is lodged with Him. This is like that faith in 2 Timothy 1:12: "I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Also consider how this conformity to Christ is carried on and advanced even as it was begun (Col. 2:6–7). Growth in grace is by growing in the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Abiding in Christ is the way to have our fruits abound (John 15:4–5). Many true Christians cannot tell when they were first converted, when they first believed; but all Christians can tell when they were most holy, and that is always when Christ manifests Himself most clearly to them. As to their first believing, they cannot determine that so well because they cannot easily remember when Christ first revealed Himself to them—He has done it so often. And every new manifestation of His glory to them draws forth a new acting of their faith on Him, and it may be such a distinct and strong act as they think they never before put forth the like.

Something of this made a great believer and an aged divine, when speaking of the time of his conversion, say, "I cannot tell it, for I have been more than a hundred times converted." Not that he was ignorant or doubtful that a true conversion is but once in God's working it, but that it may have many appearances in our sense and experience. David, after his sad fall, prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10), when, before this, he had God's testimony that he was a man according to God's own heart (Acts 13:22, taken from 1 Sam. 13:14). This was a witness not only to the truth but to the eminence of his saintship. Christ calls that recovery unto Peter a new sort of conversion (Luke 22:32)—that He, in amazing grace, promised to him just before his shameful fall. And yet he was a true believer before and blessed by Christ on his profession and acting of faith (Matt. 16:16–17).

Another thing may have some influence on Christians' ignorance of the time of their conversion, and that is that they can better remember the alarms they had in their conscience by a law work than they can the still and calm voice of the gospel. The one not only makes more noise, but it is more readily felt and remembered by us than the secret opening of the heart by Christ's love. But, whatever mistakes Christians may labor under and different thoughts and experience they may have as to the time of His love and the day of His power, yet all true believers are of one mind as to the seasons of their greatest holiness. There are different measures of it dispensed by the Lord and attained by His people. None of them have attained as much as they would have. And they who have attained most think least of their attainments and press most for perfection. But all can readily and unanimously declare when it is that their graces are most lively, their corruptions most low and least rampant, when their work is most sweet and Christ's yoke and burden most easy and light—that is, when Christ is nearest to them and they to Him, and when most of His glory appears to them. This is not from the might of their faith, as it is their act (though in such seasons it is in best case), but from the virtue and power of Christ's grace that falls on them when He is pleased to manifest Himself to them. This blessed experience of special likeness to Christ

by Him specially manifesting Himself to them is not without some danger that many saints have fallen into; for, when things are so well with them that the savor of Christ's knowledge perfumes their hearts, and that their secret corruption shrinks into a corner (as Christ's glory and our corruptions are contraries), the believer is ready to say, as David did, "I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved" (Ps. 30:6). Yet he was quickly moved, and so will all be who say as he did—for, the stronger that carnal and self-confidence is, the nearer is the man to a shameful fall, as was Peter.

Further, consider how this conformity and likeness is perfected, and that is, as it was begun and advanced by the discovery of Christ's glory in heaven. "We are the sons of God; but the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1–2). The world knows God's children well enough to despise, hate, and persecute them. And so did the world know Christ. But this sort of knowledge is nothing but ignorance of both Christ and Christians. "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be." But it will at length appear. When and how? "But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Yet all these things are food only for humble faith. Everything in it is deep and unsearchable.

What is His appearing? What is it to be like Him? What is it to see Him, and that as He is? How will this sight of Him make us like Him? These are unanswerable questions even to an apostle and to all who are yet out of heaven. If it is a dark, unintelligible riddle to every natural man (whatever knowledge he may have of the letter of the Word) how a sight of Christ by faith begins and carries on a real begun likeness to Christ in believers on earth, much more must it be dark to them, yea, to believers themselves, how the sight of Christ's glory in heaven perfects and completes this likeness! We must long for it, believe it, and leave it to the day that will declare it.

On this conformity to Christ follow satisfaction and blessedness. Of this David speaks: "But as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). According to the measure of the manifestation of Christ's glory to His people, so is the degree of their likeness to Him. And as this likeness to Him is, so is the satisfaction and bliss of them who have it. All is begun on earth with the heirs. All is perfect in heaven in the partakers and possessors of glory, and a little of both in comparing them together. Believers on earth who see His glory are transformed into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18), and this conformity always works satisfaction. David speaks of it in Psalm 4:6-7: "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." And indeed, they do not know the light of God's countenance who do not feel a joy in their heart that all the world can neither give nor take away. Christ promised us this joy: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

Paul prayed highly for this blessing: "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. 15:13). Peter spoke of joy as an attainment of believers on earth: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). The joy is unspeakable that is felt by believers when they (as sometimes by His light they do) see some begun likeness to that lovely image of Christ that won their heart the first time they saw it when it darted its beams of life and love on their dying souls and left that scent of heaven in their heart that they cannot rest till they apprehend that for which they were apprehended of, Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12). On the day that Christ apprehended them and said to them

in love, "Sinners, stop your race to hell. Follow Me, and I will give you eternal life," then they in faith answered, "Behold, we come to Thee and cannot leave Thee, for Thou hast the words of eternal life."

And thus is fulfilled that blessed saying of our Lord: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). The original spring is heaven and eternal life. And this well will spring up as high as its origin. Can there be any satisfaction comparable to this: to behold by faith eternal life descending from heaven to us in Christ's love and grace, and to find at the same time this same faith climbing up to the possession of this life? This happiness is great enough to disgrace and disparage the poor portion of the worldling that not only perishes with the using, but he who has it must perish because he has no better things nor things that accompany salvation. But yet, though the believer in and by his fellowship with the Father and the Son by the Spirit has a joy that the stranger cannot meddle with, yet his joy when most full is greatly short of theirs in heaven. Only where perfect seeing is can perfect likeness be. And where perfect likeness is, there perfect satisfaction is.

This satisfaction and blessedness is expressed by the enjoyer in love and praise. Groaning under misery is not more natural to the afflicted than exultation is to the happy person. As believers feel their present happiness or see their future greater happiness, so is their praise and their love. But how feeble are all their expressions of it! Our best praises on earth are little better than sweet and delightful groanings under the heavy yet dear load of loving kindness. David, the best man at praise of any saint—how he praises! "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can

David say more unto thee?" (2 Sam. 7:18–20). He asks questions he cannot answer. He is silenced as soon as he begins to praise, and thus he praises rightly. Whoever thinks he has the balances to weigh mercy in never felt the load of mercy, and that man is farthest from right praising who thinks he can praise and is best pleased with his praising. But perfect praising is reserved for heaven. And none can learn that song but they who are with the lamb in that Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1–4). Perfectly seeing Christ's glory, a perfect likeness to Him by that sight, perfect happiness by that likeness, and perfect expression of that happiness are all within the veil; and all we have and know on earth is but faint and dark shadows thereof.

Consider and compare beholding the glory of Christ on earth and in heaven in their duration. In this they differ as much as in any of the former. The one is a temporary enjoyment, and for a little time too. The other is eternal. If a believer gets a view of the glory of Christ by faith now, it is but as a transient glance—very sweet, but very short. In our sweetest enjoyments of Christ's company on earth, He may be pleased to awake and leave us without it (Song 2:7). And not only does He reserve a sovereign latitude in giving or withholding His sensible presence, but in love and wisdom for our good He draws near or withdraws, and His people are made to feel their profit in these changes.

But there are no such changes in heaven. Changes are only for time; none in eternity. I believe that as soon as any man passes out of time into eternity, he knows immediately and certainly that he has now come into an eternal and unalterable state. The light of eternity demonstrates it. So the saint entering into heaven knows that the everlasting doors that were opened to let him in are shut on him to keep him in that state to eternity—and this is a great part of his blessedness. The damned who go down into the pit know that the bars of

hell are locked on them so that they can never get out. And this adds to their begun but never ending misery. It is indeed both an amazing fruit and proof of the power of unbelief in men that, though they pretend to know this, yet most men do not in earnest think where and in what place and condition they will be for eternity, and yet they bestow many careful thoughts about the condition wherein they may spend their short time on earth.

So much for the doctrinal part about beholding Christ's glory in heaven.

Application: Learn from this to behold and understand Christ's last design for His people. It is to have them behold His glory. Christ will never leave any whom the Father has given Him till He has brought them to this place. Let believers learn to give Christ His will and His way. Give Him trust, give Him time, and wait patiently. Have you been given to Him? Are you a believer on Him? Behold with faith what His design on you is. It is to bring you to that place where He is so that you may behold His glory. He uses many strange and deep ways and methods to carry this design on. Submit to these and believe the end of the Lord.

Is it Christ's design to have His people with Him where He is so that they may behold His glory? Then see that it is your design too. Many desire to be in heaven who have nothing of this end in their desires. If your end in desiring to be in heaven is not the same with Christ's end in desiring it for you, how can you think that your desire is right or will be accomplished? Some men desire to be in heaven forever because they cannot stay always on earth, but if they might live in health and ease a thousand years on earth, they would never make a hearty prayer for heaven. But these are earthworms, and God will destroy them. Others desire to be in heaven only because they think hell is bad quarters, and they would be

kept from that. In effect, all carnal men's desires for heaven amount to no more than this, "Lord, save me from hell." They think that heaven is better than hell, but not as good as the earth, if they might stay comfortably in it. They know that they must be eternally in heaven or hell, and that these states are so different that it is easy to choose which is best for them. But how can a natural, unregenerate man desire heaven? A heaven of his own imagination he may desire; but true heaven, heaven described in the gospel, a state of bliss in beholding the glory of Christ—this no unbeliever can have any relish of or desire after. He can never say a hearty "amen" to Christ's prayer in my text. They do not know Christ's presence. They never saw anything of His glory, as it surpasses all glory. Never will a man desire to make a voyage through death to see that in heaven which he never had any relish of nor savor of on earth. Yea, it is impossible that he could.

Let us from hence learn to praise the dead who die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13). I allude to Ecclesiastes 4:2: "Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive." Christ will have them where He is so that they may behold His glory. And when He calls and takes them, they behold it. This is their happiness, and we should bless them and rejoice in their bliss. We have an affecting passage in Acts 20:37–38, after a farewell sermon and prayer of Paul's (here we have an apostolic pattern for farewell sermons and prayers—but nowhere have we any for funeral ones): "They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." You may justly think that as the elders and others of the church of Ephesus were excellent persons and were full of love and value for such an eminent apostle as Paul was, so their grief was great at this sad parting.

You in this city frequently have cause for the same sorrow, if you have the same spirit as they had. Not that I mean to compare any ministers you have or have lost with this apostle, for as I am persuaded we have none like him, so am I persuaded that if there were any more like him than any of us are, considering the spirit of the day we live in, that minister would be the most despised and reproached of any (though I hope that some would discern his true worth). If on such occasions of the loss of faithful ministers or useful Christians, you are sorrowing and saying, "I will see his face no more, hear his voice no more, and see his tender walking no more," then call this also to mind: "Even if I see his face no more, he sees Christ's face forever, which is better for him than the other would be to me."

There is not a believer in heaven who does not know this text better than all divines on earth can. Whenever a believer has entered within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, this blessed beholding of Christ's glory is better known to him than angels or men can teach him now. This is indeed "the white stone, and in it the new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17). I would only add that it would be a sweet speaking and sweet hearing of heaven if we at the same time felt something of it. And though we cannot yet get up into it, yet if, through His grace, something of heaven came down to us, if the joy of our Lord entered into our hearts as an earnest of our entering into it (Matt. 25:21, 23), for in that day it will be too big to enter into them. All our work now is to be well acquainted with Christ as the way. Christ is both the way and the home. We must walk in Him and be traveling toward Him. And He is our guide and leader in the way. The work and life of grace is in living on Him by faith, and the happiness of heaven is in living with Him forever. Oh, come and see; go and see! He will call you up in due time. Blessed is that believer who is as willing to be in heaven as Christ is to have him there.

The Father's Love for the Son

Only the last clause of this verse now remains to be spoken to. It is, as you have heard, the fourth and last thing I took up in the matter of Christ's prayer. The argument that Christ used to back His desire of having His people with Him was in the words: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." I will briefly speak to this and thereby conclude. This argument of Christ I will speak to in two ways: first, the words themselves; and, second, as they are used by our Lord relating to His prayer.

These words contain Christ's asserting the eternal love of the Father to the Son. The words "before the foundation of the world," "before the world was," and "before the world began" are all to the same purpose and are the Holy Ghost's way of expressing eternity prior to time—for before the world began there was nothing but eternity and God inhabiting it, as the prophet says in Isaiah 57:15. Of this eternal love of the Father for the Son, I will speak briefly.

Consider this eternal love in the Father to the person of His Son. This I admit is too deep for us to fathom, but it is a blessed deep to swim in. The manner of the everlasting begetting of the person of the Son by the Father is unsearchable by all creatures, and, it may be, will be so eternally. The state of

glory was not designed for satisfying curiosity and instructing men in points of mere speculation or in things beyond all created reach. So it passes our understanding to know how the Father loves His only begotten Son. How one divine person loves another divine person—who but a divine person can understand?

There are some sorts of love that I would name, all that this love greatly transcends. There is the love of one creature for another. This is sometimes very strong and is in some cases allowed to be very great. The love wherewith a believer loves Christ is yet greater, for though the lover is but a creature, yet the beloved is more than a creature and deserves more love than we can pay. Christ cannot be over-loved, but any creature may. There is the love of God toward His chosen. This is greater than the former. It is this love that God is called “love” from in 1 John 4:8–10. Then there is the love Christ bears to His church that is exceedingly great and is much spoken of in the Word (Eph. 3:18–19; 5:25–26).

In the first love, one creature loves another, and with a love that has bounds and limits set to it by God’s will, lest it is excessive. In the second, a creature loves God. In the third, God loves a creature. In the last, Christ loves His own body and every member of it. So in all of them, either the lover or the beloved is a creature. But where God the Father is the lover, and God the Son is the beloved, who can tell what that love is! But I pass on as this is too deep for us. Here faith must believe and adore and cry out, “Oh, the depths!”

Christ is eternally beloved by His Father in His office of mediator between God and man. To this office, He was designed from eternity. And as soon as sin entered and the breach between God and man was made, He entered on this office. In it He is God’s servant whom He upholds, His elect in whom His soul delights (Isa. 42:1). Under the name of

“Wisdom,” He speaks in Proverbs 8:22–31: “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.” And, after an elegant account of the work of creation, He adds that before anything was made and when all things were making, “then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.”

Here are adorable delights and rejoicings: the Father delighting in His Son; the Son delighting in the Father; yea, and the Son rejoicing in His people and in that earth they were to live on, though neither they nor it were as yet created. And why may not our faith take in the comfort of this thought, that these uttermost parts of the earth where we live and where the greatest harvest has been in these latter days were in Christ's heart and eye with delight from eternity! Christ the redeemer “was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:20). Yea, He is called in Revelation 13:8 “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” This high office of mediator the Father put Him in due to His love for and desire to glorify His Son (Heb. 5:4–5). In this office He always pleased His Father, and His Father witnessed to it often and in many ways. It should be a great encouragement to all who have business with Christ as mediator to consider how the Father delights in Him in this office. Salvation is given to a believer in Christ with as good will by the Father as the price of salvation was laid down by the Son. No man can please the Father better, nor so much, as by believing on the Son and by giving Him employment in His office of mediator and in His calling of saving sinners.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is eternally beloved of the Father as He is the head of His body, the church; as He is

the second Adam, the representative of all His people. I have spoken already of this at some length.

Christ was beloved of the Father in His lowest estate, and when dying. This is what is in the text. Christ was near His lowest when God asserted this love. He was going to the garden, to His agony there. He was there betrayed, apprehended, carried to judgment, condemned, put to death the next day, and buried the next evening. This was the depth of the eclipse on the sun of righteousness. Yet in all this the eternal love of the Father for Him did not cease.

When Christ first came into the world, we find what great joy there was on that account. An angel first published the good news to the shepherds, and then a multitude of the heavenly host sang a song of praise for it (Luke 2:9–14). The Father proclaimed Him on His coming as the object of heavenly worship: “When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6). There is no angel so high nor so great in power and might (2 Peter 2:11) but who must serve and worship the Son of God in His lowest and meanest appearance on earth. He was seen by angels (1 Tim. 3:16), and it was their duty, their glory, and their bliss to worship and serve Him. When Christ came into the world, He said, rejoicing, “A body thou hast prepared me. Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:5–7). And that will was to make a sacrifice of that body, which He offered with delight.

When He was baptized (Matt. 3:17), the Father, by a voice from the excellent glory (2 Peter 1:17), witnessed His love for His Son: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). In Luke 9:30–31, we have a special hint of the subject of the discourse that Moses and Elijah had with our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, who appeared in glory and spoke of the decease that He would accomplish

at Jerusalem. We would think, if it was not for this hint, that glorified saints who had come from heaven and were waiting on their Lord in His begun glory would have spoken of His approaching perfect glory rather than of His decease. But as that decease was the appointed way to His glory (Luke 24:26), so this tells us that Christ's death is a theme fitting for the most heavenly persons in their most exalted heavenly state. The song of the redeemed is principally on His death and its fruits (Rev. 5:9–12). As it is the root of all our salvation, so it should be the ground of all our songs of salvation.

But here an obvious objection rises. It is said that Christ was beloved of His Father in His lowest state. But what brought Him into this low state but His Father's anger? Did it not please Jehovah to bruise Him and to put Him to grief (Isa. 53:10)? How could this eternal love and His sore sufferings consist together?

I would premise some things more generally to remove this difficulty and then come closer to the matter. There is something among men required of God and practiced by them, and that is in parents correcting their children in love. It should always be so, but is not (Heb. 12:10). He tells us what is too common: that earthly parents chasten their children after their own pleasure or to vent their displeasure. Parents cannot distinguish between the child and the fault as they ought.

We have a greater instance in Abraham's dealing with Isaac at God's command (Gen. 22). Isaac was innocent, and Abraham loved him. Yet the Lord commanded him to offer him as a burnt offering. Now, the Lord did not command nor allow Abraham to abate anything of that love for his son that both nature and grace had planted in his heart toward Isaac. And no doubt that love continued in Abraham's heart in all his journey to the appointed place and in all the preparation he made for offering the commanded sacrifice. But Abraham

was a strong believer, and therefore was all obedience. His love for Isaac did not turn to hatred when he stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son (v. 10). But his love for Isaac shrunk up, as it were, to nothing through the strength of his faith and his readiness to obey the will of his God. Isaac's question to his father was an addition to Abraham's trial (v. 7). And Abraham's answer to it was a great act of his faith in his trial (v. 8).

Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" The instruments for the burnt offering were ready and seen. The wood was on Isaac's back, and the fire and the knife were in Abraham's hand—but no sacrifice was visible.

Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering" (v. 8). Little did Isaac think that he himself was the commanded sacrifice and to be sacrificed by his own father's hands—though, without doubt, Abraham afterward told Isaac about the command of God when he "built an altar on the place God had told him of, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood" (v. 9). And just as little did Abraham think of any other sacrifice than that of his son Isaac. But according to Hebrews 11:17–19, Abraham's faith acted on divine power that could raise Isaac to life again when Abraham had shed his blood and the wood and fire had burned his body. He was persuaded that as no command of God was to be disputed, so no promise of God would fail to be accomplished. And the issue of this trial was in the Lord's gracious acceptance of his obedience in stopping the execution of Isaac, substituting a ram in his stead, and in adding a divine oath to that promise of God on which Abraham's faith was so strongly fixed. Compare Genesis 22:11–19 with Hebrews 6:13–20, where we find that the grounds of Abraham's faith are common to all believers under

the new testament, whatever trembling and sinful shortcomings are with us in the acts and exercise of our faith.

So our Lord requires of His people in the case of suffering for Him: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). A positive hating of our relatives is forbidden to all by the law of nature and by the Word of God. To be without natural affection is a great sin (Rom. 1:31). But when the glory of Christ and His truth are so concerned (as often they are) that a man must either deny Christ or forego all for His sake, then he is called to testify by his choice, like Moses in Hebrews 11:24–26, that Christ is dearer to him than all. Thus the martyr said, when some spoke to him of the desolate state he was to leave his wife and children in, "God is my witness, that if I had all the riches of the world, I would cheerfully give it all to live with my wife and children; but now, when my testimony to Christ and His gospel are called for by my death, I as cheerfully leave all."

Regarding the Lord's dealing in love and yet in apparent anger with His people, we read, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19). "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). It is a common but sinful way of arguing for many Christians that they are not God's children because they are so corrected by Him. To question our state because of affliction or to conclude our state to be good because of prosperity and ease are equally false and foolish, though not equally dangerous, for it is far more dangerous to falsely conclude a good state when it is not the case than unbelievably to disturb a good state where it is. It is certain that the Lord loves His people with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3); that "His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting to them" (Ps. 103:17); and that

this love and mercy runs through and is mixed in with all His dealings with them. Yet how hardly is this owned by them!

Let us begin with the Lord's beginning to deal with them, to draw them to Himself, to bring them into Christ's chariot of salvation, the midst whereof is paved with love (Song 3:10). Does not the Lord appear at first to them as an enemy, not only declaring war against them but using His irresistible arms against them and His arrows to pierce their hearts (Ps. 45:5)? Little did Paul think of Christ's love to him when he fell on the earth, trembling and astonished (Acts 9:3–5). Yet afterward he well knew it and counted it as long as he lived the best day he ever saw.

Then, when the Lord has subdued men's hearts and given them rest in their souls, His yoke and His burden are laid on them (Matt. 11:28–29). Whatever is common to man (1 Cor. 10:13) or to a believer, they should lay their account with. The cross of suffering anything for Christ's sake is often laid on them, and always in love, yet it is judgment (1 Peter 4:17) and a fiery trial (v. 12). Many outward afflictions are laid on them. And let all Christians in this furnace say if they find it easy to believe His love for them when His hand presses them sorely.

Beyond these there is Satan's sieve of temptation (Luke 22:31). Can there be love in the Lord's letting the devil loose on one of His own children? Yes, the Lord did so with Job, with Paul (2 Cor. 12:7), yea, with Christ Himself (Matt. 4:3). But above all is the Lord's hiding His face and dealing as an enemy, and that for sin. When "his wrath is kindled but a little" (Ps. 2:12), and in the light and heat of that fire the fiery law (as it is called in Deut. 33:2) is read in the conscience, who can believe love in what looks so much like hell? Yet David did so (Ps. 116:3), and Jonah did so (Jonah 2:2–4). And after a life of fightings without and fears within (as 2 Cor. 7:5), when the Lord is to finish His work and design of love on His people,

then the last enemy is to be fought with (1 Cor. 15:26). Death, that to nature looks like the wages of sin, is made the door to glory. But how hard is it to believe it! He must have a strong faith who can call his own dying "sleeping in Jesus," as in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, and who can make use of Jacob's words concerning his sleeping place: "This is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:16–17). It is the great work and difficulty (and yet a duty) of Christianity to believe unseen and unfelt love in and under well-seen and well-felt distress. Sometimes the Lord joins them (as in 1 Thess. 1:6; 1 Peter 4:14), and then it is easy. But often the wrath is felt, and the love is hidden in the promise, and there only active faith can find it.

But all these instances are so far short of what we are speaking of that they afford very little light about this. Therefore, I would come nearer and offer a few things that may help direct your thoughts to a due reconciling of this eternal love the Father had for the Son with the hard service He put Him to as mediator.

1. It was the anger of an offended judge and lawgiver and not the anger of an offended father that smote Jesus Christ. Christ suffered. He was slain and died. And the bitterness of that low condition was from the justice and wrath of God that He felt in His soul. These were well expressed by a godly minister: "Christ's soul-sufferings were the soul of His sufferings," that is, the main and most bitter part of them. Yet in the depth of all these Christ was pleasing to His Father, and highly so: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again" (John 10:17).

2. This stroke of justice fell only on the man Christ in his human nature. His divine person was untouched and untouchable by His sufferings. Christ's body was the sacrifice. It was His soul and body that the sword of divine justice pierced. So this stroke was in some way but like a blow on a man's garment.

The divine person of the Son of God dwelling in flesh was neither reached nor reachable by the sword of divine justice, though the dignity of His divine person infinitely enhanced the merit of the suffering of the man Christ.

3. This stroke of divine justice on the man Christ was not for any fault of His own, for He had none, but for the sins of His people (Isa. 53:5–6). Christ's sinlessness in Himself and His dying for the sins of His people are fundamentals of the Christian religion. If He had had any sin of His own, He could not have been a fit sacrifice for the sins of others. If He had not died for our sins, all sinners must have died in and for their own sins. Now, proper, insupportable divine displeasure is for a person's own sins. This is the cup full of mixture (Ps. 75:8), and this is of wrath with wrath, and without mixture (Rev. 14:10)—that is, without any mixture of mercy with it. There is nothing but mere wrath in it. Of this cup all who die in their sins must drink. But He who died for the sins of others did not drink of it. It is true that all the wrath their sins deserved He drank of. But the sin deserving it was none of His own. If hard usage from men is lightened from this, as David found in Psalm 59:3 (“Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD”), and if a good conscience is a continual feast, then surely Christ had this in perfection in all His sufferings. He had a troubled soul, but a most quiet conscience in all. The soul may be troubled by the imputed sin of others, but conscience is never disquieted but for one's own sin. That Italian martyr understood this well and used it nobly, who, being asked why he was so merry at his approaching death when Christ Himself was in an agony before His death, answered that Christ sustained in His body all the sorrows and conflicts with death and hell due to us, and by His sufferings we are delivered from sorrow and fear of them all.

4. The Father knew the perfect sufficiency of His Son to bear all that was laid on Him. If it is an act of His grace on His people not to suffer them to be tempted above what they are able (1 Cor. 10:13), much more was it so in His dealing with Christ (Ps. 80:17; 89:19). He knew (what we cannot conceive) what a vast load of wrath this strong one could bear. None but Christ could stand before an angry God, could bear His wrath and satisfy justice. If I may use such a similitude, when the sword of justice was drawn against Christ and pierced through His soul and body, the Father knew well that His Son was so armed that He could not be hurt thereby. His divine nature and His Father's presence with Him (John 16:32) and the ineffable union between the Father and the Son were as armor of proof about the man Christ that, though justice slew Him, it did Him neither any wrong nor real hurt, whatever smart was in the stroke.

5. The Father knew the glorious victory that His Son would obtain in, by, and over all His sufferings—that, for suffering death, He would be crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9); that He would be highly exalted (Phil. 2:9). So what Christ was put through was but like a father's sending his son to a stormy sea and a dangerous voyage, from which he knew he would return safe and rich, or like a king's sending his son to war when he was sure he would conquer and return in triumph. Divine prescience is another thing in God's eye than angel or man can possibly think. And this was eminently in Christ's sufferings (Acts 2:23; 4:28).

6. There were great and glorious ends God had before Him in all the sufferings that Christ was put to endure—great glory to His grace, great glory to His Son, and a great salvation to His people, of which the Word is full. And all who read, hear, or think of Christ's death and sufferings, without regard

to the ends thereof, mind only a bare history and matter of fact, without any fruit thereby.

7. The Father loved the Son in dying and for dying, as in John 10:17–18. For Christ in dying offered up the highest and most acceptable worship and service to God that ever was offered. “Christ loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Eph. 5:2). And it is the sweet smell of this sacrifice that drowns, as it were, the stink of all the sins and sinners it was offered for. His death could not be a propitiation if it were not so.

The two greatest sins ever were these: the first is Adam’s first sin. All men’s sins since and Adam’s own sinning after (as countless he did for 930 years) were all the sinning of sinners; but his first sin was a sinless man’s sinning. Besides, it was the most damning sin that ever was or can be. The other great sin was the crucifying of the second Adam, the prince of life and the Lord of glory. It is not only charitably believed by the church of God in all ages that Adam obtained mercy, but it has also been proved by some hints in the Word that both Adam and Eve were believers. But for the other great sin, the murder of the Son of God, it is past doubt that many who were guilty of His blood were forgiven in the virtue of it. They were in a singular case. The cry of Christ’s blood defiled and disturbed their consciences (and most justly), and the voice of this blood sprinkling their consciences purged and pacified them.

Now, if to these great sins you add all the sins of all the sinners that were ever forgiven (and no man can count them or weigh them), conclude that there was something offered to God that was more pleasing to Him than all that sin was displeasing, and this was only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Abraham’s offering up his son at God’s command was highly pleasing to God, but it was but a type and shadow of Christ’s offering up Himself without spot to God (Heb. 9:14). Abraham,

in that action on the mount, was to be a priest; and his son, the sacrifice. But he only offered to be so, and the Lord accepted the will for the deed. But when Christ came to offer Himself, for all the perfect will He had to do it, the sacrifice must be offered, and was—and therein was performed the greatest, highest, and most acceptable worship to God. None was ever like it before, and none comparable to it, or will or can ever be. The praises of the glorified in heaven will be high and acceptable worship but are in no way to be compared with the worship that Christ paid and that God accepted in Christ's death.

So much for these words in themselves as they assert the eternal love of the Father for the Son. I will now speak to these words with respect to Christ's scope in using them. Herein observe three things:

First, our Lord Jesus Christ was now near to His lowest state. And He comforted Himself with the faith of His Father's eternal love. So must Christians do. Whatever the Lord brings you to, if it were to the brink of death, you must study to imitate Jesus Christ and take in the comfort of His everlasting love. For though the love the Father has for the Son and the love He has for believers differ vastly, yet they agree in this: that they are both eternal. And in this also: that the faith of this love is as supporting to His people as it was to Christ Himself. It is no wonder that believers have so little comfort, because they do not by faith seek out and dig up the right springs and wells of consolation and are so little exercised in drawing and drinking out of them. I am not saying that this spring of consolation, eternal love, is the first, plainest, and easiest to come at. But only that it is strongest when a believer can find it and use it.

Second, consider these words of Christ, as they are an argument backing His prayer and every petition in it. He calls God "Father," and rightly so, "because thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." "Glorify Thy Son, for Thou lovedst

Me. I pray for Thine and Mine, for Thou lovedst Me." How boldly may a believer pray when he has this argument in the hand of his faith to pray on: "Lord, hear me; for Thou hast loved me in Thy Son before the foundation of the world!"

Third, the main thing in the scope of these words of Christ is that the Father's love for Christ is the fountain of all good to His people. Christ is praying in this verse for the greatest good to His people, even for heaven. And this suit He urges on this argument: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." You would think that the argument would have run more plainly (but it would not have run so sweetly and so strongly) if it had been thus: "I will that they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory; for Thou hast loved them, and I have loved them, before the foundation of the world." But it is best as Christ used it: "for thou hast loved me."

On this truth, that the Father's love to Christ is the fountain of all good to His people, I would give a few examples:

Election, that sovereign purpose and grace of God, is given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9). We are "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Christ did not purchase the grace of election for us, yet there is no election but in Christ and in the sprinkling of His blood (1 Peter 1:2). The end is salvation. The way and means reaching to this end, faith and sanctification, are joined in this purpose (2 Thess. 2:13) and Christ's interest in it. 1 Thessalonians 5:9: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." And this salvation in Jesus Christ with eternal glory is obtained by the elect (2 Tim. 2:10).

The grace of redemption comes to us from the Father's love for His Son. This love sent Him to be redeemer and accepted the price of His life for His flock. Abstracting from His eternal counsel and covenant, God was at liberty to have

left man in the pit he had thrown himself into and to appoint no redeemer. But, not to trouble our heads with such unprofitable speculations, it is plain that the whole business of redemption by Christ was transacted before time, promised in time, and dispatched in the fullness of time, in love to Christ the redeemer, as well as in love to the redeemed.

Christ's intercession in heaven—whence is it so prevalent but from that great favor Christ stands in heaven in? It is from the love the Father has for the Son that Christ's desires for His people are so successful. It is on this love that Christ prays for heaven for His people in this text. And this whole prayer in this chapter was a mediatorial prayer of Christ when on earth, and the best copy we have of His intercession in heaven.

More particularly, the quickening of a sinner who is dead in sins and trespasses is from the Father's love for His Son. All the dispensations of converting grace on sinners are acts and fruits of the Father's love to Christ. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44–45). That is, "When he has been drawn and comes, I will welcome him and give a good account of him one day." And then, "I will raise him up at the last day."

But how does the Father draw men to Christ? By His way of teaching. "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God.' Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Till Christ's Father by His Spirit teaches a sinner and tells him the good news of Christ the Savior, he will not, he cannot come to Christ by faith—for divine teaching, at the same time, reveals Christ as the object of faith, works the grace of faith, and draws forth the act of faith.

We often complain (and not without cause, if we had a right frame of heart in it) that many sinners continue dead under the report of Christ in the gospel, and that conversion and the

quickenings of the dead are rarely heard of and seen. What is the cause of this rarity? It is not that sinners are without man's teaching, but because Christ's Father does not teach them; and till He does, they will never miss, value, or seek divine teaching. They seek but the shell of the gospel; they seek but the field where the treasure is hidden (Matthew 13:44); and they think that any minister can show them that. But finding the hidden treasure in the field, no apostle was ever able to teach a man to do. All they can say is that this enriching treasure is in the field of the gospel and nowhere else; but it is hidden in it, and till there comes light from heaven, you will never find it but will die as poor as your father Adam left you, and in a worse case than if you had never heard of this field.

But what should we do in this sad condition? Wait on the Lord, who has the times and seasons in His own hand. And while you wait, pray and cry for His teaching and make use of this argument of the Father's eternal love to the Son. Say, "As Thou lovest Thy Son, teach me, and many perishing sinners like me, to know Thy Son."

The justification and acceptance of a sinner with God comes only from the Father's love for His Son. We are accepted in that beloved (Eph. 1:6) and are translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13). All the love believers partake of from God is but a drop, a sprinkling of that love He has for Jesus Christ. Therefore our Lord says in this prayer, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (v. 23). And verse 26: "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." No love, no grace, no favor, comes from the Father immediately, but all in and by Jesus Christ the Mediator. Without a mediator, the Father does not [deal] with us when

He does us good; and with a mediator, we must not deal with God if we would please Him.

Believers are preserved in Jesus Christ in this accepted state (Jude 1). Everyone who is raised up by Christ is preserved as safely in a state of grace as Christ is in the state of glory. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 10:27–29; 14:19). The weakest lamb in Christ's flock who has heard the great and the good Shepherd's voice and follows Him, though feebly and with many fears, will have eternal life. And he will be kept by the power of God through faith till he possesses it (1 Peter 1:5). Christ's arm and His Father's are more than we can conceive, and yet no less than is needful to secure the weakest against the greatest dangers.

The bliss of glory in heaven is the joy of our Lord (Matt. 25:21, 23). All the eternal embraces of divine love they get there are on the account of the Father's love for the Son. It will then mainly be fulfilled what Christ promised: "At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

Application: How the Father's love to us in the Son and all the fruits of this marvelous love should endear Christ to us! How precious to us should all be! Should not all say, as one did, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" (Ps. 36:7)? Did ever a man see it by faith, did ever one taste that the Lord is gracious, did ever any hope for it who did not count it marvelous loving kindness, as it is called in Psalm 17:7 and 31:21? The love of such a God as He is to such vile creatures as we are, and this love flowing to us in such a channel as God's love for His own Son and streaming forth in all the blessings of grace and glory is a love that all who know it wonder at, and that all who taste it know best and wonder most at. Enjoying this love and admiring it are inseparable, both on earth in believers and in heaven in beholders. You have not

come under the warm beams of this love who do not stand astonished at its nature and greatness, and who do not find something of both the depth and blessedness of those words: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

Try to say this particularly of yourselves, and you will find its difficulty. If you attain to it by the spirit of faith, you will find its blessedness. Yea, what are all the blessed beholders and enjoyers of this love in heaven but a blessed company of wonderers at this love? They are in the midst of the ocean of this love (whereof a few drops tasted by them on earth made heaven begin for them), blessedly swimming, diving, drinking, and admiring. But it is only very little of what they get there and of what they do there that we do or can know while we are here. Yet, believers, do you receive any spiritual blessing? Is it not a lovely spring it flows from—the Father's love for His Son (Eph. 1:3)? Is it not a sweet name that you should by faith give to your pardon, to your sanctification, to the spirit of prayer, and to any fellowship with God: "This, that, and all and every good I obtain is all from the love of God in Jesus Christ my Lord"?

This way of conveyance proclaims that all is of free grace, and this way makes the blessings sure and sweet. Thankfulness for His unspeakable gift would rise higher and be purer and more constant if we would read the name of the Father's love for His Son written (as surely it always is, though not always read) on all our mercies. This would make a crumb from the master's table be earnestly begged when we are hungry. And it would make us, when we get it, prize it more than the greatest revenues of the wicked. This love of God in Christ is an ingredient in mercy that makes the mercy swell up to heaven. It is an ingredient in the bitterest cup of affliction that

not only prevents any poison apprehended to be in it (and what is more usual to our unbelief than to call God's medicine poison?) and promotes our health thereby; but it also cools the fiery furnace, sweetens it, and makes it the place of love and praise, as it was to the three children in Daniel 3:25.

Learn, Christians, to use this argument in Christ's prayer in your prayers also. You see that our Lord prays for His people on this argument: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Let your faith chime to this prayer, and say, "Father, I would be with Christ where He is, so that I may behold His glory that Thou hast given Him; for Thou didst love Him before the foundation of the world." You daily hear that you should pray to the Father in Christ's name. Now, what is that but to raise our faith and embolden our confidence with God, merely on the account of that high love the Father bears for the Son? Blessed is the believer who can plead with God on the argument of the Father's love for His Son, so that, though we have nothing in us that is lovely in God's sight; though we can do nothing to make ourselves acceptable or our desires successful; yea, though there is a cloud over God's love for us—yet we build all our hopes of acceptance and success, and these hopes strong and high, on this lovely and beloved one, Jesus Christ, and on the Father's love for Him.

Whatever you want of God you may ask, and ask it on the same grounds Christ prays for you on. You will say, "May everyone ask on this argument?" I answer, every believer may and ought; and if he is wise, he will. And if he pleads thus, he will prevail.

And you may ask, "But how may I know that I am a believer on Jesus Christ?" And I answer, the Spirit of Christ sometimes suddenly satisfies the doubting soul; and that is a great mercy. He shines on the promise and makes it bright. He shines on faith and makes it strong and active. He manifests Christ's

glory so that the heart cannot help but believe and love and know that it does so. But the common way and the way of our duty is to satisfy our hearts as to our being true believers on Christ by repeating the actions of faith on Him. I am not saying to believe that you believe. But I am saying believe on Jesus Christ, and you will know that you are believers on Him. First John 5:13: "These things have I written to you that believe on the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." And the spirit of faith in believers gives evidence to faith itself. By this Spirit, we know the things that are freely given us by God (1 Cor. 2:12), and faith is a special gift of God. First John 5:10 is of great extent: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." I dare be so bold as to say that there are few true believers who are in the lively exercise of faith in Christ, and, while in that exercise, but they are some way persuaded that they are believers, insofar that if Satan should say to the contrary, yea, or if the Lord Himself should seem to say to the contrary, yet they cannot deny that they are believers on Christ.

"How can this be?," you ask. It is from the sense and inward feeling of the workings of their hearts in dependence and trust on Jesus Christ for salvation. Is it not thus with you, Christians, whenever you are thoughtful about salvation; whenever you are terrified by the law; whenever Satan assaults you by the remembrance of your sins and ill-deservings; yea, whenever God writes bitter things against you and makes you own the iniquities of your youth or riper age? What do you do? Where do you go? Is it not always to Jesus Christ by faith? Every true believer can readily answer these three questions, which no unbeliever can:

1. What will you do in the day of visitation and in the desolation which will come from far?

2. To whom will you flee for help?

3. And where will you leave your glory (Isa. 10:3)?

Every believer can answer, "Come what desolation will, I know what to do. I know where to go for help, and where to leave my glory, even on Jesus Christ by faith." You have no other answer to give to the law of God condemning you, to the devil accusing you, and to your own conscience challenging you, but this: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. His Father, in love for Him and sinners, sent Him. He came and died in love for sinners. And I, on the good report of Him in the gospel, daily come to Him to be saved by Him and look for salvation in Him, by Him, and from Him. And all my sins, my unworthiness, my fears, and the sad grounds of these fears are all just so many cords to draw me more and more to Christ by faith and to bind me faster to Him. And if I am a believer on Him, I am one of those He prayed for in this chapter and in this verse: 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' If Christ prayed so for me, I may surely pray so for myself; for a better copy I cannot follow. If Christ prayed so for me, He was surely answered and the blessing will be given. And therefore I may firmly believe and patiently wait for the salvation of God. And I may also use the same argument for strengthening my faith that Christ used to enforce His suit, the eternal love of the Father for His Son."

This is indeed a great and marvelous salvation that God has provided for His people. Marvelous is the way, Jesus Christ; and that the gospel now declares. Marvelous is the beginning and progress of this salvation. A sinner must feel grace before he knows the grace of God in truth (Col. 1:6). He must have faith wrought in him and acted by him before he knows what believing to the saving of the soul is (Heb. 10:39). He must be

in heaven before he knows well what heaven is; yea, which is more strange, the believer must be in heaven before he knows perfectly the way to heaven. We know that Christ is the way. We know that we must enter into Him by faith, as He is the way, that we must walk in Him, abide in Him, and live on Him till we come home to His Father's house.

But how Christ became the way to heaven; how He is the new and living way; how He consecrated Himself as the way; how He was the beloved of the Father and yet was bruised with divine wrath at the same time; how Christ the living head draws dead lumps of hell and makes them lively members of His own body; how He knits and nourishes them by spiritual joints and bands (Col. 2:9) till He perfects them in Himself (Eph. 4:16; Col. 1:28); how He gives the last pull and drawing at death and receives them to Himself (John 14:2-3); what Christ is now doing in preparing a place for them; and what He will at last do in receiving them and presenting them to His Father—these and many such things are matters for our daily exercise in faith and hope and wonder.

Our main work while we are here and outside the veil is to be striving to get more and more into Christ by faith, and not only to get within the gates and walls of this city of refuge (the walls are salvation; and the gates, praise [Isa. 60:18]), but also to get into His palaces where He gives His love. "His love is better than wine" (Song 1:2). The taste of this love would quickly make all the wells of this world's consolation to be as tasteless and empty to us as they are in themselves. Unspeakably strong and sweet is that mortification and deadness to the world that is wrought in the believer by the shedding abroad of the love of God in his heart by the Holy Ghost. You live in an evil world. It will mock you and hate you, but do you pity it? A believer is a pitiful creature in the eyes of the ungodly, "looking at things that are not seen, and not looking at things

that are seen" (2 Cor. 4:18), despising this world and all things in it as a portion, and seeking an unseen and future glory in an unknown world to come. To build all our hopes of partaking and possessing it on an unseen Christ; to ground our faith on Him on a word from Him; to live and die on His promise; and to do those cheerfully—these are the glory of a Christian.

But this glory is turned into shame by the thoughts and reproaches of all unbelievers. But let the righteous stay on his way, and he who has clean hands will wax stronger and stronger (Job 17:9). Your path is as "the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). Pass through this world, believers in Jesus, liking nothing in it; caring for nothing in it; content and satisfied with nothing it can give; moved by nothing in it; neither much taken up with the much evil or the little good of it; and neither cast down with the frowns nor lifted up with the smiles of this vain deceitful world. Pass on and press forward for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). You have greater things to look to, greater things to fix your hearts and hope on than all this world—even to that blessed state when we will be with Christ where He is and will behold the glory that His Father has given Him, for the Father loved His Son and our Savior before the foundation of the world.