

DIRECTION SEVENTH.

THE SEVERAL PIECES OF THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

Third Piece—The Christian's Spiritual Shoe.

'And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace' (Eph. 6:15).

This verse presents us with the third piece of armour in the Christian's panoply—A SPIRITUAL SHOE, fitted to his foot, and to be worn by him, so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan. 'And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' We shall cast the words into distinct questions or inquiries, from the resolution of which will result the several points to be insisted on. **FIRST.** What is meant by the 'gospel.' **SECOND.** What is meant by 'peace,' and why it is attributed to 'the gospel.' **THIRD.** What the 'feet' here mentioned import, and what grace is intended by 'the preparation of the gospel of peace,' which here is compared to the shoe, and fitted for these feet.

DIRECTION VII.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[WHAT IS MEANT BY THE GOSPEL.]

What is meant by the gospel. Gospel, according to the notation of the original word, εὐαγγέλιον, signifies any good news, or joyful message. So, Jer. 20:15, 'Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad'—Septuagint, ὁ εὐαγγελισάμενος τῷ πατρὶ. But usually in Scripture, it is restrained, by way of excellency, to signify the doctrine of Christ, and salvation by him to poor sinners. 'I bring you good tidings,' said the angel to the shepherds, 'of great joy,' Luke 2:10. And, ver. 11, he addeth, 'unto you is born....a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' Thus it is taken in this place, and generally in the New Testament, and affords this note.

DOCTRINE. The revelation of Christ, and the grace of God through him, is without compare the best news, and the joyfulest tidings, that poor sinners can hear. It is such a message that no good news can come before it, nor no ill news follow. No good news can come before it, no, not from God himself to the creature. He cannot issue out any blessing to poor sinners till he hath shown mercy to their souls in Christ. 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us,' Ps. 67:1.

FIRST. God forgives and then he gives. Till he be merciful to pardon our sins through Christ, he cannot bless or look kindly on us sinners. All our enjoyments are but blessings in bullion, till gospel grace—pardon-
ing mercy—stamp, and make them current. God cannot so much as bear any good-will to us, till Christ makes peace for us; 'on earth peace, good-will toward men,' Luke 2:14. And what joy can a sinner take, though it were to hear of a kingdom befallen to him, if he may not have it with God's good-will?

SECOND. Again, no ill news can come after the glad tidings of the gospel, where believingly embraced. God's mercy in Christ alters the very property of all evils to the believer. All plagues and judgments that can

befall the creature in the world, when baptized in the stream of gospel-grace, receive a new name, come on a new errand, and have a new taste on the believer's palate, as the same water by running through some mine, gets a tang and a healing virtue, which before it had not. 'The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity,' Isa. 33:24. Observe, he doth not say 'They shall not be sick.' Gospel grace doth not exempt from afflictions, but 'they shall not say, I am sick.' they shall be so ravished with the joy of God's pardoning mercy, that they shall not complain of being sick. This or any other cross is too thin a veil to darken the joy of the other good news. This is so joyful a message which the gospel brings, that God would not have Adam long without it, but opened a crevice to let some beams of this light, that is so pleasant to behold, into his soul, amazed with the terror of God's presence. As he was turned out of paradise without it, so he had been turned into hell immediately; for such the world would have been to his guilty conscience. This is the news God used to tell his people of, on a design to comfort them and cheer them, when things went worst with them, and their affairs were at the lowest ebb, Isa. 7:15; Micah 5:5. This is the great secret which God whispers, by his Spirit, in the ear of those only [whom] he embraces with his special distinguishing love, Luke 10:21; I Cor. 2:12, so that it is made the sad sign of a soul marked out for hell, to have the gospel 'hid' from it, II Cor. 4:3. To wind up this in a few words, there meet all the properties of a joyful message in the glad tidings of the gospel.

[The FIVE PROPERTIES of a joyful message
found in the gospel.]

Five ingredients are desirable in a message, yea, must all conspire to fill up the joyfulness thereof into a redundancy.

First Property. A message to be joyful must be good. None rejoice to hear evil news. Joy is the dilation of the heart, whereby it goes forth to meet and welcome in what it desires; and this must needs be some good. Ill news is sure to find the heart shut against it, and to come before it is welcome.

Second Property. It must be some great good, or else it affects little. Affections are stirred according to the degrees of good or evil in the object presented. A thing we hear may be so inconsiderable, that it is no great odds how it goes, but if it be good, and that great also, of weighty importance, this causeth rejoicing proportionable. The greater the bell, the more strength is required to raise it. It must be a great good that raiseth great joy.

Third Property. This great good must intimately concern them that hear it. My meaning is, they must have propriety in it. For though we can rejoice to hear of some great good befallen another, yet it affects most when it is emptied into our own bosom. A sick man doth not feel the joy of another's recovery with the same advantage as he would do his own.

Fourth Property. It would much add to the joyfulness of the news if this were inauditum or insper-

atum—unheard of and unlooked for—when the tidings steal upon us by way of surprise. The farther our own ignorance or despair has set us off all thoughts of so great enjoyment, the more joy it brings with it when we hear the news of it. The joy of a poor swineherd's son, who never dreamed of a crown, would be greater at the news of such a thing conferred on him, than he whose birth invited him to look for it, yea, promised it him as his inheritance. Such a one's heart would but stand level to the place, and therefore could not be so ravished with it, as another, who lay so far below such a preferment.

Fifth Property. To fill up the joy of all these, it is most necessary that the news be true and certain, else all the joy soon leaks out. What great joy would it afford to hear of a kingdom befallen to a man, and the next day or month to hear all crossed again and prove false? Now, in the glad tidings of the gospel, all these do most happily meet together, to wind up the joy of the believing soul to the highest pin that the strings of his affections can possibly bear.

1. The news which the gospel hath in its mouth to tell us poor sinners is good. It speaks promises, and they are significations of some good intended by God for poor sinners. The law, that brings ill news to town. Threatenings are the lingua vernacula legis—the native language of the law. It can speak no other language to sinners but denunciations of evil to come upon them; but the gospel smiles on poor sinners, and plains the wrinkles that sit on the law's

brow, by proclaiming promises.

2. The news the gospel brings is as great as good. It was that the angel said, 'I bring you good tidings of great joy,' Luke 2:10. Great joy it must needs be, because it is all joy. The Lord Christ brings such news in his gospel as that he left nothing for any after him to add to it. If there be any good wanting in the tidings of the gospel, we find it elsewhere than in God, for in the covenant of the gospel he gives himself through Christ to the believing soul. Surely the apostle's argument will hold: 'All things are yours and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' I Cor. 3:22, 23. The gospel lays our pipes close to the fountain of goodness itself; and he, sure, must have all, that is united to him that hath that is all. Can any good news come to the glorified saints which heaven doth not afford them? In the gospel we have news of that glory. 'Jesus Christ, hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,' II Tim. 1:10. The sun in the firmament discovers only the lower world; *absignat cælum dum revelat terram*—O it hides heaven from us, while it shows the earth to us! But the gospel enlightens both at once—'Godliness hath the promise of the life that is now, and of that which is to come,' I Tim. 4:8.

3. The gospel doth not tell us news we are little concerned in—not what God has done for angels, but for us. 'Unto you,' saith the angel, 'is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord.' If charity made angels rejoice for our happiness, surely then, the benefit which is paid into our nature by it, gives a further pleasure to our joy at the hearing of it. It were strange that the messenger who only brings the news of some great empire to be devolved on a person should sing, and the prince to whom it falls should not be glad. And, as the gospel's glad tidings belong to man's nature, not to angels; so in particular, to thee, poor soul, whoever thou art, that embracest Christ in the arms of thy faith. A prince is a common good to all his kingdom—every subject, though never so mean, hath a part in him—and so is Christ to all believers. The promises are so laid that, like a well-drawn picture, they look on all that look on them by an eye of faith. The gospel's joy is thy joy, that hast but faith to receive it.

4. The glad tidings of the gospel were unheard of and unlooked for by the sons of men. Such news it brings as never could have entered into the heart of

man to conceive, till God unlocked the cabinet of his own good pleasure, and revealed the counsel of his will, wherein this mysterious price of love to fallen man lay hid far enough from the prying eye of the most quick-sighted angel in heaven, much more from man himself, who could read in his own guilty conscience within, and spell from the covenant without, now broken by him, nothing but his certain doom and damnation. So that the first gospel-sermon preached by God himself to Adam, anticipated all thoughts of such a thing intended to him. O who but one that hath really felt the terrors of an approaching hell in his despairing soul, can conceive how joyous the tidings of gospel mercy is to a poor soul, dwelling amidst the black thoughts of despair, and bordering on the very marches of the region of utter darkness! Story tells us of a nobleman of our nation, in King Henry VIII.'s reign, to whom a pardon was sent a few hours before he should have been beheaded, which, being not at all expected by him, did so transport him that he died for joy. And if the vessel of our nature be so weakly hooped that the wine of such an inferior joy breaks it, how then could it possibly be able to bear the full joy of the gospel tidings, which doth as far exceed this as the mercy of God doth the mercy of a mortal man, and as the deliverance from an eternal death in hell doth a deliverance from a temporary death, which is gone before the pain can well be felt?

5. The glad tidings of the gospel are certainly true. It is no flying report, cried up today, and liked to be crossed tomorrow—not news that is in every one's mouth, but none can tell whence it came, and who is the author of it; we have it from a good hand—God himself, to whom it is impossible to lie. He from heaven voucheth it—'This is my beloved Son: hear him,' Luke 9:35. What were all those miracles which Christ wrought but ratifications of the truth of the gospel? Those wretches that denied the truth of Christ's doctrine, were forced manytimes to acknowledge the divinity of his miracles, which is a pretty piece of nonsense, and declares the absurdity of their unbelief to all the world. The miracles were to the gospel as seals are to a writing. They could not deny God to be in the miracles, and yet they could not see him in the doctrine! As if God would set his seal to an untruth! Here, Christians, is that which fills up the joy of this good news the gospel brings—that we

may lay our lives upon the truth of it. It will never deceive any that lay the weight of their confidence on it. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' 1 Tim. 1:15. This bridge which the gospel lays over the gulf of God's wrath, for poor sinners to pass from their sins into the favour of God here, and [into the] kingdom of God hereafter, is supported with no other arches than the wisdom, power, mercy, and faithfulness of God; so that the believing soul needs not fear, till it sees these bow or break. It is called the 'everlasting gospel,' Rev. 14:6. When heaven and earth go to wreck, not the least iota or tittle of any promise of the gospel shall be buried in their ruins. 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you,' 1 Peter 1:25.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Claim of those who never heard the gospel on our compassion.]

Use First. Pity those that never heard word of this good news. Such there are in the world—whole nations, with whom the day is not yet broke, but a dismal night of ignorance and barbarism continues to be stretched over them—whose forlorn souls are under a continual massacre from the bloody butcher of hell! An easy conquest, God knows, that soul-fiend makes of them. He lays his cruel knife to their throats, and meets with no resistance, because he finds them fast asleep in ignorance—utterly destitute of that light which alone can discover a way to escape the hands of this destroyer. What heart, that ever tasted the sweetness of gospel grace, trembles not at their deplored state?—yea, doth not stand astonished at the difference of God's dispensations to them and us? 'Lord, why wilt thou manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?' God pardon the unmercifulness of our hearts, that we can weep no more over them. Truly we do not live so far from the Moors and Indians but we may—by not pitying of them, and earnest desiring their conversion—besmear ourselves with the guilt of their souls' blood, which is shed continually by the destroyer of mankind. O how seldom is their

miserable the companion of our sorrowful thoughts, and their conversion the subject of our prayers and desires! There have been, alas! in the world, more counsels how to ease them of their gold, than enrich them with the treasure of the gospel—how to get their land, than how to save their souls. But the time is coming, when winning souls will be found more honourable than conquering nations. Well, Christian, though thou canst not impart to them what God hath laid on thy trencher, yet, as thou sittest at the feast of the gospel, think of those poor souls, and that compassionately, who starve to death for want of that bread with which thou art fed unto eternal life. There is an opinion which some have lately taken up, that the heathens may spell Christ out of the sun, moon and stars. These may seem kinder than others have been to them; but I wish it doth not make them more cruel to them in the end—I mean by not praying so heartily for gospel light to arise among them, as those must needs do who believe them under a sad necessity of perishing without it. When a garrison is judged pretty well stored with provisions for its defence, it is an occasion that relief and succour comes the slower to it. And I wish Satan hath not such a design against those forlorn souls in this principle. If such a lesson were to be got by the stars, we should ere this have heard of some that had learned it. Indeed, I find a star led the wise men to Christ; but they had a heavenly preacher to open the text to them, or else they would never have understood it.

[Lamentation for the unkind welcome the gospel finds in the world.]

Use Second. A sad lamentation may be here taken up, that so good news should have such an ill welcome as the gospel commonly finds in the world. When the tidings were first told at Jerusalem of a Saviour being born, on would have thought—especially if we consider that the Scripture reckoning was now out for the birth of the Messias, and they big with the expectation of his coming—that all hearts should have leaped within them for joy at the news, to see their hopes so happily delivered and accomplished. But, behold, the clean contrary. Christ's coming proves matter of trouble and distaste to them. They take the alarm at his birth, as if an enemy, a destroyer

—not a Saviour—were landed in their coast; and as such, Herod goes out against him, and makes him flee the country. But possibly, though at present they stumble at the meanness of his birth and parentage, yet, when the rays of his divinity shall shame through his miracles, then they will religiously worship him when now they contemn; when he comes forth into his public ministry, opens his commission and shows his authority—yea, with his own lips tells the joyful message he brings from the Father unto the sons of men, then surely they will dearly love his person, and thankfully embrace, yea greedily drink in, the glad tidings of salvation which he preacheth to them. No; they persist in their cursed unbelief and obstinate rejecting of him. Though the Scripture, which they seemed to adore, bear so full a testimony for Christ that it accuseth them to their own consciences, yet they will have none of him. Christ tells them so much—‘Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,’ John 5:39, 40. Life they desired, yet will lose it rather than come to him for it.

And is the world now amended? Doth Christ in his gospel meet with any kinder usage at the hands of most? The note that Christ sings is still the same, ‘Come unto me, that ye may have life.’ The worst hurt Christ does poor souls that come unto him, is to put them into a state of life and salvation; and yet where is the person that likes the offer? O, it is other news that men generally listen after. This makes the exchange, the market-place, so full, and the church so thin and empty. Most expect to hear their best news from the world. They look upon the news of the gospel as foreign, and that which doth not so much concern them, at least at present. It is time enough, they think, to mind this, when they are going into another world. Alas! the gospel is not accommodated to their carnal desires. It tells them off no fields and vineyards that it hath to give. It invites them not with the gaieties of worldly honours and pleasures. Had Christ in his gospel but gratified the cravings of men’s lusts with a few promises for these things—though he had promised less for another world—the news would have gone down better with these sots, who had rather hear one prophecy of wine and strong drink, than [to hear] preach of heaven itself. Truly, there are but a

very few—and those sufficiently jeered for their pains—that like the message of the gospel so well as to receive it cordially into their hearts. If any one does but give entertainment to Christ, and it be known, what an alarm does it give to all his carnal neighbours! If they do not presently beset his house, as the Sodomite’s did Lot’s, yet do they set some brand of scorn upon him—yea, make account they have now reason enough to despise and hate him, how well soever they loved him before.

O what will God do with this degenerate age we live in! O England! England! I fear some sad judgment or other bodes for thee! If such glad tidings as the gospel brings be rejected, sad news cannot be far off—I cannot think of less than of a departing gospel. God never made such settlement of his gospel among any people but he could remove it from them. He comes but upon liking, and will he stay where he is not welcome? Who will that hath elsewhere to go? It is high time for the merchant to pack up and be gone when few or none will buy, nay, when instead of buying, they will not suffer him to be quiet in his shop, but throw stones at him, and dirt on his richest commodities. Do we not see the names of Christ’s faithful messengers bleeding at this day under the reproaches that fly so thick about their ears? Are not the most precious truths of the gospel almost covered with the mire and dirt of errors and blasphemies, which men of corrupt minds—set on work by the devil himself—have raked out of every filthy puddle and sink of old heretics and thrown on the face of Christ and his gospel! And where is the hand so kind as to wipe off that which they have thrown on? the heart so valiant for the truth as to stop these foul mouths from spitting their venom against Christ and his gospel? If anything be done of this kind, alas! it is so faintly, that they gather heart by it. Justice is so favourably sprinkled, like a few drops upon fire, that it rather increaseth the flame of their rage against the truth than quencheth it. A prince calls not home his ambassador for every affront that is offered him in the streets—only when he is affronted and can have no redress for the wrong.

Objection. But some may say, Though it cannot be denied that the gospel hath found very unkind entertainment by many among us, and especially of late years—since a spirit of error hath so sadly pre-

vailed in the land—yet, make us not worse than we are.’ There is, blessed be God, ‘a remnant of gracious souls yet to be found to whom Christ is precious—who gladly embrace the message of the gospel, and weep in secret for the contempt that is cast upon it by men of corrupt minds and profane hearts, and therefore we hope we are not in such imminent danger of losing the gospel as your fears suggest.’

Answer. If there were not such a sprinkling of saints among us, our case would indeed be desperate, *conclusum esset de nobis*—the shades of that dismal night would quickly be upon us. These are they that have held the gospel thus long among us. Christ had, as to his gospel presence, been gone ere this, had not these hung about his legs, and with their strong cries and prayers entreated his stay. But there are a few considerations as to these, which, seriously weighed, will not leave us without some tremblings of heart.

1. Consideration. Consider what little proportion, as to the number, I mean, do these that embrace the gospel bear with those that continue to reject it—those that desire to keep Christ among us with those that wish him gone and would gladly be rid of him. Were it put to the vote, would not they carry it by thousands of thousands that care not whether we have a gospel or not? And doth it not prophesy sadly when the odds are so great? In all the departures of God from a people, there were ever some holy ones mingled amongst the rout of sinners. Sardis had her ‘few names which had not defiled their garments;’ but yet the ‘candlestick was removed.’ All that they could get was a promise for themselves in particular—‘They shall walk with me in white,’ Rev. 3:4—but no protection for the church. God can pull down the house, and provide well for his saints also that he finds there. A few voices are easily drowned in the outcry of a multitude—a few pints of wine are hardly tasted in a tun of wine—and a little number of saints can do, sometimes, but little to the saving of a wretched people among whom they live. Possibly, as in a weak body, where the disease hath got the mastery, nature putting forth its *summum conatum*—its utmost strength—may keep life a while in the body—some days or weeks—but cannot long, without some help to evacuate the distemper; so a few saints, shut up in a degenerate age amongst an ungodly Christ-despising people, may a while prorogue the judgment, and

reprieve a while the life of such a people; but if there be no change made upon them for the better, ruin must needs break in upon them.

2. Consideration. Consider, of these few gracious ones found amongst us that embrace the gospel, how many are new converts—such, I mean, as the gospel hath of late days won to Christ. I am afraid you will find this little number of saints chiefly to consist of old disciples—such as were wrought upon many years since. Alas! the womb of the gospel hath been in a great measure shut up of late, as to the bringing forth of souls by a thorough solid work of conversion. Indeed, if they may pass for converts that baptize themselves into a new way and form of worship, or that begin their religion with a tenet and an opinion, we have more than a good many to show of these. But in this old age of England’s withered profession, how great a rarity is a sincere convert? We cannot deny but God is graciously pleased to bring the pangs of the new birth now and then upon some poor souls in our assemblies, that his despised servants may have his seal to confirm their ministry, and stop those mouths which are so scornfully opened against it; yet, alas! it is but here and there one. And doth not this prophesy sadly to this nation? I am sure, when we see a tree that used to stand thick with fruit no bring forth but little—may be an apple on this bough, and another on that—we look upon it as a dying tree. Leah comforted herself from her fruitfulness, that therefore her husband would love her and cleave to her, Gen. 29:34. May we not, on the contrary, fear that God will not love, but leave, a people when they grow barren under the means of grace? God threatens as much, ‘Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee,’ Jer. 6:8. And if God’s soul departs, then he is upon his remove as to his visible presence also. So indeed it follows, ‘lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.’ O my brethren, those golden days of the gospel are over when converts come flying as a cloud—as the doves to their windows in flocks. Now gospel news grow stale; few are taken with them. Though a kingdom hath much treasure and riches in it; yet, if trade cease, no new bullion comes in, nor merchandise be imported, it spends upon its old stock, and must needs in time decay. Our old store of saints—the treasure of their times—wears away apace, what will become of us if

no new ones come in their room? Alas! when our burials are more than our births, we must needs be on the losing hand. There is a sad list of holy names taken away from us; but where are they which are born to God? If the good go, and those which are left continue bad—yea, become worse and worse—we have reason to fear that God is clearing the ground, and making way for a judgment.

3. Consideration. Consider the unhappy contentions and divisions that are found among the people of God yet left upon the place: these prophesy sadly, the Lord knows. Contentions ever portend ill. The remarkable departures of God, recorded in Scripture, from the church of the Jews, found them woefully divided and crumbled into parties. And the Asian churches no less. Christ sets up the light of his gospel to walk and work by, not to fight and wrangle; and therefore it were no wonder at all if he should put it out, and so end the dispute. If these storms which have been of late years upon us, and are not yet off, had but made Christians, as that did the disciples, Mark 6:48, to ply their oar and lovingly row all one way, it had been happy. We might then have expected Christ to come walking towards us in mercy, and help us safe to land. But when we throw away the oar, and fall a scuffling in the ship, while the wind continues loud about us, truly we are more like to drive Christ from us than invite him to us, we are in a more probable way of sinking than saving the ship and ourselves in it.

[A word of exhortation to unbelievers
and also to believers.]

Use Third. A word of exhortation to you who have not closed with the terms of the gospel, and also to you who have—to believers and to unbelievers.

1. To unbelievers. Be persuaded to receive the message of the gospel kindly, believingly, into your hearts; it is the best news you can send back to heaven, as a gratulatory return, for the glad tidings that the gospel brings from thence. Thy embracing Christ preached to thee in the gospel, will be as welcome news to heaven, I can tell thee, as the tidings of Christ and salvation through him, can be to thee. 'There is joy in heaven' at the conversion of a sinner. Heaven soon rings of this. The angels that sang

Christ into the world, will not want a song when he is received into thy heart; for he came into the world for this end. Christ descended when he came into the world, but now he ascends. That was an act of his humiliation, this of his exaltation. The highest created throne that God can sit in, is the soul of a believer. No wonder then, that Christ calls all his friends to joy with him at a soul's return to him and reception of him, Luke 15:9. What joy is now in heaven upon this occasion, we may collect from the joy it drew from Christ when on earth. It was some great good news that could wring a smile then from Christ, or tune his spirit into a joyful note, who was 'a man of sorrows,' and indeed came into the world to be so. Yet when his disciples whom he had sent forth to preach the gospel, returned with news of some victorious success of their labours, 'in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father,' Luke 10:21. Of all the hours of his life, that is the hour wherein Christ would express his joy; which, with the care of the Spirit to record this passage in the history of Christ's life, shows that Christ had an especial design in that expression of his joy at that time. And what could it be, but to let us know how much his heart was set upon this work of saving souls? and that, when he should be gone to heaven, if we meant to send any joyful news to him thither, it should be of the prosperous and victorious success the gospel hath over our hearts. This, this which could make him rejoice in the midst of all his sorrows here on earth, must needs be more joyous to him in heaven now, where he hath no bitterness from his own sufferings—which are all healed, past, and gone—to mingle with the joy of this news. And, if the kind reception of the gospel be such joyful news to him, you may easily conceive how distasteful the rejecting of it is to him. As he rejoiced in spirit to hear the gospel prevailed; so he cannot but be angry when it meets with a repulse from the unbelieving world. We find, Luke 14:21 'the master of the house'—that is Christ—'angry,' when his servants, sent to invite the guests—that is, preach the gospel—return with a denial from those that were bidden (for so their mannerly excuses were interpreted by Christ), yea, so angry, that he claps a fearful doom upon them—'not one of those which were bidden shall taste of my supper,' ver. 24. God can least bear any contempt cast upon his grace. The Jews, though

they had many grievous calamities which befell them for their idolatries and other sins, yet never any like that which the rejecting Christ brought upon them. Under those they relented, but under this they hardened. They would not come when the supper was on the table; and therefore the cloth is drawn, and they go supperless to bed, and die in their sins. While they shut the door of their hearts against Christ, this padlock, as I may so call it, of judiciary impenitence is fastened to it. Christ needs take no other revenge on a soul for its refusing him, to make it miserable to the height, than to condemn such a one to have its own desire. Christ thou wilt not, Christ therefore thou shalt not have. O unhappy soul thou! that hast offers of Christ, but diest without Christ! Thou goest with thy full lading to damnation. None sink so deep in hell, as those that fall into it with a stumble at Christ. That gospel which brings now good news, will, when thou shalt have a repetition sermon of it at the great day, bring the heaviest tidings with it that ever thy ears heard.

2. To believers. You who have entertained the message of the gospel, rejoice at the news. Glad tidings and sad hearts do not well together. When we see one heavy and sorrowful, we ask him, what ill news he hath heard. Christian, what ill news hath Christ brought from heaven with him, that makes thee walk with thy folded arms and pensive countenance? Ps. 132:16. To see a wicked man merry and jocund, or a Christian sad and dumpish, is alike uncomely. 'A feast is made for laughter,' saith Solomon, Ecc. 10:19. I am sure God intended his people's joy in the feast of the gospel. Mourners are not to sit at God's table, Deut. 26. Truly the saint's heaviness reflects unkindly upon God himself. We do not commend his cheer, if it doth not cheer us. What saith the world? The Christian's life is but a melancholy walk. Sure, thinks the carnal wretch, it is a dry feast they sit at, where so little wine of joy is drunk. And wilt thou confirm them in this their opinion, Christian? Shall they have an example to produce Christ and his word, which promise peace and joy to all that will come to this feast? O God forbid that thy conversation, wherein thou art to 'hold forth the word of life'—to live in the eyes of the world—and which ought to be as a comment or gloss upon the word, to clear up the truth and reality of it to others—forbid

that this should so disagree with the text, as to make the gladsome tidings spoken of in it, more disputed and questioned in the thoughts of the unbelieving world than before. It is an error, I confess, and that a gross one, which the Papists teach—that we cannot know the Scriptures to be the word of God, but by the testimony of the church; yet it is none to say, that a practical testimony from the saints' lives hath great authority over the consciences of men, to convince them of the truth of the gospel. Now they will believe it is good news indeed the gospel brings, when they can read it in your cheerful lives. But when they observe Christians sad with this cup of salvation in their hands, truly they suspect the wine in it is not so good as the preachers commend it to them for. Should men see all that trade to the Indies come home poorer than they went, it would be hard to persuade others to venture thither, for all the golden mountains said to be there. O Christians, let the world see that you are not losers in your joy since you have been acquainted with the gospel. Give not them cause to think by your uncomfortable walking, that when they return Christians, they must bid all joy farewell and resolve to spend their days in a house of mourning.

Is the gospel a message of glad tidings? Do not then for shame, Christian, run on the world's score by taking up any of its carnal joy; thou needest not go out of God's house to be merry. Here is joy enough in the glad tidings of the gospel, more than thou canst spend, though thou shouldst live at a higher rate than thou dost or canst here on earth. Abraham would not take so much as 'thread,' or shoe-latchet' from the king of Sodom, lest he should say that he made Abraham rich, Gen. 14:23. A Christian should deny himself of the world's joy and delights, lest they say, These Christians draw their joy out of our cistern. The channel is cut out by the Spirit of God, in which he would have his saints' joy to run. 'If any be merry, let him sing psalms.' Let the subject of his mirth be spiritual; as, on the other hand, if he be sick, let him pray, James 5:14. A spiritual vent is given to both affections of sorrow and joy. *Aliter ludit ganeo, aliter princeps*—a prince's recreation must not be like a ruffian's. No more a Christian's joy like the carnal man's. If ever there was need to call upon Christians to feed the lamp of their joy with spiritual fuel, holy oil, that drops from a gospel pipe, now the time is,

wherein professors do symbolize with the world in their outward bravery, junketings, fashions, pastimes, and are so kind to the flesh in allowing of, yea in pleading so much for, a carnal liberty in these things, that shows too plainly that the spiritual joy to be drawn out of these wells of salvation does not satisfy them; or else they would not make up their draught from this puddle-water, which was wont to be thirsted after only by those that had never drunk of Christ's cup. O what is the reason for those, who would pass for Christians, forsake this pure wine of gospel joy, for the sophisticated stuff which this whore the world presents in her golden cup to them? Is it because the gladsome message of the gospel is grown stale, and so its joy—which once sparkled in the preaching of it, as generous wine doth in the cup, and cheered the hearts of believers with strong consolations—hath now lost its spirits? or can that pure stream of spiritual joy, which hath run so long through the hearts and lives of the saints in so many generations, with our mingling with the brackish water of the world's sensual pleasures, at last fall in with them, and be content to lose its own divine nature and sweetness in such a sink? O no! The gospel is the same it was; the joy it brings as sweet and brisk, as spiritual and pure, as ever it was, and will be as long as God and Christ continue to be the same, out of whose bosom of love it first flowed, and is still fed; but the professors of this gospel now, are not the same with those holy men and women of primitive times. The world grows old, and men's affections with it chill and become cold. We have not our taste so lively, nor our spirits so chaste and pure, to relish the heavenly viands dished forth in the gospel. The cheer is as good as ever, but the guests are worse. We are grown debauched in our judgments, and corrupt in our principles; no wonder then if carnal in our joys. Error is a whore, it takes away the heart from Christ and his spiritual joys. The head once distempered soon affects the heart, and, by dropping the malignity of its principles upon it, poisons it with carnal affections; and carnal affections cannot fare with any other than gross and carnal joys. Here, here is the root of the misery of our times. Hath not, think you, the devil played his game cunningly among us, who, by his instruments—transforming themselves into the likeness of angels of light—could first raise so many

credulous souls into a fond expectation of higher attainments in grace and comfort from their new pretended light, than ever yet the saints were acquainted with, and then at last make them fall so low, be so reasonable, or rather unreasonable, as to accept such sensual pleasures and joys as this world can afford, in full payment for all the glorious things he promised them? Well, sirs, this I hope will make some love the gospel the more, and stick closer to it as long as they live.

O Christians! bless God for the glad tidings of the gospel; and never lend an ear to him that would be telling you other news, except you mean to part with truth to purchase a lie. Yea, let it make you careful to draw all your comfort and joy from the gospel's breast. When a carnal heart would be merry, he doth not take the Bible down to read in that. He doth not go into the company of the promises, and walk in the meditation of them. It brings no joy to him to think of Christ or heaven. No, he takes down a play-book, may be; seeks some jovial company; goes to the exchange or market, to hear what news he can meet with. Every one, as his haunt lies; but still it is from the world he expects his joy. And now where lies thy road, Christian? whither doth thy soul lead thee for thy joy? Dost thou not go to the word, and read there what Christ has done for thee on earth, and is doing for thee in heaven? Is not the throne of grace the exchange, to which thou resortest for good news from that far country, heaven, where all thy estate lies, and thy best friends live? Art thou not listening what promise he will speak peace from to thy soul? If so, thou hast not thy name for naught, thou art a Christian indeed. 'True students,' saith Erasmus, 'that love their book indeed, when they have wearied their spirits with study, can recreate them again with study, by making a diversion from that which is severe and knotty, to some more facile and pleasant subject.'¹ Thus the true Christian, when his spirits are worn and wasted in the severer exercises of Christianity, such as are fasting and prayer, wherein he afflicts both body and soul for his sins, then can he

1. Qui litteris addicti sumus, saith Erasmus, animi lassitudinem à studiis gravioribus contractam, ab iisdem studiis, sed amœnioribus recreamus.

recover them at the feast of God's love in Christ, where he sees his water turned into wine, and the tears that even now his sins covered his face with, all washed off with the blood of Christ. When his soul is struck into a fear and trembling with the consideration of the justice of God, and the terror of his threat-

enings and judgments for sin, then the meditation of the sweet promises of the gospel recreate and revive him; so that, in the same word where he meets with his wound, he finds his healing; where he hath his sorrow, there also he receives his joy.

DIRECTION VII.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY PEACE.]

The second inquiry follows, viz.—What peace is here meant that is attributed to the gospel. Peace is a comprehensive word. 'We looked for peace,' saith the prophet, 'but no good came,' Jer. 8:15. Peace brings, and carries away again with it, all good, as the sun doth light, to and from the world. When Christ would to the utmost express how well he wished his disciples, he wraps up all the happiness which his large heart could bestow on them in this blessing of peace—'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,' John 14:27. Now, take peace in its greatest latitude, if not spurious, and it will be found to grow upon this gospel-root. So that we shall lay the conclusion in general terms.

DOCTRINE. True peace is the blessing of the gospel, and only of the gospel. This will appear in the several kinds of peace, which may be sorted into this FOURFOLD division:—FIRST. Peace with God which we may call peace of reconciliation. SECOND. Peace with ourselves, or peace of conscience. THIRD. Peace with one another, or peace of love and unity. FOURTH. Peace with the other creatures, even the most hurtful, which may be called a peace of indemnity and service. Let us begin, where all the others begin, with peace of reconciliation with God. For when man fell out with God, he fell out with himself, and all the world besides; and he can never come to be at peace with these, till his peace be made with God. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*—a tranquil God tranquilizes all things.

FIRST KIND OF PEACE.

[PEACE WITH GOD the blessing of the gospel.]

Peace with God we may call peace of reconciliation; and peace of reconciliation with God is the blessing of the gospel. Three things are here to be done in prosecution of the point.

FIRST. I shall show you that there is a quarrel depending between God and the sons of men. SECOND. I shall show you that the gospel, and only the gospel, takes this up, and makes peace betwixt God and man; therefore called the gospel of peace. THIRD. I shall show you why God conveys this second piece of reconciliation into the world in this way, and by this

method.

[Need for peace with God.]

FIRST. I shall show you there is a quarrel depending betwixt God and the sons of men. Open acts of hostility done by one nation against another proclaim there is a war commenced. Now, such acts of hostility pass betwixt God and man. Bullets fly quickly to and fro on either hand. Man, he lets fly against God—though, against his will, he shoots short—whole volleys of sins and impieties. The best saints acknowledge thus much of themselves, before converting grace took them off. 'We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving

divers lusts and pleasures,' Titus 3:3. Mark the last words, 'serving lusts and pleasures.' They were in pay to sin, willing to fight against God, and side with this his only enemy. Not a faculty of the soul or member of the body of an unconverted man which is not in arms against him. 'The carnal mind,' saith the apostle, 'is enmity against God,' Rom. 8:7. And if there be war in the mind, to be sure there can be no peace in the members—inferior faculties, I mean—of the soul, which are commanded all by it. Indeed, we are by nature worst in our best part; the enmity against God is chiefly seated in the superior faculties of the soul. As in armies, the common soldiery are wholly taken up with the booty and spoil they get by the war, without much minding one side or other, but the more principal officers, especially the princes or general, go into the field full of enmity against them that oppose them; so the inferior faculties seek only satisfaction to their sensual appetite in the booty that sin affords, but the superior faculties of the mind, these come forth more directly against God, and oppose his sovereignty; yea, if it could lay a plot effectually to take away the life of God himself, there is enmity enough in the carnal mind to put it in execution.

And as man is in arms against God, so is he against man. 'God is angry with the wicked every day;...he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath also prepared for him the instruments of his death,' Ps. 7:11-13. God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate Adam, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and as against such, he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword, to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from heaven daily in the judgements executed upon sinners, and those, many of them, but 'of a span long'—before they can show what nature they have by actual sin—yet crushed to death by God's righteous foot, only for the viperous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets its foot, there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul and member of body are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath its portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over; inside and outside, soul and body, written all

with woes and curses so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline or add to what God hath written.

In a word, so fiery is the Lord's wrath against sinful man, that all the creatures share with him in it. Though God takes his aim at man, and levels his arrows primarily at his very heart, yet as they go they slant upon the creature. God's curse blasts the whole creation for man's sake; and so he pays him some of his misery from the hand of those creatures which were primarily ordained to minister to him in his happy estate, yea, contribute some drops to the filling of his cup. As an enraged army makes spoil and havoc of all in their enemies' land—destroys their provision, stops or poisons their waters, burns up their houses, and lets out his fury on all his hand comes at—truly thus God plagues man in every creature, not one escapes his hand. The very bread we eat, water we drink, and air we breathe in, are poisoned with the curse of God; of which they who live longest die at last. All these, however, are no more to hell than the few files of men in a forlorn² to the whole body of an army. God doth but skirmish with sinners here, by some small parties of judgments, sent out to let them know they have an enemy alive, that observes their motions, takes the alarm their sins give him, and can be too hard for them when he pleaseth. But it is in hell where he falls on with his whole power. There sinners 'shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,' II Thes. 1:9. And so much for the first, that there is a quarrel between God and man: the second follows.

[The gospel effects the peace needed.]

SECOND. I shall show you that the gospel, and only the gospel, takes this quarrel up, and makes peace between God and man:—therefore called the 'gospel of peace.' This will appear in two particulars. First. The gospel presents us with the articles of peace which God offers graciously to treat upon with the

2. Forlorn — a small group of soldiers detached from the main group for a very dangerous mission; with very little chance of success. From Webster's.

children of men, and this none but the gospel doth. Second. The gospel, preached and published, is the great instrument of God to effect this peace thus offered.

First. The gospel presents us with the articles of peace which God graciously offers to treat and conclude an inviolable peace upon, with rebellious man. In it we have the whole method which God laid in his own thoughts from eternity of reconciling poor sinners to himself. The gospel, what is it but God's heart in print? The precious promises of the gospel, what are they but heaven's court-rolls translated into the creature's language? In them are exposed to the view of our faith all the counsels and purposes of love and mercy which were concluded on by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the recovery of lost man by Jesus Christ, who was sent as heaven's plenipotentiary to earth, fully empowered and enabled, not only by preaching to treat of a peace as desired on God's part to be concluded between God and man, but by the purchase of his death to procure a peace, and by his Spirit to seal and ratify the same to all those who—believing the credential letters which God sent with him in the miracles wrought by him, and especially the testimony which the Scripture gives of him—do by a faith unfeigned receive him into their souls as their only Lord and Saviour, Gal. 3:23. This is such a notion as is not to be learned elsewhere. A deep silence we find concerning it in Aristotle and Tully. They cannot tell us how a poor sinner may be at peace with God. Nothing of this is to be spelled from the covenant God made with Adam. That shuts the sinner up in a dark dungeon of despair—bids him look for nothing but what the wrath of a just God can measure out to him. Thus the guilty creature is surrounded on every side as with a deluge of wrath—no hope nor help to be heard of—till the gospel, like the dove, brings the olive branch of peace, and tells him the tide is turned, and that flood of wrath which was poured on man for his sin is now fallen into another channel, even upon Christ, who was 'made a curse for us,' and hath not only drunk of the brook that lay in the way and hindered our passage to God, but hath drunk it off; so that where a sea was now appears dry land, a safe and fair causeway, called, 'a living way,' Heb. 10:20, by which every truly repenting and believing sinner may pass without any danger from the justice

of God now appeased into the love and favor of God. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' Rom. 5:1. We are entirely beholden to the gospel for the discovery of this secret, which the apostle solemnly acknowledgeth, where Christ is said to bring 'life and immortality to light by the gospel,' II Tim. 1:10. It lay hid in the womb of God's purpose, till the gospel arose, and let us into the knowledge of it, as the light of the sun reveals to the eye what was before, but what could not be seen without its light; and therefore, it is not only called 'a living way,' but 'a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us,' in the place forementioned—so 'new,' that the heart of man never was acquainted with one thought of it, till the gospel opens it, according to that of Isa. 42:16, 'I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known.'

Second. The gospel, published and preached, is the great instrument of God to effect this peace. Before peace is concluded betwixt God and the creature, both must be agreed; as God to pardon, so the sinner to accept and embrace peace upon God's own terms. But how shall this be done? The heart of man is so deeply rooted in its enmity against God, that it requires a strength to pluck up this equal with that which tears up mountains, and carries rocks from one place to another. The gospel preached is the instrument which God useth for the effecting of it. 'I am not ashamed,' saith the apostle, 'of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation,' Rom. 1:16. It is the chariot wherein the Spirit rides victoriously when he makes his entrance into the hearts of man—called therefore 'the ministration of the Spirit,' II Cor. 3:8. He fashions anew the heart, as he framed the world at first, with a word speaking. This is the day of God's 'power,' wherein he makes his people 'willing'—power indeed, to make those that had the seeds of war sown in their very natures against God willing to be friends with him. Unheard-of power! As if the beating of a drum should carry such a charm along with its sound as to make those on the enemy's side upon the hearing of it to throw down their arms, and seek peace at his hand against whom they even now took the field with great rage and fury. Such a secret power accompanies the gospel. It strikes many times not only the sinner's sword out of his hand

while it is stretched out against God, but the enmity out of his heart, and brings the stoutest rebel upon his knee, humbly to crave the benefit of the articles of peace published in the gospel. It makes sinners so pliant and tractable to the call of God in the gospel, that they on a sudden, upon the hearing of a gospel sermon, forget their old natural affections which they have had to their beloved lusts, and leap out of their embraces with indignation, lest they should keep God and them at odds one moment longer. Now follows the third.

[Why God effects peace by the gospel.]

THIRD. Why doth God convey this peace of reconciliation unto the sons of men in this way and by this method? or, in plainer terms, why doth God chose to reconcile poor sinners to himself by Christ? For this is the peace which the gospel proclaims, Col. 1:20, 'And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself;' and, ver. 21, 22, 'and you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouceable in his sight.'

But let us reply. They are too bold with God who say that he could not find out another way. Who can tell that, except God himself had told him so? Alas! how unmeet is the short line of our created understanding for such a daring attempt as to fathom the unsearchableness of God's omnipotent wisdom!—to determine what God can, and what he cannot do! But we may say, and not forget to revere the Majesty of heaven, that the wisdom of God could not have laid the method of salvation more advantageous to the exalting of his own glorious name, and his poor creatures' happiness, than in this expedient of reconciling them to himself by Christ our great Peacemaker. This transaction hath in it a happy temperament to solve all the difficulties on either hand; and, for its mysterious contrivance, it exceeds the workmanship which God put forth in making this exterior world—though in its kind so perfect and so glorious that the least creature tells its maker to be a Deity, and puts the atheist to shame in his own conscience that will not believe so; yet, I say, the plan of recon-

ciliation exceeds this goodly frame of heaven and earth as far as the watch itself doth the case which covers it. Indeed, God intended, by this way of reconciling poor sinners to himself, to make work for angels and saints to admire the mystery of his wisdom, power, and love therein, to everlasting.

O, when they shall all meet together in heaven, and there have the whole counsel of God unfolded to them!—when they shall behold what seas were dried up, and what rocks of creature impossibilities digged through, by the omnipotent wisdom and love of God, before a sinner's peace could be obtained, and then behold the work, notwithstanding all this, to be effected and brought to a happy perfection—O how will they be swallowed up in adoring the abyss of his wisdom, who laid the platform of all this according to the eternal counsel of his own will! Surely the sun doth not so much exceed the strength of our mortal eyes as the glory of this will their understandings from ever fully comprehending it. This, this is the piece which God drew on purpose, for its rare workmanship, to beautify heaven itself withal. When Christ returned to heaven he carried none of this world's rarities with him—not its silver and gold, not crowns and diadems, which here men venture their lives, yea part with their souls, so prodigally for. Alas! what are these, and the whole pride and gallantry of this world, to heaven? That which it glories most of, suits heaven no better than the beggar's dish and scraps do a prince's table; or the patched, tattered coat of the one, the wardrobe of the other. No, the Lord Christ came on a higher design than this to earth. The enterprise he undertook to achieve was to negotiate, yea effect, a peace betwixt God and his rebel creature man, that had by his revolt incurred his just wrath and vengeance. This was a work that became God himself so well to engage in, that he thought none high and worthy enough to be trusted with the transacting of it beneath his only Son, who stayed here but while he had brought his negotiation to a happy period, and then carried the joyful tidings of its being finished back with him to heaven, which made his return infinitely welcome to his Father, and all the glorious inhabitants of heaven, his attendants. But I shall proceed to give some more particular answer to the question propounded.

[Particular reasons why God adopts
the method of reconciliation by the gospel.]

Reason First. God lays this method of reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, that he might give the deepest testimony of his perfect hatred to sin in that very act wherein he expresseth the highest love and mercy to sinners. No act of mercy and love like that of pardoning sin. To receive a reconciled sinner into heaven is not so great an advance as to take a rebel into a state of favour and reconciliation. The terms here are infinitely wider. There is reason to expect the one, none to look for the other. It is pure mercy to pardon, but truth, being pardoned, to save, Micah 7:19, 20. Well, when God puts forth this very act, he will have the creature see his hatred to sin written upon the face of that love he shows to the sinner. And truly this was but needful, if we consider how hard it is for our corrupt hearts to conceive of God's mercy without some dishonourable reflection upon his holiness. 'I kept silence,' saith God, Ps. 50:21. And what inference doth the wicked draw from thence? 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,' that is, 'thou thoughtest I liked sin as well as thyself.' Now, if so plain and easy a text as God's forbearing mercy be wrested, and a false gloss, so repugnant, not only to the end of God therein, but to the holy nature of God, imposed, how much more subject is forgiving mercy—that is so far superlative to that, and infinitely more luscious to the sinner's palate—to be abused? Some men gaze so long on this pleasing object that they are not willing to look off, and see any other attribute of God. Now, in this way of reconciling himself to sinners by Christ, he hath given such an argument to convince sinners that he is an implacable hater of sin, as hath not its fellow. It is true, every threat in the Bible tells us that sin finds no favour in God's heart; the guilty consciences of men, that hunt them home, and follow them into their own bosoms, continually yelling and crying damnation in their ears; the remarkable judgments which now and then take hold of sinners in this world; and much more the furnace which is heating for them in another world, show abundantly how hot and burning God's heart within him is in wrath against sin. But, when we see him run upon his Son, and lay the envenomed knife of his wrath to his throat, yea, thrust

it into his very heart, and there let it stick—for all the supplications and prayers which in his bitter agonies he offered up to his Father, 'with strong crying and tears'—without the least sparing of him, till he had forced his life, in a throng of sad groans and sighs, out of his body, and therewith paid justice the full debt, which he had, as man's surety, undertaken to discharge—this, this I say, doth give us a greater advantage to conceive of God's hatred to sin, than if we could stand in a place to see what entertainment the damned find in hell, and at once behold all the torments they endure. Alas! their backs are not broad enough to bear the whole weight of God's wrath at once—it being infinite and they finite, which, if they could, we would not find them lying in that prison for nonpayment. But behold one here who had the whole curse of sin at once upon his back. Indeed, their sufferings are infinite extensivè—extensively, because everlasting; but his were infinite intensivè—intensively. He paid in one sum what they shall be ever paying, and yet never come to the last farthing of. 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him,' Isa. 53:5. 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,' ver. 6. Or [as it is in the margin], 'he hath made the iniquity of us all to meet in him.' The whole curse met in him, as all streams do in the sea—a virtual collection of all the threatenings denounced against sin, and all laid on him. And now, take but one step more, and consider in how near relation Christ stood to God, as also the infinite and unspeakable love with which this relation was filled, and mutually endeared on each hand, and this at the very same time when he ascended the stage for this bloody tragedy to be acted on him in; and, I think, that you are at the highest stair the word of God can lead you to ascend by, into the meditation of this subject.

Should you see a father that has but one only son, and can have no more, make him his mittimus to prison; come into court himself, and sit judge upon his life; and with his own lips pass sentence of death upon him, and order that it be executed with the most exquisite torments that may be, yea, go to the place himself, and with his own eyes, and those not full of water, as mourning for his death, but full of fire and fury—yea, a countenance in every way so set as might tell all that see it, the man took pleasure in his child's death;—should you see this, you would say, Surely he

bitterly hates his son, or the sin his son hath committed. This you see in God the Father towards his Son. It was he, more than men or devils, that procured his death. Christ took notice of this, that the warrant for his death had his Father's hand and seal to it. 'Shall I not drink of the cup my Father gives me?' Yea, he stands by and rejoiceth in it. His blood was the wine that made glad the heart of God—'It pleased the Lord to bruise him,' Isa. 53:10. When God corrects a saint he doth it, in a manner, unwillingly; but when Christ suffers, it pleaseth him; and not this from want of love in his heart to Christ, nor that any disobedience in Christ had hardened his Father's against him—for he never displeased him—but from that hatred he had to sin, and from zeal to exalt his mercy towards sinners, by satisfying his justice on his Son.

Reason Second. God effected our peace by Christ, that he might for ever hide pride from his saints' eyes. Pride was the stone on which both angels and men stumbled and fell. In man's recovery, therefore, he will roll that stone, as far as may be, out of the way—he will lay that knife aside with which man did himself the mischief. And that he may do this, he transacts the whole business by Christ for them. Man's project was to cut off the entail of his obedience to God, and set up for himself as a free and absolute prince, without holding upon his Maker. A strange plot! for to effect this he must first have thrown away that being which God gave him, and, by self-creation—if such a thing had been possible—have bestowed a new one upon himself; then, indeed, and not till then, he might have had his will. But alas! his pride to be what he could not, lost him what he had, and still might have, enjoyed. Yet how foolish soever it now appears and infeasible, that was the plot pride had sprung into man's heart. Now, God, to preserve his children from all future assaults and batteries of hell at this door, chose such a way of reconciling and saving them, that, when the prince of the world comes to tempt them to pride, he should find nothing in them to give the least countenance or colour to such a motion; so that, of all sins, pride is such a one as we may wonder how it should grow, for it hath no other root to bear it up but what is found in man's dreaming fancy or imagination. It grows, as sometimes we shall see a mushroom or moss, among stones, where little or no soil is for its root to take

hold of. God, in this gospel way reconciling sinners by Christ, makes him fetch all from without doors. Wilt thou, poor soul, have peace with God? Thou must not have it from thine own penance for thy sins. 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him;,' Isa. 53:5. O know thou art not thy own peacemaker! That is Christ's name, who did that work: 'for he is our peace, who hath made both one,' Eph. 2:14—Jew and Gentile one with God, and one with one another. Wouldst thou be righteous? Then thou must not appear before God in thy own clothes. It is another's righteousness, not thy own, that is provided for thee. 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness,' Isa. 45:24. In a word, wouldst thou ever have a right in heaven's glory? Thy penny is not good silver to purchase it with. The price must not come out of thy purse, but Christ's heart; and therefore, as it is called the 'purchased possession,' in regard of Christ—because he obtained it for us with a great sum, not 'silver and gold,' but his 'precious blood'—so 'an inheritance' in regard of us, because it descends upon us as freely as the father's estate on his child, Eph. 1:14. And why all this, but that the 'lofty looks' of man may be 'humbled,' and the 'haughtiness of man' should be 'bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted' in the day of our salvation? The manna is expounded by Christ himself in a type of him: 'The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world,' John 6:33. Now observe wherefore God chose that way of feeding them in the wilderness: 'Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee,' Deut. 8:16. But wherein lay this great humbling of them? Were they not shrewdly humbled think you, to be fed with such a dainty dish, which had God for its cook, and is called 'angels' food' for its delicacy? Ps. 78:25—such, that if they needed any repast, might well suit their table. I answer, it was not the meanness of the fare, but the manner of having it, which God intended should humble them. Man is proud, and loves to be his own provider, and not stand to another's allowance. The same feast sent in by the charity and bounty of another, will not go down so well with his high stomach as when it is provided at his own cost and charges; he had rather have the honour of keeping his own house, though mean, than to live higher upon the alms and allowance of an-

other's charity. This made them wish themselves at their onions in their own gardens in Egypt, and their flesh-pots there, which though they were grosser diet, they liked better, because bought with their own penny.

Reason Third. God lays this method of reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, that it might be a peace with the greatest advantage possible—that God and man might meet again on better terms by this pacification, than when Adam stood in all his primitive glory. God, no doubt, would not have let the beauty of his first workmanship to be so defaced by sin, had he not meant to have reared a more magnificent structure out of its ruins. Now, God intending to print man's happiness in the second edition with a fairer character than at the first, he employs Christ in the work, as the only fit instrument to accomplish so great a design. Christ himself tells us as much: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,' John 10:10. His coming was not to give those who were dead and damned bare peace, naked life, but 'more abundantly' than ever man had before the breach. It was Christ in the second temple who filled it with a glory superlative to the first—Christ in the second creation of man, that lifts his head above the first state in happiness. As Adam was a pattern to all his seed—what he was in his innocent state, that should they all have been, if sin had not altered the scene, and turned the tables—so Christ is a pattern to all his seed of that glory which they shall be clothed with, I John 3:2. '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'—that is, 'our vile bodies like his glorious body.' as the apostle hath it, Php. 3.21, and our souls also, like his glorious soul. Now, by how much our nature in Christ is more glorious than it was in Adam, by so much the state of a reconciled sinner surpasseth Adam's first condition. Some little discovery whereof, take in two particulars.

[Superiority of our nature in Christ
to its state in Adam.]

1. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his union to God. 2. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his communion with

God.

1. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his union to God. And that,

(1.) As it is nearer. The union is nearer, because God and man make one person in Christ. This is such a mystery as was not heard of by Adam in all his glory. He, indeed, was in league of love and friendship with God—and that was the best flower in his crown—but he could lay no claim to such kindred and consanguinity as now—with reverence be it spoken—the reconciled soul can with God. This comes in by the marriage of the divine nature with the human, in the person of Christ, which personal union is the foundation of another, a mystical union betwixt Christ and the person of every believer; and this is so near a union, that, as by the union of the divine nature and human, there is one person, so also by this mystical union, the saints and their head make one Christ, 'for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ,' I Cor. 12:12. *Ecclesia est Christus explicatus*—the church is nothing but Christ displayed. Who can speak what an advance this is to the human nature in general, and to the persons of believers in especial?—such a one, as it leaves not only Adam, but angels, beneath a reconciled sinner in this respect. Adam, at first, was made but 'little lower than the angels;' but, by this pair of unions, God hath set the reconciled soul more than a little above them both, for Christ, by taking on him, not 'the nature of angels'—though the more ancient and noble house—but the seed of Abraham,' made 'the elder serve the younger.' Even angels themselves minister to the meanest saint, as unto their Master's heir, Heb. 1:14.

(2.) As it is stronger. Therefore stronger, because nearer. The closer stones stand together the stronger the building. The union betwixt God and Adam in the first covenant, was not so near but Adam might fall, and yet God's glory stand entire and unshaken; but the union now is so close and strong betwixt Christ and his saints, that Christ cannot be Christ without his members. 'Because I live,' saith Christ, 'ye shall live also,' John 14:19—implying that their life was bound up in his, and [that] it was as easy for him to be turned out of heaven as for them to be kept out. The church is called Christ's 'body, the

fulness of him that filleth all in all,' Eph. 1:23. A body is not full if it hath not every member and joint, though never so little, and them in their fulness too. The saints' graces is Christ's glory, II Cor. 8:23; and, though his essential glory as God receives no filling from his saints, or their graces, yet consider him in his mediatorship as head of his church, so Christ's glory is daily filling, as the elect are called in daily, and as those that are called in grow up to their appointed stature. Christ hath not his fulness till the saints have their perfection and complement of grace in heaven's glory.

2. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his communion with God. The nearer, we use to say, the dearer. Communion results from union. If the union be nearer and stronger between a reconciled soul and God than Adam's was, his communion must needs be sweeter and fuller. Why else is the communion between husband and wife fuller than of friend and friend, but because the union is closer? God converseth with Adam as a friend with his friend and ally, but with the reconciled soul as a husband with his wife. 'For thy Maker is thy husband,' Isa. 54:5. There is a double sweetness peculiar to the reconciled sinner's communion with God.

(1.) There is, in Christ, a foundation laid for greater familiarity with God, than Adam was at first capable of. He, indeed, was the son of God, yet he was kept at a further distance, and treated with more state and majesty, from God, than now the reconciled soul is; for, though he was the son of God, by creation, yet 'the Son of God' was not then 'the Son of man' by incarnation; and at this door comes in the believer's sweetest familiarity with God. The Christian cannot now lift up an eye of faith to God, but sees his own nature standing upon the throne by him, in the person of Christ. And, if the sight of Joseph at Pharaoh's right hand, in court favour and honour, sent the patriarchs home with such joyful news to their aged father, what a ravishing message of joy must faith carry then to the soul of a reconciled sinner, when it comes in after some vision of love in an ordinance and saith, 'Cheer up, O my soul, I see Jesus Christ, thy nearkinsman, at God's right hand in glory, to whom 'all power is given in heaven and earth;' fear not, he is so nigh in blood to thee that he cannot be unmindful of thee, except he should do

what is unnatural in thyself, that is, hide himself from his own flesh.' The lower a prince stoops to the meanest of his subjects, the more familiar he makes himself to his subjects.

It was a wonderful condescension in the great God, who can have no compeer, first to make man, and then to strike so friendly a league and covenant with him. This God doth now with every reconciled soul, and that too enriched with so many astonishing circumstances of condescending grace as must needs speak the way of the believer's access to God more familiar. God, in this second and new alliance with the poor creature, descend from his throne—exchanges his majestic robes of glory for the rags of man's frail flesh. He leaves his palace to live for a time in his creature's humble cottage, and there not only familiarly converses with him, but, which is stranger, ministers to him, yea, which is more than all these, he surrenders himself up to endure all manner of indignities from his sorry creature's hand; and when this, his coarse entertainment is done, back he posts to heaven, not to complain to his Father how he hath been abused here below, and to raise heaven's power against those that had so ill-entreated him, but to make ready heaven's palace for the reception of those who had thus abused him, and now will but accept of his grace; and lest these yet left on earth should fear his re-assumed royalty and majesty in heaven's glory would make some alteration in their affairs in his heart—to give them therefore a constant demonstration that he would be the same in the height of his honour that he was in the depth of his abasement—he goes back in the same clothes he had borrowed of their nature, to wear them on the throne in all his glory—only some princely cost bestowed, to put them into the fashion of that heavenly kingdom, and make them suit with his glorified state—giving them a pattern by this, what their own vile bodies, which are now so dishonourable, shall be made another day. Now none of all those circumstances were found in God's first administration to Adam, and therefore this is the more familiar.

(2.) There is the sweetness of pardoning mercy, and the bleeding love of Christ—who, by his death, purchased it for him—to be tasted in the reconciled soul's communion with God. This lump of sugar Adam had not in his cup. He knew what the love of

a giving God meant, but was stranger to the mercy of a forgiving God. The reconciled soul experiments both. The love of a father, more than ordinary kind, is a great comfort to a dutiful child—one that never displeased his father; but it carries no such wonder in it to our thoughts as the compassion and melting bowels of a father towards a rebellious child doth. And certainly the prodigal child, that is received again into his father's embraces, hath the advantage for loving his father more than his brother that never came under his father's displeasure. O this pardoning mercy, and the love of Christ that procured it!—they are the most spacious and fruitful heads for a gracious soul to enlarge his sweetest meditations upon, here on earth. But who can conceive what ravishing music glorified saints will make in running division on this sweet note? I am sure the song their harps are tuned unto is 'the song of the Lamb,' Rev. 15:2, 3. The saints' finished happiness in heaven's glory is a composition of all the rare ingredients possible—so tempered by the wise hand of God, that, as none could well be spared, so not the taste of any one shall be lost in another. But this ingredient of pardoning mercy, and of the stupendous love and wisdom of God through Christ therein, shall, as I may so say, give a sweet relish to all, and be tasted above all the rest.

[Use or application.]

Let it provoke everyone to labour to get an interest in this peace of reconciliation with God which the gospel brings. Peace with God! Sure it is worth the sinner's having, or else the angels were ill employed when they welcomed the tidings thereof into the world at our Saviour's birth with such acclamations of joy. 'Glory to God,....on earth peace,' Luke 2:14. Yea otherwise Christ himself was deceived in his purchase, who, if a sinner's peace with God be not of high praise and value, hath little to show for the effusion of his heart-blood, which he thought well spent to gain this. But this we cannot believe. And yet to see how freely God offers peace and pardon to the sons of men through Christ, and how coy, yea sullen and cross they are to the motion:—one that does not well know them both—God's infinite goodness, and wretched man's horrible baseness—might be ready to think it some low prized ware which lay upon God's

hands, and this to be the cause why God is so earnest to put it off, and man so loath to take it off his hands. Ah poor deluded wretches! who is the wicked counsellor that hardens your hearts from embracing your own mercies? None, sure, but a devil can hate God and you so much. And hath he sped so well in his own quarrel against God, that he should be hearkened to by thee, poor sinner? Can he give thee armour that will quench God's bullets? How then is it that he is so unkind to himself as to let them lie burning in his own bosom to his unspeakable torment? Or will he lend thee any pity when thou hast by his advice undone thyself? Alas! no more than the cruel wolf doth the silly sheep, when he hath sucked her blood and torn her in pieces. Think, and think again, poor sinner, what answer thou meanest to send to heaven before God calls his ambassadors home, and the treaty break up, never to be renewed again. And that thou mayest not want some seasonable matter for thy musing thoughts to enlarge upon on this subject, let me desire thee to treat with thy own heart upon these four heads. First. Consider what it is that is offered thee. Second. Who it is that offers it. Third. How he offers it. Fourth. What thou dost when thou refuseth it.

[Exhortations to the sinner to embrace this peace with God, offered in the gospel.]

First. Consider what it is that is offered thee—peace with God. A thing so indispensable—thou canst not have less, and so comprehensive—thou needest have no more than this, and what cometh with it, to make thee truly, fully happy. Of all the variety of enjoyments with which it is possible thy table can be spread, this is a dish can least be spared. Take away peace, and that but of an inferior nature—outward peace—and the feast is spoiled, though it be on a prince's table. David's children had little stomach to their royal dinner when one of them was slain that sat at the board with them. And what taste can you have in all your junkets while God is in array against you; many sinners slain before your eye by God's judgments; and the same sword that hath let out their blood, at thy throat, while the meat is in thy mouth? Methinks your sweet morsels should stick in your throat, and hardly get down, and hardly get down,

while you muse on these things. O sinner! is not this as a toad swelling at the bottom of thy most sweetly sugared cup—that the controversy yet depends betwixt God and thee? Thy sins are unpardoned, and thou a dead damned creature, however thou dost frolic it for the present in thy prison. Would you not wonder to see a man at his sport, hunting or hawking, and one should tell you that that man is to be hanged tomorrow? Truly God is more merciful to thee than thou canst promise thyself, if he stay the execution till another day. I confess, when I meet a man whose life proclaims him an unreconciled sinner, and see him spruce up himself with the joy of his children, estate, honour, or the like, in this life, it administers matter of admiration [amazement] to me, what such a one thinks of God or himself. Canst thou think it is long thou shalt sit at this fire of thorns thou hast kindled, and not God for thee? Must it needs provoke a creditor to see his debtor live high, and go brave, all at his cost, and all the while never think of getting out of his debt, or of making his peace with him? Much more then doth it provoke God to see sinners spend upon his bounty—lead joyful jovial lives in the abundance of outward enjoyments he lends them, but take no thought of making peace with him in whose debt-book they are so deep in arrears.

What folly had it been for the Jews, when Ahasuerus had sealed the warrant for their destruction, to have gone and painted their houses, planted their fields, and let out their hearts in the enjoyment of their estates, without taking care, in the first place, of getting that bloody decree reversed? A worse sot art thou, that doest all these, while thou carriest the sentence of death from God's mouth, about thee in thy own conscience. Sir Thomas More, when in the Tower, would not so much as trim himself, saying, 'There was a controversy betwixt the king and him for his head, and till that was at a happy end, he would be at no cost about it.' Scum but off the froth of his wit and you may make a solemn use of it. Certainly all the cost you bestow on yourselves to make your lives pleasurable and joyous to you is mere folly, till it be decided what will become of the suit betwixt God and you, not for your heads, but souls, yea soul and body, whether for heaven or hell. O were it not thy wisest choice to begin with making thy peace, and then thou mayest soon lead a happy life! We say, 'He

that gets out of debt grows rich.' I am sure the reconciled soul cannot be poor. As soon as the peace is concluded a free trade is opened betwixt God and the soul. If once pardoned, thou mayest then sail to any port that lies in God's dominions, and be welcome. All the promises stand open with their rich treasure. Take, poor soul, full lading in of all the precious things they afford, even as much as thy faith can bear, and none shall hinder thee. As a man may draw the wine of a whole vessel through one tap, so faith may draw the comfort of all the covenant out of this one promise of reconciliation. If reconciled, then the door is open to let thee into communion with God in all his ordinances. God and thou being agreed may now walk together, whereas before thou couldst not look into God's presence but his heart rose against thee, as one at the sight of his enemy, ready to draw upon thee with his judgments. 'The smith,' we say, 'and his penny, both are black.' So wert thou with all thy duties and performances, while unreconciled in his eye. But now thy 'voice is sweet, and countenance comely.' All the attributes of God, thy ally, are thine: his horses and chariots thine, as Jehoshaphat told Ahab. Whenever any enemy puts thee in fear, you know where to have a friend that will take part with thee. All his providences, though like bees, they fly some this way, and some that, yea, one contrary to another, as, thou thinkest, impossible to trace them, are yet all at work for thee; and thy soul is the hive wherein they will unlade the sweet fruit of all their labour, though possibly it may be night—the evening of thy days—before thou findest it. In a word, if reconciled, thou standest next step to heaven; 'whom he justifies, them he glorifies,' Rom. 8:30. Thou art sure to be there as soon as death rends the veil of thy flesh, which is all that interposeth between thee and it.

Second. Consider who it is that offers peace to thee—the great God. It is hard to say which speaks the greatest wonder—for God to offer, or thee to deny what he offers. We marvel not to see the undutiful child on his knee, labouring to soften his father's heart with his tears, which he hath hardened against him with his rebellions; nor a condemned traitor prostrate at his prince's foot, begging for his life, now forfeited to the justice of the law; but it is something strange to see the father become suppliant to his

child, more, for the traitor to open his dungeon door and find his prince standing there, and that upon no other errand than to desire him to accept of a pardon. And yet self-love may be the great motive for this seeming self-denial. The parent doth but love himself when he steps below his place to gain his child, that carries so much of its parent's life about him. And such necessity of state there is sometimes, that great princes are forced to stoop to the meanest, yea worst of his subjects. A prince's safety may be so intimately concerned in a traitor's life that he cannot cut off his head without imminent danger to the crown that stands upon his own. But none of these straits forced God to take up thoughts of peace to his poor creature; no, they are the birth of free condescending love. And now, think again, sinner, before the great God hath a denial from thee. If a neighbour, the poorest in the town, and he one that hath done thee wrong, and not received it from thee, comes to thee and desires peace, shouldst thou reject the motion? Would not thy conscience reproach thee to thy dying day? How then wilt thou endure to look God or conscience in the face, if thou refusest peace at God's hands that thou doth not treat, like men, when their sword is broke, and they cannot fight, but when he hath absolute power over thy life—which is ever in his hands—yea, a God that hath ever received the wrong—never did thee any—yea, should have done thee none, if he had long before this hanged thee up in chains of darkness among the damned.

Third. Consider how God offers thee peace.

1. He offers peace sincerely. He covers not fraud under a treaty of peace. Among men there hath been horrible juggling in this case. The flag of peace is oft hung out at lip only, to draw them within the reach of their dagger, which is ready to smite them, as Joab did Abner, 'under the fifth rib.' In all the civil wars of France the poor Protestants found peace more costly to them than war; they beat the Papists in the field, when open enemies, but were betrayed by them in the chamber, when false friends. But for thy comfort know it is, 'a God of truth' thou treatest with. Never did he shed the blood of war in peace, or give a soul to the sword of his wrath, after quarter taken and peace given. 'If we confess,....he is just and faithful to forgive.' His promises are not 'yea and nay,' like the devil's, who lays them so that he may have

the credit both ways. No, the very heart of God may be seen as through a crystal window in the promise; they are all 'yea and amen' in Christ, II Cor. 1:20.

2. He offers peace affectionately, his heart deeply engaged in the tenders of mercy to poor sinners; which will appear,

(1.) In his contriving a way for reconciling sinners to himself. What men strongly desire, they stretch their wits to the utmost how to accomplish. 'The liberal man deviseth liberal things,' Isa. 32:8. It shows the heart exceeding large in charity, when a man shall sit down and study how he may find out ways for the exercise of his charity; whereas, most men, alas! beat their brains how they may save their purses and escape with giving as little as may be to the poor. O what a rare invention hath God found out for showing mercy, which hath so many mysterious passages in it, that angels themselves are put hither to school, that by studying this mystery of God's reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, they might know 'the manifold wisdom of God!' Eph. 3:10.

(2.) By the early discovery he made of this to the sons of men. He would go among us, for no sooner had man broken the peace, and taken up rebellious arms against his Maker, but the Lord's heart relented towards him, and could not let the sun go down on his wrath against him, but must, in the very same day that he sinned, let him hear of a Saviour, by preaching peace to him, in 'the seed of the woman,' Gen 3:15. Little did Adam think that God had such a message in his mouth for him, when he first heard him coming towards him, and for fear ran his head into a bush, meditating a flight from him, if he had known whither to have gone. O, that 'Adam, where art thou?' sounded, no doubt, in his guilty ears, like the voice of an avenging God calling him, a malefactor, to execution! But it proved the voice of a gracious God, coming, not to meet man in his way returning to him, but to seek him out, who had lost all thoughts of him, that he might give some ease to his own gracious heart, now full of mercy to his poor creature, by disclosing to him the purposes of grace which he had there conceived towards him. Surely his heart was very full, or else this would not have burst out so soon.

(3.) The great ordinance of the gospel-ministry, which God hath set up in the church, on purpose to

treat with sinners upon a peace, speaks his deep affection to the work, II Cor. 5:18. One would have thought it had been enough to print his thoughts and purposes of mercy in the Scripture, though he had done no more. Princes, when they put out a statute or law, expect all their subjects should inquire after it, and do not send one to every town, whose office shall be to give notice thereof, and persuade people to submit to it. Yet this the great God doth. The minister's work from one end of the year to the other, what is it but to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God? And in this observe,

(a) The persons he sends to preach. Not angels, foreigners to our nature, who, though they wish us well, yet are not so intimately concerned in man's fall, as to give them the advantage of preaching with those melting bowels, that God would have them filled with who go on his errand. No, he sends men, with whom he may converse familiarly, creatures of like passions—whose nature puts them under the same depravation, temptation, condemnation with ourselves—who can, from the acquaintance they have with their own hearts, tells us the baseness of ours—from the fire of God's wrath, which hath scorched them for their sins, [can] tell us the desert of ours, and the danger we are in by reason of them—as also, from the sweet sense that the taste of God's love in Christ hath left on their souls, can commend the cheer and feast they invite us to upon their own knowledge. Did not God, think you, desire good speed to his embassy when he chose such to carry it?

(b) Observe the qualifications required in those he employs as ambassadors to offer peace to sinners. 'The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves,' II Tim. 2:24, 25. O how careful is God that nothing should be in the preacher to prejudice the sinner's judgment, or harden his heart, against the offer of his grace. If the servant be proud and hasty, how shall they know the master is meek and patient? God would have them do nothing to make the breach wider, or hinder a happy close betwixt him and them. Indeed, he that will take the bird must not scare it. A froward peevish messenger is no friend to him that sends him. Sinners are not pelted into Christ with stones of hard

provoking language, but wooed into Christ by heart-melting exhortations.

(c) Look into the commission God gives his ambassadors, and still his heart appears in the business, whether you consider the largeness of it, on the one hand, or the strictness of it on the other. First, the largeness of it—'Go and preach,' saith Christ, 'the gospel to every creature.' Make no difference—rich or poor, great sinners or little, old sinners or young. Offer peace to all that will but repent and believe. Bid as many come as will; here is room for all that come. Again, the strictness of it on the other hand. O what a solemn charge have they of delivering their message faithfully! Paul trembles at the thoughts of loitering—'Woe is me if I preach not.' What an argument doth Christ use—fetched from his very heart—to persuade Peter to be careful, 'If thou lovest me, feed my sheep.' As if he had said, 'Peter, thou now art in tears for thy cowardice in denying me, but thou hast yet one way left, for all that unkindness, to demonstrate thy love to me, and that is by feeding my sheep; do this, and trouble not thyself for that.' Christ shows more care of his sheep than of himself.

(d) The joy God expresseth when poor sinners come into the offer of peace. Joy is the highest testimony that can be given to our complacency in any thing or person. Love to joy is as fuel to the fire. If love lay little fuel of desires on the heart, then the flame of joy that comes thence will not be great. Now God's joy is great in pardoning poor sinners that come in; therefore his affection great in the offer thereof. It is made the very motive that prevails with God to pardon sinners, 'because he delighteth in mercy,' Micah 7:18. 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' God doth all this, 'because he delighteth in mercy.' Ask why the fisher stands all night with his angle in the river. He will tell you, 'because he delights in the sport.' Well, you now know the reason why God stands so long waiting on sinners, months, years, preaching to them; it is that he may be gracious in pardoning them, and in that act delight himself. Princes very oft pardon traitors to please others more than themselves, or else it would never be done, but God doth it chiefly to delight and gladden his own

merciful heart. Hence the business Christ came about—which was no other but to reconcile sinners to God—is called ‘the pleasure of the Lord,’ Isa. 53:10. The Lord takes such joy and pleasure in this, that, whereas other fathers—whose love to their children sinks infinitely beneath any comparison with the love of God to Christ—mourn at the death of their children, and most of all when violent and bloody, God takes content in his Son’s death; yea, had the chief hand in the procuring of it, and that with infinite complacency: ‘It pleased the Lord to bruise him.’ And what joy could God take in his Son’s death, but as it made way for him and his poor creature that were fallen out, and at open war one against another, to fall in again by a happy accord? And now, speak, O sinner! if God doth so affectionately desire to be reconciled with thee, doth it not much more behove thee to embrace the peace, than it doth him to offer it? There is but one thing more I would desire thee, sinner, to consider, and then I leave thee to thy own choice.

Fourth. Consider what thou doest when thou refusest peace with God. Determinations of war or peace use to be the result of the most grave counsels and mature deliberation possible. Think and think again, what thou doest, before thou breakest off the treaty of peace, lest thou makest work for repentance when it will be bootless. But, lest thou shouldst not be so faithful to God and thy own soul as to give thy conscience liberty to speak freely in this matter, I shall do it for thee, and tell thee what thou doest when thou rejectest peace. Thou justifiest thy former hostilities against God, and declarest that thou wilt vouch what thou hast done, let God right himself as well as he can. He that refuseth a pardon, either denieth he hath done wrong, or, which is worse, stands to defend it. Thou hadst as good say thou desirest not to be friends with God, but hast a mind to perpetuate the feud betwixt God and thee, like Amilcar, who was such an enemy to Rome, that, when he died, he made his son Hannibal heir to his hatred against them. Is it not enough that thou hast fought so many battles on earth against thy Maker, but wilt thou keep the quarrel up in another world also, where there is no more possibility to put an end to it than to eternity itself? Thou throwest the greatest scorn upon God that it is possible for a creature to do. As if

God’s love and hatred were such inconsiderable things that they need not, when cast into the scale of thy thoughts, preponderate³ thee either way—the one to move thy desire, or the other thy fear! In a word, thou consentest to thy own damnation, and desperately flingest thyself into the mouth of God’s flaming wrath, which gapes in the threatening upon thee. God is under an oath to procure thy destruction, if thou diest in this mind, which God forbid! Death is the trap-door which will let thee down to hell’s dungeon; and when once thou art there, thou art where thou wilt have space enough to weep over thy past folly, though here thou hast neither mind nor leisure to make God thy friend. The very thoughts of those offers of peace which once thou hadst, but no heart to embrace them, will be like so much salt and vinegar, with which thy accusing conscience will be continually basting thee, as thou liest roasting in hell-fire, to make thy torment the more intolerable. I know this language grates on the sinners’ ears, but not so ill as the gnashing of the sinner’s own teeth will in hell.

I have read of a foolish, I may say cruel, law among the Lacedemonians⁴, that none should tell his neighbour any ill news befallen him, but every one should be left, in process of time, to find it out themselves. Many among us, I think, would be content if there were such a law, that might tie up ministers’ mouths from scaring them with their sins, and the miseries that attend their unreconciled state. The most are more careful to run from the discourse of their misery, than to get out of the danger of it—are more offended with the talk of hell, than troubled for that sinful state that shall bring them thither. But alas! when, then, shall we show our love to the souls of sinners if not now, seeing that in hell there remains no more offices of love to be done for them? Hell is a pest-house, that we may not write so much on the door of it as ‘Lord, have mercy on them that are in it.’ Nay, they who now pray for their salvation, and weep

3. Preponderate — outweigh; to weigh down; to exceed in weight; to descend or incline downward; to exceed in influence, power, or importance. — From Webster’s.

— SDB

4. Lacedemonians — This is the same as Sparta, a city-state in ancient Greece, before the time of Rome. — SDB

over their condition, must then with Christ vote for their damnation, and rejoice in it, though they be their own fathers, husbands, and wives they see there. O, now bethink yourselves, before the heart of God and man be hardened against you!

Question. But how may a poor sinner be at peace with God?

1. See and be sensible of the feud and enmity that at present stands betwixt God and thee. 2. Look thou propoundest right ends in thy desire of reconciliation with God. 3. Throw down thy rebellious arms, and humbly submit to his mercy. 4. Hie thee, as soon as may be, to the throne of grace, and humbly present thy request to God to be at peace with thee through Christ.

[Directions to sinners as to how they may be at peace with God.]

1. Direction. See and be sensible of the feud and enmity that at present stands betwixt God and thee.

(1.) As to the reality of the thing, that there is indeed a quarrel, which God hath against thee. Wherever thou goest, an angry God is at thy back, and his wrath, like a big-bellied cloud, hangs full of curses over thy head, ready every moment to empty them upon thy head. There is need of pressing this. For, though it is ordinary for men to confess themselves sinners, yet most are loath to disparage their state so far as to rank themselves among the enemies of God. No, they hope God and they are good friends for all this. Like thieves they will confess some little matter, but they have a care of letting fall anything that may hazard their necks. 'Sinner' is a favourable word. Who lives and sins not? That they will grant. But, to be in a state of enmity, and under the wrath of God, this scares them too much, and brings them too near the sight of the gallows—the seat of hell—which are due to that state; and therefore, when pressed thus far—as the Jews desired Rabshakeh, when he scared them with the dreadful things that would befall them if they stood out against the king his master, 'that he would not speak in the Jews' language in the ears of the people,' Isa. 36:11, for fear of affrighting them, but in a foreign tongue—so sinners desire those that deal plainly with them, that they should not speak so

broad in the hearing of their conscience, which they are afraid should know the worst. But, if thou lovest thy own soul, make a true representation of thy state to thyself. O what folly is it for a man to lose his cause by concealing the badness of it!

(2.) Labour to bring thyself under the sense of thy miserable condition as thou art. Hadst thou the empire of the world, and all nations creeping to thy foot, as once the beasts did to Adam, and a lease as long as Methuselah's life twice told to enjoy it in, without the interposition of one cloud all the while, to darken the glory of this thy royalty, yet, supposing thee to be one to whom God is an enemy, I would choose to be the worm under thy foot, the toad in the ditch, sooner than thy miserable self in thy palace. One thought of thy approaching death, and eternal misery in store for thee, will let out all the joy of thy present happiness. This, this makes the great ones of the world—indeed all unreconciled sinners, high and low—to go to their graves as bears down a hill—backwards. Alas! if they should but look forward whither they were going, their hearts would soon be at their mouths, for want of this breastplate—a comfortable persuasion of their peace made with God. Go, therefore, as a poor malefactor condemned to die would do, shut thyself up from all thy old flattering companions, that would still lullaby thy miserable soul in a senseless security—the cradle which the devil rocks souls in, to their utter destruction; let none of them come to thee, but send for those that dare be faithful to thee, and, like Samuel, dare tell thee every word that God saith against thee, and conceal nothing; yea, read thy doom with thy own eyes in the word, and take thy condemnation from God's own mouth, and not man's. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' Muse on it till it cleaves to thy soul like a drawing-plaster to a sore, and brings out the very core of thy pride and carnal confidence, which hardened thy heart from all sense of thy condition; by which time, the anguish of thy own spirit, seeing the straits thou art brought into, will prompt thee to desire peace with God, and this is that which God waits for to hear drop from thee, as much as Benhadad's servants did for a word from Ahab's mouth.

2. Direction. Look thou propoundest right ends in thy desire of reconciliation with God. Nothing more hateful to God or man than falsehood and

treachery in treaties of peace; and yet some men can have words as smooth as butter in their mouths, and war be in their hearts at the same time, Ps. 55:21. O take heed of any hollowness of heart in thy inquiry for peace! When found out—as it must needs be, except God’s eye fails him, which is impossible—it will exceedingly harden the heart of God against thee. God never repented of any he pardoned or took up into the chariot of peace with him, because he was never deceived by any, as men are, who make often peace with those that prove at last false brethren, and give them cause to wish they had never known them. Joab killed Amasa, but he took no heed to the sword in Joab’s hand. God looks to the heart, and sees what is in its hand; be sure thou therefore stand clear in thy own thoughts as to the ends thou aimest at. It is lawful for thee to look to thy own safety. God will give thee leave to look to thyself. This thou mayest, and yet not neglect him. But never was any peace true or sure where only self-love made it, whether it be with God, or between man and man. Thou seest thou art undone if thou keepest thy old side, and therefore thou seekest peace with God, as the kings that served Hadarezer. When they saw he was ‘smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel’ themselves, II Sam. 10:19. Well, this may be allowed thee to come over to God, because his is the surer side. Never any made peace with God, but this argument weighed much with them. If Jacob could have been safe at home, he had never fled to Laban. All are fired out of their holds before they yield to God. But take heed this be not all thou aimest at, or the chief thou aimest at. This thou mayest do, and hate God as much as ever, like those who are said to yield ‘feignedly’ to David’s victorious arms, because no help for it. A man taken in a storm may be forced under the pent-house of his greatest enemy for shelter, without any change of his heart, or better thoughts of him than before he was wont. Two things, therefore, thou mayest look to have in thy eye, above thy own self-preservation.

(1.) You must desire to be reconciled to God with an eye to the honour of God. Hence, oft the saints’ prayers are pressed with an argument from God, as well as themselves and their own misery: ‘Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name’s sake,’ Ps. 79:9. Certainly, if God could not be

more glorified in our peace and reconciliation, than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us, that he is no loser by acts of mercy. In this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he could not love ‘mercy rather than sacrifice.’ God is free to choose what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name; and he delights more in the mercy shown to one, than in the blood of all the damned that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And, indeed, he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering, and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy in his saved ones. This is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow to it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement, when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. ‘This,’ said Abigail to David, ‘shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord,’ I Sam. 25:31. She meant he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God and say, ‘O Lord, when I shall with saints and angels be praising thy pardoning grace in heaven, it will not grieve thee that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul to hell.’ But now it is evident that many who seem to seek peace, and pursue it too, very strongly, yet do not take overmuch care for God’s honour in the thing, because they are earnest with God to pardon them in a way that were to him dishonourable. Pardoned they would be, though wholly ignorant of God and Christ. They would have God to be at peace with them while they were enemies to him. Like a thief at the bar, he would have the judge spare his life, right or wrong, legally or illegally, what cares he? Doth this wretch consider the honour of the judge? or that sinner, who, so he be saved, how unrighteous God is in the act of mercy? O deceive not yourselves, poor souls, God will not make war between his own attributes to make peace with you!

(2.) You must desire to be reconciled to God, that you may have fellowship with God. Certainly a soul sensible what the loss of communion with God is, counts it hath not all her errand done when it hath naked peace given it. Should God say, ‘Soul, I am friends with thee—I have ordered thou shalt never go

to hell. Here is a discharge under my hand that thou shalt never be arrested for my debt more; but, as for any fellowship with me, or fruition of me, thou canst expect none. I have done with thee—for ever being acquainted more with thee.’ Certainly the soul, in such a case, would take little joy in her peace. Were the fire out as to positive torments, yet a hell would be left in the dismal darkness which the soul would sit under for want of God’s presence. Absalom knew no middle condition that could please him betwixt seeing the king his father’s face, and being killed. ‘Let me see the king’s face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me,’ II Sam. 14:32—‘if I be not worthy to enjoy my father’s love and presence, neither do I desire to live;’ whereas a naughty heart seeks reconciliation without any longing after any fellowship with God. Like the traitor, if the king will but pardon and save him from the gallows, he is ready to promise him never to trouble him at court. It is his own life, not the king’s favour, he desires.

3. Direction. Throw down thy rebellious arms and humbly submit to his mercy. God will not so much as treat with thee so long as thy sword is in thy hand—‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord,’ Isa. 1:18. Mark when the parley begins: ‘put away the evil of your doings,’ ver. 16. Now come and treat with God about a peace.

(1.) God is a great God, and it doth not become his sovereignty to treat with his sorry creature on equal terms, as a king doth with his fellow-prince, who, if he cannot have peace on his own terms, is able probably to revenge himself by force of arms; but, as a mighty king with his rebel subject, whom he hath fast bound with chains in prison, and can at pleasure hang up for his treason. The great God will have thee know that. Let those capitulate who can retire to their strength and live without peace. But as for thee, poor sinner, thou dost not, I hope, think thou art in a capacity to meet with God in the field, or to thrive by this trade of war against God. No, thy only way is to conquer him upon thy knee, to lay thy neck at his foot and say, ‘Lord, I put my life in thy hands, thy true prisoner I will be, choosing rather to die by the hand of thy justice, than to continue fighting against thy mercy.’ Now, poor soul, thou art got into the right path, that leads to peace. ‘Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up,’ James

4:10. That soul shall not long be out of his arms that is prostrate at his foot. But, though ‘the high and lofty One’ can stoop to take up a penitent sinner into the arms of his pardoning mercy, yet he will not debase his sovereignty to treat with a wretch that stands to his arms and stouts it out with him. There is one red letter in God’s name—‘he will by no means clear the guilty,’ Exodus 34:7.

(2.) The holy nature of God requires this. Sin is that which made the breach, and caused God to take arms against his creature; how canst thou rationally think to make thy peace with him, and keep this makebate⁵ in thy bosom? God is willing to be reconciled with thee, but wilt thou have him be at peace with thy sin also? Is it not enough to be justified from thy sin? but wouldst thou have God betray his own honour by justifying thee in thy sin? Did you ever hear a prince give a patent to another to cut his own throat? What security canst thou give to God of thy love to him if thou wilt not renounce that which is the only thing that seeks his life? Peccatum est deicidium—sin is deicide. As long as the traitor is in favour within, God will not raise his siege, or hear of peace without. They cannot reign together; choose which you will have of them. And be not so far deluded as to think it is enough to send thy lust out of the way for a while, as princes use to do their favourites in a popular commotion, to please the people, and then call for them home when the hubbub is over. No, God will not be thus dodged and mocked. See how the promise runs, and this he will stand to. ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,’ Isa. 55:7. See how cautious God is in the terms; no corner left for the least sin to skulk and save its life in—he must ‘forsake all.’ That implies,

(a) A deliberate choice in the soul; he does it freely. Some men’s sins ‘forsake’ them. The unclean spirit goes out, and is not driven out—occasions to sin cease, or bodily ability to execute the command of sin is wanting. There is no forsaking sin, however, in

5. Makebate, any thing or person that excites dispute—a bone of contention. — ED.

all this. But to break from it with a holy indignation and resolution, when temptation is most busy and strength most active—now as David said, when his enemy opposed him as bees, in the name of the Lord to repel and resist them—this is to forsake. This is the encomium⁶ of Moses. He forsook the court when he was grown up; not for age, as Barzillai, but when his blood was warm in his veins. A man doth not forsake his wife when he is detained from her in prison, but when he puts her away, and gives her a bill of divorce.

(b) To ‘forsake’ sin is to leave it without any thought reserved of returning to it again. Every time a man takes a journey from home about business we do not say he hath forsaken his house, because he meant, when he went out, to come to it again. No, but when we see a man leave his house, carry all his stuff away with him, lock up his doors, and take up his abode in another, never to dwell there more, here is a man hath indeed forsaken his house. It were strange to find a drunkard so constant in the exercise of that sin, but some time you may find him sober, and yet a drunkard he is, as well as if he was then drunk. Every one hath not forsaken his trade that we see now and then in their holiday suit. Then the man forsakes his sin when he throws it from him, and bolts the door upon it with a purpose never to open more to it. ‘Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?’ Hosea 14:8.

Again observe, before pardon can be sealed he must ‘forsake,’ not this sin or that, but the whole ‘way’ of sin. ‘Let the wicked forsake his way.’ A traveller may step from one path to another, and still go on in the same way—leave a dirty, deep, rugged path, for one more smooth and even. So many, finding some gross sins uneasy, and too toilsome to their awakened consciences, step into a more cleanly path of civility; but alas! poor creatures, all they get is to go a little more easily and cleanly to hell than their beastly neighbours. But he forsakes the way of sin that turns out of the whole road. In a word, thou must forsake the blindest path of all in sin’s way—that which lies behind the hedge, as I may so say, in

the thoughts of the heart—‘and the unrighteous man his thoughts;’ or else thou knockest in vain at God’s door for pardoning mercy; and therefore, poor soul, forsake all or none. Save one lust and you lose one soul. If men mean to go to hell, why are they so mannerly? This halving with sin is ridiculous. Art thou afraid of this sin, and not of a less, which hinders thy peace, and procures thy damnation as sure, only not with so much distraction to thy drowsy conscience at present? This is as ridiculous as it was with him, who, being to be hanged, desired that he might by no means go through such a street to the gallows, for fear of the plague that was there. What wilt thou get, poor sinner, if thou goest to hell, though thou goest thither by thy ignorance, unbelief, spiritual pride, &c., yet led about so as to escape the plague of open profaneness? O sirs, consider but the equity, the honourableness of the terms that God offers peace upon. What lust is so sweet or profitable that is worth burning in hell for? Darius, when he fled before Alexander, that he might run the faster out of danger, threw away his massy crown from his head which hindered him; and is any lust so precious in thy eye that thou canst not leave it behind thee, rather than fall into the hands of God’s justice? But so sottish is foolish man, that a wise heathen could take notice of it⁷—we think we only buy what we part with money for, and as for those things we pay ourselves our souls for, these we think we have for nothing, as if the man were not more worth than his money! Having been faithful to follow the preceding directions, thou art now in a fair way to effect thy much desired enterprise. Therefore,

4. Direction. Hie thee, therefore, as soon as may be, to the throne of grace, and humbly present thy request to God that he would be at peace with thee, yea, carry with thee a faith that thou shalt find him more ready to embrace the motion than thou to make it. Take heed only, what thou makest thy plea to move God, and where thou placest thy confidence. Not in thy repentance or reformation, this were to play the merchant with God; but know he expects not a chapman to truck with him, but a humble suppli-

6. Encomium, High or glowing praise. — From Webster’s. — SDB

7. *Ea sola emi putamus, pro quibus pecuniam solvimus; ea gratuita vocamus, pro quibus, nos-ipsos impendimus, &c.* — Sen. Epist. 42.

cant to be suitor to him. Nor his absolute mercy, as ignorant souls do. This is to take hold of the sword by the blade, and not by the hilt. Such will find their death and damnation from that mercy which they might be saved by, if they did take hold of it as God offers it them, and that is 'through Christ.' 'Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me,' Isa. 27:5. And where lies God's saving strength, but in Christ? He hath, 'laid strength' upon this 'mighty' one, 'able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God.' It is not God's absolute power or mercy will help thee, but his covenant strength and mercy, and this is in Christ. Take hold of Christ and thou hast hold of God's arm; he cannot strike the soul that holds thereby.

Indeed, God's essential goodness is a powerful argument to persuade the poor soul to rely upon the promise in Christ for pardon—when he considers that God who promiseth peace to the believer, is a God whose very nature is forgiving, and mercy itself—but had there been no promise to engage this mercy to poor sinners through Christ, this would have been but cold comfort to have believed God was good. He could have damned the whole stock of Adam, and not called his essential goodness the least in question. It is no blot to the almightiness of his power that he doth not all he can. He could make more worlds, if he was so pleased, than he hath done; but we have no ground to believe he will, neither is he the less almighty because he does not. So he could have saved the fallen angels with the sons of lost man. He is not scant in mercy for such a design, if he had thought it fit. But, having passed no promise for such a thing, the essential goodness of God affords the devils but little relief, or hope that he will do it. And yet God continues good. And, for aught I can find out of the word, they among the sons of men who, either through simple ignorance of the gospel, or prejudice, which their proud reason hath taken up against the way it chalks out for making our peace with God, through Christ's satisfaction for us, do neglect Christ, or scornfully reject his satisfaction, and betake themselves to the absolute goodness and mercy of God, as the plea which they will make at Christ's bar for their pardon and salvation, shall find as little benefit from it as the devils themselves.

Suppose, friends, a prince should freely make a law, by which he will govern his people, and takes a solemn oath to keep close to it, could a malefactor that is condemned by this law to die expect any relief by appealing from the law to the mercy and goodness of the prince's nature? I confess some have sped and saved their lives by taking this course. But it hath been, because either the prince was imprudent in making the law, or unfaithful in keeping his oath; neither of which can, without blasphemy, be imputed to God, infinitely wise and holy. He hath enacted a law, called the law of faith, for the saving poor sinners through Christ, and is under an oath to make it good both in the salvation of every one that believes on Christ, and damnation on every one that doth not believe: and, to make all sure, hath given Christ an oath to be faithful in his office; who was trusted as priest to secure redemption, and shall sit judge to pronounce the sentence at the great day of absolution or condemnation. Take heed, therefore, poor sinner, that thou beest not drawn from placing thy entire confidence on Christ the Son of God—both God and man in one person—who laid down his life upon agreement with his Father, to make an atonement for the sin of the world; and now offers thee that blood which then he shed, as a price to carry in the hand of thy faith to the Father, for pardon and peace. No, though they should come and call thee from Christ to Christ—from a Christ without thee, to a Christ within thee. As the Jesuit doth in the Quaker, into whom he is now got; as the friars of old were wont into their hollow images, viz. that they might deliver their lying doctrines out of the mouths of their reputed saints, and thereby cozen the multitude without any suspicion of their knavery. Just so do the Jesuits nowadays deliver their popish stuff out of the mouths of the Quakers—a design so much more dangerous as it is more cunning than the other. There is too much light shed abroad for that old puppet play to take. But, though men are too wise to lend an ear to a block or a stone, yet holiness in a living saint commands such reverence, that the devil hath ever found, and will, to the end of the world, that he may pass least suspected under this cloak. Well, when he comes to call thee from a Christ without thee to a Christ within thee; strip the doctrine out of its pleasing phrase, and, in plain English, he calls thee from

trusting in the righteousness of Christ wrought by him for thee, and by faith to be made thine for thy justification before God, to an inherent work of grace or righteousness wrought by the Spirit of God in thee for thy sanctification and renovation, called sometimes the 'new creature,' and 'Christ within us.' Now, hadst thou not made a goodly change if thou hadst let go thy hold on Christ, who is thy righteousness, to rely on a creature, and that a weak one too, God knows, full of so many imperfections that thy conscience—except injudicious and given over to believe a lie—can tell it is but a vein of gold embased with much more earth and dross, which shall never be quite purged till thou beest put into the refining pot of the grave. Look to thyself, Christian. Here it is a matter of life and death. Prize Christ's grace within thee thou must; yea thou hast none in thee, if thou dost not value it above all the mountains of gold the world hath. But trust not to this Christ or grace of Christ within thee for life and salvation; for now thou prizest the creature above God, and settest 'Christ within thee' to fight with 'Christ without thee.' The bride doth well highly to esteem her husband's picture which he hath given her, especially if very like him, and most of all, if drawn by his own hand; but it were very ridiculous if she should dote on that so far as to slight her husband, and, when she wants money, clothes, or the like, to go, not to her husband, but to the picture he gave her, for all. The saint's grace is called 'Christ within him,' because it is his picture, and makes the saint so like Christ. This, for the resemblance it bears to the holiness of Christ, himself thy husband, who with the finger of his own Spirit, drew it on thy soul, deserves highly to be valued. But, what a dotage were it for thee turn thy back on the Lord Jesus Christ himself, to whom by faith thou art married, and, when thou wantest pardon and comfort—wouldst have heaven and happiness—to expect these, not from Christ, but from thy grace? O will Christ thank thee for honouring his creature to the dishonour of his person?

[Exhortations to those already
at peace with God.]

A few words by way of improvement to you whose peace with God is concluded with Christ.

First. Hast thou peace with God?—look thou makest no peace with sin. This broke thy peace with God; now let thy peace with God begin a war with that never to have end. Thou canst not, sure, forget the inestimable wrong and damage thou hast suffered by it. Every moment's sweet enjoyment of God—whose bosom-love thou hast now happily recovered—will help to keep the fire of wrath and revenge burning in thy heart against that cursed enemy, that both threw and kept thee so long thence. God hath now won thy heart, I hope, by his pardoning mercy, dearly to love him for his love to thee. How then canst thou with patience see any lust come braving forth from its trench—thy heart I mean—defying thy God and his grace in thee? Paul's spirit was stirred in him at Athens to see God dishonoured by the superstition of others; and is not thine, to see him reproached by the pride, unbelief, and other sins, that do it from under thy own soul's roof? O Christian, meditate some noble exploit against it. Now, the more to steel thy heart, and harden it against all relenting towards it, carry the blood and wounds of thy Saviour into the field with thee, in the hand of thy faith. The sight of those will certainly enrage thy heart against thy lusts, that stabbed and killed him, more than the bloody garments of Cæsar, held up by Antony, did the Roman citizens against his murderers. O see how cruelly they used the Lord of glory, and where they laid him in an ignominious grave—and that fastened with a seal, stronger than that which man set to it—the curse due to us sinners, never possible to have been broke up by any less than his own almighty arm! And now, Christian, shall these murderers, not of man, but of God—for it was the blood of God that was shed—escape that vengeance which God would have done with thy hand upon them? Wherefore else doth he leave thee any life in thy soul but that thou shouldst have the opportunity of showing thy love to Christ by running thy dagger of mortification into their heart? Alexander got no more honour by his great victories in the field than by his piety to his dead father Philip, whose bloody death he avenged as soon as he came into the throne, slaying the murderers upon his father's tomb. O, show thou, Christian, thy pity to thy dear Saviour by falling upon thy cursed lusts, and that speedily! Never rest till thou hast had their blood that shed his.

Till thou dost this thou art consenting to all the cruelty that was executed on him. This, this is the 'honour' which all 'the saints shall have,' and therefore the 'two-edged sword' of the Spirit is put into their hands that they may execute the vengeance written.

Second. Is God reconciled to thee? Be thou willing to be reconciled to any that have wronged thee. Thy God expects it at thy hands. Thou hast reason to pardon thy brother for God's sake, who pardoned thee for his pure mercies' sake. Thou, in pardoning, dost no more than thou owest thy brother, but God pardoned thee when he did owe thee nothing but wrath. Thou needest not, I hope, think that thou dishonourest thyself in the act, though it be to the veriest beggar in the town. Know thou dost it after thy betters. Thy God stooped lower when he reconciled himself to thee, yea, sought it at thy hands, and no dishonour, neither, to the high and lofty One. Nay, by implacableness and revenge, thou debasest thyself the most thou canst likely do; for, by these, thou stoopest not only beneath thy heaven-born nature, but beneath thy human nature. It is the devil, and none but such as bear his image, that are implacable enemies. Hell-fire it is that is unquenchable. 'The wisdom from above' is 'easy to be entreated.' Thou a Christian, and carry hell-fire about thee! How can it be? When we see a child, that comes of merciful parents, furious and revengeful, we use to say, 'We wonder of whom he got his currish, churlish disposition, his father and mother were not so.' Who learns thee, O Christian, to be so revengeful and unmerciful? Thou hast it not of thy heavenly Father, I am sure.

Third. Is God at peace with thee? Hath he pardoned thy sins? Never, then, distrust his providence for anything thou wantest as to this life. Two things, well weighed, would help thy faith in this particular.

1. When he pardoned thy sins he did more for thee than this comes to. And, did he give the greater, and will he grudge thee the less? Thou hast Christ in thy pardon bestowed on thee. 'How shall he not with him also freely give thee all things?' Rom. 8:32. When the father gives his child the whole orchard, it were folly to question he gives him this apple or that in it — 'all things are yours,' and 'ye are Christ's,' 1 Cor. 3:22. The reconciled soul hath a right to all. The whole world is his. But, as a father who, though he

settles a fair estate on his child, yet lets him hold no more in his own hand than he can well manage; so God gives believers a right to all the comforts of this life, but proportions so much out to them for their actual use, as his infinite wisdom sees meet, so that he that hath less than another in his present possession, ought to impute it not to any want of love or care in God, but to the wisdom both of his love and care, that gives stock as we have grace to work it out. We pour the wine accordingly as the cup is. That which but fills one would half be lost if poured into a less.

2. Consider how God gives these temporals to those he denies peace and pardon to. Though, within a while, they are to be tumbled into hell, yet while on earth his providence reacheth unto them. And, doth God feed these 'ravens,' unclean birds? Doth he cause his rain to drop fatness on their fields, and will he neglect thee, thinkest thou, that art a believer? If the prince feeds the traitor in prison, surely the child in his house shall not starve. In a word, to allude to that, Luke 12:28, if God in his providence so abounds to the to the ungodly, as we see he doth, if he 'so clothe the grass,' for to this the wicked may well be compared, 'which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into hell's burning oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?'

Fourth. Art thou at peace with God? O show then no discontent at any cross or affliction that God visiteth thee withal! If he hath visited thee first with his mercy, thou hast reason to bid him kindly welcome when he comes to visit thee with his rod. Thou hast sugar by thee now to sweeten thy bitter cup. When the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem, it is said, 'The elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably!' 1 Sam. 16:4, 5. Thus when God comes with some heavy affliction to us, it may make us tremble till we know what it comes for, whether peaceable or no. Now, if thou beest at peace with God the fear is over, it cannot but come peaceably; thou mayest conclude it comes on mercy's errand.

What condition canst thou, O pardoned soul, be in, that should part thee and the joy of thy peace with God? Is it the wrath of man thou fearest? Possibly thou hast many enemies, and those great ones, and their wrath as great as such can express. Let it be so.

Is God among them or no? Doth God let out their wrath in his wrath against thee? If not, thou exceedingly wrongest God, if overmuch troubled, and thyself also. Thou wrongest God by not sanctifying his name in thy heart, whose mercy, I hope, is able to secure thee from their wrath: 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' Rom. 8:31. Thou needest not fear them though an army of them were about thee—no more than if they were so many wisps of straw. And thou wrongest thyself also: for how, indeed, can we wrong God and not ourselves? So long as thou art under the power of such a fear from man's wrath, thou canst never have the taste of God's love in its true sweetness.

Again, art thou sick, poor, and what not beside? May not God reasonably expect that reconciling mercy should stop thy mouth from whispering any word of discontent against him, and prevent all envious glances of thy eye at the prosperity of the wicked? Remember, man, that thou canst say one great word which they cannot, in the midst of all their pomp and worldly glory. 'Though I lie here poor and sick, yet I am, through mercy, at peace with God.' This, well thought on, would soon change both your notes—the joy of the prosperous sinner into bitter mourning, and thy sorrow, Christian, into joy. The Lady Elizabeth—afterwards England's gracious queen—hearing a simple milk-maid sing merrily in the field, when the poor princess, being then a sorrowful prisoner, had more mind to sigh than sing, though served at the same time in state as a princess, said, 'That poor maid was happier than herself.' And so would the sinner, how great and high soever in the world, think the poorest Christian, with his rags and penury, a better man, and happier in his liberty, and peace with God, than himself in all his grandeur and worldly gaieties, did he but consider that in the midst of all these he is a prisoner, not to man, but God, out of whose hands there is no escaping.

Fifth. Comfort thyself with this, that thou, who art at peace with God now on earth, shalt feast with God ere long in heaven. 'And whom he justified, them he also glorified,' Rom. 8:30. And do not think this news to be too good or great to be true. Here is a word for it, you see. Heaven's number of glorified saint's is made up of justified sinners. Neither more nor less of the one than of the other. Art thou justi-

fied by faith, by which thou hast peace with God? Then, lose not thy privilege, but rejoice with thy fellow-saints, 'in hope of the glory of God.' It is before thee. Every day brings thee nearer to it, and nothing can hinder thee of it at last. Not thy sins themselves, and I know thou fearest them most. He that paid thy great score at thy conversion will find mercy enough in his heart, surely, to pass by thy dribbling debts, which thy own infirmity, and Satan's subtlety, have run thee into. Thou wert an enemy when God thought of doing the first, but now thou art a friend; and this will oblige him to do the second, that he may not lose his disbursement in the first; yea, provision is made by God in this method of our salvation for the one, as strongly as for the other. Christ died to make us, of enemies to God, friends with him, and he lives now to bring God and us, being thus made friends, to meet in one heaven together. Yea, the apostle gives the advantage to this of the two for our faith to triumph in. 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life,' Rom. 5:10. As if the apostle had said, 'Can you believe that God hath taken you that were bloody enemies, into a state of peace and favour with himself? Surely, then, you must needs find it easier for your faith to argue from reconciliation to salvation, than from hostility to enmity to pardon and peace. Could Christ procure the one by his death, when he was weakest, as I may so say, and at the lowest descent of his humiliation; how much more shall he, in the height of his court-favour in heaven—when he hath all power given him, and in particular 'the keys of the hell and death' to open and shut as he pleaseth—to be able to save those whom he hath reconciled?' Rev. 1:18.

Sixth. Art thou at peace with God? Knowing the goodness of God to thyself, then do thou woo in some others to embrace the same mercy. The house is not so full, but 'yet there is room,' Luke 14:22. Hast thou none thou lovest so well as to wish them thy happiness? Haply, thou hast a carnal husband lying by thy side, children of thy womb or loins, neighbours in whose company thou art every day almost, and all these in an unreconciled state—who, should they die as now they live, their precious souls are lost for ever, and yet themselves think no more of this misery com-

ing on them, than the silly sheep doth, as to what the butcher is doing, when he is whetting his knife to cut her throat. Well, the less merciful they are to their own souls, the more need there is thou shouldst show thy compassion towards them. We take most care of those that are least capable of taking care for themselves. If thou hadst a friend sick in thy house, and of such a disease that he could not help himself, should he die rather than thou wouldst look after him? If a child were condemned to die, though he did himself not mind the getting of a pardon, yet surely thou wouldst run and ride to obtain it, rather than see him end his days so shamefully. In a word, didst thou but know thy next neighbour had an intention to foredo himself, and for that end had locked himself up in a room, wouldst thou not bestir thee to break up the door, rather than the man should thus miscarry? But alas, where is the holy violence that is used to save poor souls? Parents, husbands, neighbours, they can see their relations going to hell before their eyes, and who saith to them, Why do you so? O, for the Lord's sake, be more merciful to the souls of others. Thou hast found a feast, let not any that are near thee starve for want of knowing where it is to be had. Go and invite all thou canst see to God's house. So did David: 'O taste and see that the Lord is good,' Ps. 34:8. Thou needst not fear a chiding from God for sending him more guests. He complains he hath no more. 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,' John 5:40. He threatens those that keep sinners off from making their peace with him, by flattering them with a false one, called a 'strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life,' Eze. 13:22. O how acceptable a work then must it needs be to woo souls to Christ! The merchant is not angry for sending a customer into his warehouse that will buy what he hath taken so much cost and travail to get that he may sell. Nor will the physician blame any for bringing a patient to him, by whose cure he may let the world know his skill and art. And this is the great design Christ hath long had in particular prayed for, viz. 'that the world might believe he was sent of God,' John 17:21. What aims he at in the gathering in of souls by the grace of the gospel, but 'to take out of them a people' from the heap of sinners 'for his name,' Acts 15:14, that is, cull out a number, in showing mercy to whom he might

exalt his own name gloriously.

SECOND KIND OF PEACE.

[PEACE OF CONSCIENCE
the blessing of the gospel.]

We come now to the second kind of peace, and that is peace of consolation, or peace of conscience. By the former—peace of reconciliation—the poor sinner is reconciled to God; by this, he becomes *anima pacata sibi*—a soul reconciled to itself. Since man fell out with God, he could never be truly friends with his own conscience. This second peace is so necessary, that he cannot taste the sweetness of the first, nor indeed of any other mercy, without it. This is to the soul what health is to the body, it sugars and sweetens all enjoyments. A suit, though of cloth of gold, sits not easy on a sick man's back. Nothing joyous to a distressed conscience. Moses brought good news to the distressed Israelites in Egypt, but it is said, 'They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit,' Ex. 6:9. Hannah, she went up to the festival at Jerusalem with her husband, but it is said, 'She wept, and did not eat,' I Sam. 1:7. Truly, thus the wounded soul goes to the sermon, but doth not eat of the feast before it; hears many precious promises, but her ear is shut up from receiving the good news they bring. Tell one in trouble of conscience, here is your dear husband, [your] sweet children, will you not rejoice with them; alas, the throes such a one feels are so amazing, that he regards these things no more than Phinehas' wife in her sore travail did the woman that joyed her with the birth of a son. Set the most royal feast before such a soul that ever was on prince's table, and, poor heart, it had rather go into a corner and weep, than sit and eat of those delicacies. 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' yea, who can cure? Some diseases are, for their incurableness, called *ludibrium medicorum*—the physician's shame and reproach. To be sure this spiritual trouble of an accusing conscience puts all the world to shame for their vain attempts. Many have attempted to conjure this evil spirit out of their own bosoms and others'; but have found it at last to leap upon them, and prevail against them, as the 'evil spirit' did by the

sons of Sceva, Acts 19:14.

No, peace of conscience, I am now to show, is the blessing of the gospel, and only of the gospel. Conscience knows Jesus, and the gospel of Jesus; these and none else it will obey. Two particulars considered will demonstrate the truth of the point. First. If we consider what is the argument that pacifies and satisfies conscience. Second. If we consider what the power is and strength required to apply this argument so close and home to the conscience as to quiet and fully satisfy it. Both these will be found in the gospel, and only in the gospel.

[THE ARGUMENT which gives peace
to the conscience.]

First. Let us inquire what is the argument that is able to pacify conscience when thoroughly awakened. Now to know this, we must inquire what is the cause of all those convulsions of horror and terror with which the consciences of men are at any time so sadly rent and distorted. Now this is sin. Could this little word—but great plague—be quite blotted out of men's minds and hearts, the storm would soon be hushed, and the soul become a pacific sea, quiet and smooth, without the least wave of fear to wrinkle the face thereof. This is the Jonah which raiseth the storm—the Achan that troubles the soul. Wherever this comes, as was observed of a great queen in France, a war is sure to follow. When Adam sinned, he dissolved another manner of jewel than Cleopatra did, he drank away this sweet peace of conscience in one unhappy draught, which was worth more to him than the world he lived in, Heb. 10:2. No wonder that it rose in his conscience as soon as it was down his throat—'they saw that they were naked.' Their consciences reproached them for cursed apostates. That therefore which brings peace to conscience must prostrate this Goliath—throw this troubler overboard—pluck this arrow out of the soul—or else the war will not end, the storm will not down, the wound will not close and heal which conscience labours under. Now the envenomed head of sin's arrow, that lies

burning in conscience, and, by its continual boking⁸ and throbbing there, keeps the poor sinner out of quiet—yea, sometimes in unsupportable torment and horror—is guilt. By it the creature is alarmed up to judgment, and bound over to the punishment due to his sin; which, being no less than the infinite wrath of the eternal living God, must needs lay the poor creature into a dismal agony, from the fearful expectation thereof in his accusing conscience. He, therefore, that would use an argument to pacify and comfort a distressed conscience that lies roasting upon these burning coals of God's wrath kindled by his guilt, must quench these coals, and bring him the certain news of this joyful message—that his sins are all pardoned; and that God, whose wrath doth so affright him is undoubtedly, yea everlastingly, reconciled to him. This and no other argument will stop the mouth of conscience, and bring the creature to true peace with his own thoughts. 'Son, be of good cheer,' said Christ to the palsied man, 'thy sins be forgiven thee,' Matt. 9:2. Not, be of good cheer, thy health is given thee (thou gh that he had also); but, thy 'sins are forgiven thee.'

If a friend should come to a malefactor on his way to the gallows, put a sweet posy into his hands, and bid him 'be of good cheer, smell on that,' alas! this would bring little joy with it to the poor man's heart, who sees the place of execution before him. But if one comes from the prince with a pardon, which he puts into his hand, and bids him be of good cheer; this, and this only, will reach the poor man's heart, and overrun it with a sudden ravishment of joy. Truly, anything short of pardoning mercy is as considerable to a troubled conscience towards any relieving or pacifying of it, as that posy in a dying prisoner's hand would be. Conscience demands as much to satisfy it as God himself doth to satisfy him for the wrong the creature hath done him. Nothing can take off conscience from accusing but that which takes off God from threatening. Conscience is God's sergent he employs to arrest the sinner. Now the sergent hath no power to release his prisoner upon any private composition between him and the prisoner, but listens whether the debt be fully paid, or the creditor

8. Boke — to nauseate, to vomit, to belch. — Halliwell.

be fully satisfied; then, and not till then, he is discharged of his prisoner. Well, we have now only one step to go further, and we will bring this demonstration to a head.

From what quarter comes this good news, that God is reconciled to a poor soul, and that his sins are pardoned? Surely from the gospel of Christ, and no other way besides. Here alone is the covenant of peace to be read betwixt God and sinners; here the sacrifice by which this pardon is purchased; here the means discovered by which poor sinners may have benefit of this purchase; and therefore here alone can the accusing conscience find peace. Had the stung Israelites looked on any other object besides the brazen serpent, they had never been healed. Neither will the stung conscience find ease with looking upon any besides Christ in the gospel promise. The Levite and the priest looked on the wounded man, but would not come near him. There he might have lain and perished in his blood for all them. It was the good Samaritan that poured oil into his wounds. Not the law, but Christ by his blood, bathes and supplies, closeth and cureth, the wounded conscience. Not a drop of oil in all the world to be got that is worth anything for this purpose besides what is provided and laid up in this gospel vial. There was abundance of sacrifices offered up in the Jewish church; yet, put all the blood of those beasts together which was poured out from first to last in that dispensation, and they were not able to quiet one conscience or purge away one sin. The ‘conscience of sin,’ as the apostle phraseth it, Heb. 10:2—that is, guilt in their conscience—would still have remained unblotted notwithstanding all these, if severed from what was spiritually signified by them. And the reason is given, ver. 4, ‘for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.’ There is no proportion betwixt the blood of beasts, though it should swell into a river—a sea, and the demerit of the least sin. Man’s sin deserves man’s death, and that eternal, both of body and soul, in hell. This is the price God hath set upon the head of every sin. Now, the death of beasts being so far beneath this price which divine justice demands as satisfaction for the wrong sin doeth him, it must needs be as far beneath pacifying the sinner’s conscience—which requires as much to satisfy it, yea, the very same, as it doth to satisfy the justice of God himself.

But in the gospel, behold, joyful news is brought to the sinner’s ears, of a fountain of blood there opened, which for its preciousness is as far above the price that divine justice demands for man’s, as the blood of bulls and beasts was beneath it, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ, who freely poured it out upon the cross, and by it ‘obtained eternal redemption for us,’ Heb. 9. This is the door all true peace and joy comes into the conscience by. Hence we are directed to bottom our confidence and draw our comfort here, and nowhere else: ‘Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,’ Heb. 10:22. Mark that, ‘sprinkled from an evil conscience.’

Conscience, by office, is appointed to judge of a man’s actions and state, whether good or bad, pardoned or unpardoned. If the state be good, then it is to acquit and comfort; if evil, then to accuse and condemn him; therefore the ‘evil conscience’ here, is the accusing conscience. From this ‘evil conscience’ we are said to be ‘sprinkled,’ that is, freed by the blood of Christ sprinkled on us. It is sin the evil conscience accuseth of, and wrath, the due punishment for that, it condemns the poor creature unto; and to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ is to have the blood of Christ applied to the heart by the Spirit, for pardon and reconciliation with God. Sprinkling in the law did denote the cleansing of the person so sprinkled from all legal impurities; yea, the believing soul from all sinful uncleanness by the blood of Christ, which was signified by the blood of those sacrifices. Therefore David prays, ‘Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,’ Ps. 51:7—that is, apply the blood of Christ to my troubled conscience, as they did with the bunch of hyssop did the blood of the beast into which it was dipped upon the leper, to cleanse him, ‘then,’ saith he, ‘I shall be clean,’ Lev. 14:6. This sin, which now doth affright my conscience, shall be washed off, and I at peace, as if I had never sinned. To this sprinkling of blood the Holy Ghost alludes, where we are said in the gospel administration to be ‘come...to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,’ Heb. 12:24, that is, ‘better things’ in the conscience. Abel’s blood, sprinkled in the guilt of it upon Cain’s conscience, spake swords and daggers, hell and damnation; but the blood of Christ sprinkled

in the conscience of a poor trembling sinner speaks pardon and peace. Hence it is called 'the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,' I Pet. 3:21. An answer supposeth a question, an 'answer toward God' supposeth a question from God to the creature. Now the question God here is supposed to propound to the poor creature may be conceived to be this, viz. what canst thou say—who art a sinner, and standest by the curse of my righteous law doomed to death and damnation—why thou shouldst not die the death pronounced against every sinner?

Now the soul that hath heard of Christ, and hearing of him hath received him by faith into his heart, is the person, and the only person, that can answer this question so as to satisfy God or himself. Take the answer as it is formed and fitted for, yea, put into the mouth of every believer, by the apostle Paul, 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,' Rom. 8:34. Such an answer this is that God himself cannot object against it, and therefore St. Paul, representing all believers, triumphs in the invincible strength thereof against all the enemies of our salvation, 'who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' ver. 35, and proceeds to challenge in death and devils, with all their attendants, to come and do their worst against believers who have got this breast-work about them, and at last he displays his victorious colours, and goes out of the field with this holy confidence, that none—be they what they will—shall ever be able to hurt them: 'I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,' Rom. 8:38, 39. In him he lodgeth his colours, and lays up all his confidence. But I am afraid I have been too long; if I can be said to be too long on this subject—the richest vein in the whole mine of gospel treasure.

[THE POWER REQUIRED so to apply this argument as to give peace of conscience.]

Second. This second demonstration is taken from the strength and power required to press this argument home to the conscience, so as to quiet and

fully satisfy it. Conscience is a lock that goes hard; though the key fit it (I mean the argument used to comfort it be suitable and strong), yet, if this key be in a weak hand, that cannot turn it in this lock—as it is whenever a mere creature holds it—conscience will not open; its doubts and fears will not be resolved. No, this must be the work of the Spirit, or else it will never be done. Conscience is God's officer; and, though the debt be paid in heaven, yet it will not let the soul go free, till a warrant comes from thence to authorize it. And who can bring this but the Spirit of God? Thus as it is not in all their power that are about the poor prisoner to comfort him, till news come from court what the prince means to do with him; so here in this case. 'When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?' Job 34:29. Now two things I shall do for the bringing of this demonstration to a head. 1. I shall show that the gospel alone presents the Spirit of God to us under the notion of a Comforter. 2. I shall show the admirable fitness and sufficiency of the Holy Spirit to pacify and comfort a guilty troubled conscience. The first will evince that peace of conscience is nowhere else to be found but from the gospel; the second will show that it is there abundantly to be found.

1. It is the gospel alone that presents the Spirit of God as a Comforter to poor sinners. Indeed the comforting office of the Spirit is founded on the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. When Christ had shed his blood, and in it laid down upon the nail the full price of a sinner's peace with God; then, at his return to heaven, he prays his Father to send the Comforter. Neither could Christ desire this request of his Father, nor his Father grant it to him, but upon the account of this his death, which secures the justice of God from receiving any damage by the comfort which the Spirit carries into the believing sinner's bosom. Christ tells his disciples thus much, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you,' John 16:7. Pray, mark the Spirit, as a Comforter, stays till Christ goes to heaven to send him down, and no room for Christ there, till the work was done he came about. And what was that, but, by his bloody death, to purchase peace with God for poor believing sinners? Now let him come when he will. The Spirit is ready to be sent as a com-

forter, as soon as he appears in the heavens with his blood as an intercessor. But whence then had the Old Testament saints all their peace and comfort, who lived before Christ returned to heaven, yea, before he took his first journey from heaven, I mean to earth? I answer, 'Upon the same account they had their comfort, that they had their pardon.' They were pardoned through the blood of Christ, who was virtually a lamb slain from the beginning of the world; and they were comforted by the Spirit of Christ, whose comforting office bears the same date with Christ's mediatorial office. As all their pardons were issued out upon the credit of Christ, who stood engaged in the fulness of time to lay down his life; so all the comfort which the Spirit of Christ issued out into their consciences, was upon the same credit of Christ, who should, as in the fulness of time die on earth for sinners, so appear also in the heavens—by virtue of the satisfaction that his death should make—there to intercede with the Father for a comforter. Thus you see the first thing. The Spirit as a comforter hath his office from the gospel covenant, and could never have spoken a word of comfort, but upon this gospel account. Hence it is, when the Father sends him as a comforter, he sends him in Christ's name, who hath made up the breach betwixt him and sinners, John 14:26—that is, for his sake and at his entreaty. Yea, when the Spirit doth comfort, what is it he saith? The joyful news he brings is gospel intelligence, 'He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak,' John 16:13. The meaning is [that] when he comes to teach, he shall not bring new light, different from what shines in the gospel, but what truth Christ preached in the gospel, that he shall teach. When he comforts, the ingredients which his soul-reviving cordials shall be made of, are what grow in the gospel garden, as ver. 14: 'He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you'—that is, my death, my merit, my resurrection, my ascension and intercession, my promises purchased and sealed with my blood—these he shall take and make report of to you, for your eternal joy and comfort. So that, if it had not been for these, the Spirit, who is Christ's messenger, would have wanted an errand of this comfortable nature to have brought unto poor sinners, yea, instead of a comforter, he would have been an accuser and a tormentor. He

that now bears witness with our spirits for our reconciliation, adoption, and salvation, would have joined in a sad testimony with our guilty consciences against us, for our damnation and destruction.

2. I am to show the admirable fitness of the Spirit for this comforting office, which the gospel reveals him to have, for the pacifying and satisfying the consciences of poor disconsolate sinners. You have heard the gospel affords an argument sufficient to satisfy the most troubled conscience in the world—to wit, the full satisfaction which Christ by his precious blood hath made to God for sinners—but, if poor man had been left to improve this as well as he could for his comfort, he might have lain long enough roaring in the horror of his scorched conscience without ease, for want of one to drop this cooling healing balm into it. But, as both the wisdom and love of God appeared in providing an able Saviour to purchase eternal redemption for us; so also a meet Comforter, as able to apply this purchased redemption to us. His consolations are called 'strong consolations.' Christ showed his strength, when he unhinged the gates of the grave, and made his way out of that dark prison by his glorious resurrection. By this he was 'declared to be the Son of God with power,' as the apostle hath it, Rom. 1:4. And truly, it requires no less power to break open the dungeon, wherein the guilty conscience lies shut up, as one free among the dead in his own despairing thoughts. For, if you observe it well, the same stone and seal are upon the sinner's conscience to keep him down from a resurrection of comfort, as was on Christ's grave to keep him down from a resurrection to life. What was the heaviest stone, the strongest seal, upon dead Jesus to keep him from rising? Not the stone man rolled upon him, not the seal the Jews thought to fasten the grave with, but the curse of the law for sin, which divine justice rolled upon him. This pressed heaviest upon Christ without all compare. The angel himself that rolled away the stone could not have removed the curse. Now, look in upon the distressed conscience's grave, where its own guilt hath laid it. What is that? no other than the lowest hell in its fears and present dismal apprehensions. I am damned, I am for ever an undone creature, is the language such a one rings continually in his own ears. But inquire, what is it that keeps him down in this grave? what hinders, but

the poor wretch may be helped out of this pit of horror, and receive some comfort? Alas he will tell you, that it is but in vain to comfort him; this ointment is all wasted to no purpose, which you pour upon his head. No, he is an undone sinner. The curse of God sticks like a dagger in his heart; the wrath of God lies like a mountain of lead on his conscience. Except you can put your hand into his bosom, and pluck out the one, or by main force roll off the other, it is impossible he should be raised to any peace or comfort in his miserable conscience. You see it is the same gravestone on both. But for thy eternal comfort know, poor heart, that art thus fast laid under the sense of the curse due to thy sins, know that as the weight that keeps thee from comfort is the same which lay on Christ to keep him from life; so the same power and strength is sent to raise thee to comfort, that enabled Christ to rise to life. That Spirit, who kept the Lord Jesus from seeing corruption in the grave; that restrained death, when it had Christ in its very mouth, so as it could no more feed on him than the whale could digest Jonah in her belly; yea that quickened his dead body, and raised him with honour, not only to life, but immortality also—is he that Christ sends for his messenger, to come and satisfy the trembling consciences of his poor children on earth concerning his love, yea his Father's love to them for his sake. This blessed Spirit hath all the properties of a comforter. He is also pure and holy, he cannot deceive; called therefore 'the Spirit of truth,' John 14. If he tell thee thy sins are pardoned, thou mayest believe him. He will not flatter. If thy were not so pardoned he would have brought another message to thee; for he can chide and reprove as well as comfort, convince of sin as well as of righteousness. He is so wise and omniscient, that he cannot be deceived. Never did the Spirit of God knock at the wrong doors, and deliver his letters into a wrong hand, as a man may do, especially where persons are very like. The Spirit exactly knows the heart of God to the creature, with all his counsels concerning him: 'The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,' I Cor. 2:10. And what are those 'deep things of God' the apostle means, but the counsels of love, which lie deep in his heart, till the Spirit draws them forth and acquaints the creature with them? That appears by ver. 9. And he also knows the whole frame

of man's heart. It were strange indeed if he that made the cabinet should not know every secret box in it. Some few men have compassed that we call the greater world. But the little world of man, as we call him, never did any creature encircle with his knowledge, no not the devil himself, who hath made it his work so many thousands of years to make a full discovery of it. But the Spirit of God doth know him, intus est in cute—as we say, thoroughly; and knowing both these, he cannot be deceived.

In a word, he is so irresistible, that none can hinder the efficacy of his comforts. The pardon brought by Nathan to David did not lie so close as the holy man desired; and therefore away goes he to beg comfort of the Comforter, Ps. 51. There you find him on his knees praying hard to have his lost joy restored, and his trembling heart established by the free Spirit of God. Though thou canst baffle man, and through thy own melancholy fancy, and the sophistry of Satan, who coins distinctions for thee, evade the arguments that Christians and ministers bring for thy comfort; yet, when the Spirit comes himself, all disputes end. The devil cannot chop logic with him. No; then the lying spirit vanisheth, and our own fears too, as the darkness flees before the sun. So sweetly and powerfully doth the comforting Spirit overrun the heart with a flood of joy that the soul can no more see her sins in the guilt of them, than Noah could the mole-hills when the whole earth was under water.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[A reproof to three sorts of persons.]

Use first. Is peace of conscience the blessing of the gospel? This reproveth three sorts of persons.

1. Sort. The Papists, who interpretatively deny that peace of conscience is the blessing of the gospel, for they deny that any person can know in this life, unless by an extraordinary revelation, that he is a child of God, and one that shall be saved—which, if true, would stave all to pieces the vessel in which the Christian's joy and inward peace is kept. Whence comes the peace we have with our own consciences, but from the knowledge we have of our peace with God? 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,' Rom. 5:1. If the poor soul be left at uncertainties here, and the gospel cannot resolve to it what its state is for hell or heaven, farewell to all inward peace. The poor Christian may then say of himself, with a trembling heart, what St. John saith, in another case, of him that hateth his brother, 'He walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth,' 1 John 2:11. Truly then the gospel might rather be called the gospel of fears and doubts, than the gospel of peace. But is that the top of the blessing the gospel brings to saints, which was almost the bottom of the curse that the law denounced against sinners?—that 'their life should hang in doubt before them; and they shall fear day and night, and should have no assurance of life,' Deut. 28:66. Bold men they are that dare so wretchedly disfigure the sweet face of the gospel; making Christ in his precious promises speak as doubtfully to his saints, as the devil did in his oracles to his devotees. Because their hypocrisy makes them justly question their own salvation, and will not suffer them to apply the comfort of the promises to themselves, must they therefore seal up these wells of salvation from those that are sincere, and then lay the blame on the gospel which is due only to their own wickedness? But there is a mystery of iniquity which hath at last been found to be at the root of this uncomfortable doctrine of theirs. They are a little akin to Judas, who was a thief, and carried the bag. These have a bag, too, into which they put more gold and silver, that this doctrine brings them in, than ever Judas had in his. Though the doctrine of gospel-grace to poor sinners' would bring more peace to others' consciences—might it be seen in its naked glory among them—yet the superstitious fear which they keep ignorant souls in, brings more money to their purses; and this lies so near the heart of their religion, that gospel, Christ, heaven, and all, must bow unto it.

2. Sort. Those are to be reprov'd, who frame very unlovely images in their own foolish imaginations of the gospel—as if there was nothing less than peace of conscience and inward comfort to be found in it—and all, because they see some that profess it, who cannot show that they have got any more peace and comfort since their acquaintance with the gospel

than they had before, or than themselves have who are yet strangers to it; yea may be, discover more trouble of spirit. Such I would desire to take these following particulars, by way of answer, into their serious consideration.

(1.) Consider all that are not true Christians that hang upon the gospel by profession. And no blame can be laid on the gospel, though it doth not lavish out this treasure to every one that scrapes acquaintance with it. The Spirit of God is too wise and faithful to set his seal to a blank. The minister indeed offers peace to all that will accept it. But where the peace of the gospel meets with a false heart, it will not stay there, 'If the house be not worthy, let your peace return to you,' Matt. 10:13. As the dove returned to the ark again, when it found the earth under water, so doth the Spirit of God carry his comfort back with him to heaven from a soul that is yet in the suds of sin, soaking in his abominations. Where can this heavenly dove find rest for the sole of her foot in such a soul? And will he speak peace to that soul in which himself can find no rest?

(2.) As for those that are sincere, true-hearted Christians, there are several considerations which will vindicate the gospel to answer its name, and to be a gospel of peace and consolation.

(a) Some that are sincere Christians, do not so clearly understand the doctrine of the gospel as others; and the want of light, of joy, and comfort in their consciences comes from that want of light in their understandings. The ignorance of the workman doth not disparage the art. Plus est in arte, quam in artifice—there is more in an art than the attainment of the artist. There is a fulness of comfort in the principles of the gospel, but every Christian hath not attained to the 'riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,' which the apostle directs the Colossians to, as a sovereign means whereby 'their hearts might be comforted,' Col. 2:2.

(b) Some that do understand the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ—the only foundation to build and rear up true comfort and peace of conscience on—yet may, by their negligence in their Christian course—not walking carefully by the rule of the gospel—deprive themselves at present of this

sweet peace, which otherwise might flow into their bosoms from the promises of the gospel. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them,' Gal. 6:16. And if so, what blame can be laid on the gospel? Be the pen never so good, and the hand never so skilful, it will not write on wet paper; yet we do not fault the hand or pen, but the paper. If the heart—though of a saint never so eminent—be under the defilement of a present lust, not repented of, no promise will speak peace to him; he is a disorderly walker, and the Spirit hath his rod to whip such. No sweetmeats of joy and peace to entertain them withal in that night.

(3.) As for those which do walk close to the rule of the gospel—I mean by a sincere endeavour—and thou seest no such peace and comfort, as we speak of, that they have, I answer,

(a) They may have it, and thou not know it. The saint's joy and peace is not such a light giggling joy as the world's; *res severa verum gaudium*—true joy is a real thing. The parlour, wherein the Spirit of Christ entertains the Christian, is an inner room, not next to the street, for every one that goes by to smell the feast. 'The stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy,' Prov. 14:10. Christ and the soul may be at supper within, and thou not so much as see one dish go in, or hear the music that sounds so sweetly in the Christian's ears. Perhaps thou thinkest he wants peace, because he doth not hang out a sign in his countenance of the joy and peace he hath within. Alas, poor wretch! may not the saint have a peaceful conscience with a solemn, yea sad countenance, as well as thou and thy companions have a sorrowful heart, when there is nothing but fair weather in your faces? 'In laughter the heart is sorrowful,' Prov. 14:13. Sure he means the wicked man's laughter. It never looks more like rain with them than when it shines. Their conscience lowers when their face laughs. So, on the contrary, there is never more inward peace and comfort to be found in a saint's bosom, than sometimes when his face is blubbered with tears. Shouldst thou come in and hear the Christian bemoaning himself, and complaining with sighs and sobs of his sins against God, thou wouldst go home, and cry out of this melancholy religion, and the sad condition this man was in. And yet he whom thou so pitiest can desire thee to save it for thyself, and not spend it in vain for him; for he would not part with that very sorrow

that scares thee so much, for all the joy which the world, with all its gallantry, when best set forth, could afford. There is a mystery in this sorrow which thou canst not unriddle. Know therefore that there is a sorrow and anguish of heart which ariseth from the guilt of sin and the fearful apprehensions of God's wrath due to sin; and another that flows, not from fear of wrath arising from guilt, but from the sense of sin's inbeing in the soul, provoking the Christian to do that which is dishonourable to that God who hath pardoned his sins to him; and this is the sorrow which sometimes makes the saints go for sad uncomfortable creatures, when all the same time their hearts are as full of comfort from the sense of God's pardoning mercy as they can hold. This sorrow is but like a summer shower, melted by the sense of God's love, as that by the warm sun, and leaves the soul—as that doth a garden of sweet flowers—on which it falls, more fresh and odoriferous.

(b) Though some precious souls, that have closed with Christ, and embraced the gospel, be not at present brought to rest in their own consciences, but continue for a while under some dissatisfactions and troubles in their own spirits; yet even then they have peace of conscience in a threefold respect. In *precio*, in *promisso*, in *semine*—in what purchases it, in the promise, and in the gem.

Every true believer hath peace of conscience in *precio*—in the price. The gospel puts that price into his hand which will assuredly purchase it, and that is the blood of Christ. We say, 'That is gold which is worth gold'—which we may anywhere exchange for gold. Such is the blood of Christ. It is peace of conscience, because the soul that hath it, may exchange it for this. God himself cannot deny the poor creature that prays on these terms, 'Lord, give me peace of conscience, here is Christ's blood the price of it.' That which could pay the debt, surely can procure the receipt. Peace of conscience is but a discharge under God's hand that the debt due to divine justice is fully paid. The blood of Christ hath done that the greater for the believer, it shall therefore do this the less. If there were such a rare potion, that did infallibly procure health to every one that takes it, we might safely say, as soon as the sick man hath drunk it down, that he hath drunk his health; it is in him, though at present he doth not feel himself to have it, in time it

will appear.

Every true believer hath peace of conscience in promisso—in the promise. And that we count as good as ready money in the purse, which we have sure bond for, Ps. 29:11. ‘The Lord will bless his people with peace.’ He is resolved on it, and then who shall hinder it? It is worth your reading the whole psalm, to see what weight the Lord gives to this sweet promise, for the encouragement of our faith in expecting the performance thereof; nothing more hard to enter into the heart of a poor creature—when all is in an uproar in his bosom, and his conscience threatening nothing but fire and sword, wrath and vengeance, from God for his sins—than thoughts or hopes of peace and comfort. Now, the psalm is spent is showing what great things God can do, and that with no more trouble to himself than a word speaking. ‘The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty,’ ver. 4. ‘It breaketh the cedars; it divideth the flames; it shaketh the wilderness; it maketh the hinds to calve.’ This God that doth all this, promiseth to bless his people with peace, outward and inward. For without this inward peace, though he might give them peace, yet could he never bless them with peace as he here undertakes. A sad peace, were it not, to have quiet streets, but cutting of throats in our houses? yet infinitely more sad is it to have peace both in our streets and houses, but war and blood in our guilty consciences. What peace can a poor creature taste or relish, while the sword of God’s wrath lies at the throat of conscience—not peace with God himself? Therefore Christ purchased peace of pardon, to obtain peace of conscience for his pardoned ones; and accordingly hath bequeathed it in the promise to them. ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,’ John 14:27. There, you see, he is both the testator to leave and the executor of his own will—to give out with his own hands what his love hath left believers; so that there is no fear, but his will shall be performed to the full, seeing himself lives to see it done.

Every believer hath this inward peace in semine—in the seed. ‘Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,’ Ps. 97:11. Where sown, but in the furrows of the believer’s own bosom, when principles of grace and holiness were cast into it by the Spirit of God? Hence it is called ‘the peace-

able fruit of righteousness,’ Heb. 12:11. It shoots as naturally from holiness as any fruit in its kind doth from the seed proper to it. It is indeed most true, that this seed runs and ripens into this fruit sooner in some than it doth in others. This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other that is outward doth. But here is the comfort, whoever hath a seedtime of grace pass over his soul, shall have his harvest-time also of joy. This law God hath bound himself to, as strongly as for the other; which are ‘not to cease while the earth remaineth,’ Gen. 8:22; yea, more strongly, for that was to the world in general, not to every particular country, town or field in these, which may want a harvest, and yet God keep his word; but God cannot perform his promise, if any one particular saint should everlastingly go without his reaping time. ‘He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him,’ Ps. 126:6. And therefore you who think so basely of the gospel and the professors of it, because at present their peace and comfort is not come, know it is on the way to them, and comes to stay everlastingly with them; whereas your peace is going from you every moment, and is sure to leave you without any hope of returning to you again. Look not how the Christian begins, but ends. The Spirit of God by his convictions comes into the soul with some terrors, but it closeth with peace and joy. As we say of March, ‘It enters like a lion, but goes out like a lamb.’ ‘Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace,’ Ps. 37:37.

3. Sort. This reproves those that think to heal their consciences with other than gospel balm; who leave the waters of living comfort, that flow from this fountain opened in the gospel by Christ, to draw their peace and comfort out of cisterns of their own hewing, and they are two—a carnal cistern, and a legal cistern.

(1.) Some think to draw their peace out of a carnal cistern. There is not more variety of plasters and foolish medicines used for the cure of the ague of the body, than there is of carnal receipts used by self-deceiving sinners to rid themselves of the shaking ague which the fear of God’s wrath brings upon their guilty consciences. Some, if they be but a little awakened by the word, and they feel their hearts chill with-

in them, from a few serious thoughts of their wretched undone condition, fall to the physic of Felix; who, as soon as his conscience began to be sick at Paul's sermon, had enough of the preacher, and made all the haste he could to get that displeasing noise out of his head: 'Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way,' Acts 24:25. Thus many turn their back off God, run as far as they can from those ordinances, that company, or anything else that is likely to grate upon their consciences, and revive the thoughts of their deplored state, which all their care is to forget. Such a one I have heard of, that would not be present at any funeral; could not bear the sight of his own gray hairs, and therefore used a black-lead comb to discolour them; lest, by these, the thoughts of death, which he so abhorred, should crowd in upon him. A poor cowardly shift, God knows! yet all that this wretch had, and all that many more have, betwixt them and a hell above ground in their consciences. Others, their light is so strong, and glares on them so constantly, that this will not do, but wherever they go, though they hear not a sermon in a month, look not on a Bible in a year, and keep far enough from such company as would awake their consciences, yet they are haunted with their own guilt. And therefore they do not only go 'from the presence of the Lord,' as Cain did, Gen. 4:16; but as he also made diversion of those musing thoughts which gathered to his guilty conscience, by employing them another way in 'building a city,' ver. 17, so do they labour to give their consciences the slip in a crowd of worldly businesses. This is the great Leviathan that swallows up all the thoughts of heaven and hell in many men's hearts. They are so taken up with that project and this, that conscience finds them not at leisure to exchange a few words with them of a long time together. Conscience is as much hunched at and spited among sinners, as Joseph was among the patriarchs. That which conscience tells them, likes them no better than Joseph's dream did his brethren; and this makes many play the merchants with their consciences, as they did with him—which they do by bribing it with the profits of the world. But this physic is found too weak also; and therefore Saul's harp, and Nabal's feast, is thought on by others. With these they hope to drown their cares, and lay their raving consciences asleep, like some ruffian that is under an arrest for debt, and hath no way, but now

to prison he must go, except he can make the sergeant drunk in whose hand he is; which he doth, and so makes an escape. Thus many besot their conscience with the brutish pleasures of sin; and when they have laid it as fast asleep in senseless stupidity as one that is dead drunk, then they may sin without control till it wakes again. This is the height of that peace which any carnal recipe can help the sinner unto—to give a sleeping potion, that shall bind up the senses of conscience for a while, in which time the wretch may forget his misery, as the condemned man doth when he is asleep; but as soon as it awakes, the horror of his condition is sure again to affright him worse than before. God keeps you all from such a cure for your troubles of conscience, which is a thousand times worse than the disease itself. Better to have a dog that will, by his barking, tell us a thief is in our yard, than one that will still, and let us be robbed before we have any notice of our danger.

(2.) Some draw their peace of conscience from a legal cistern. All the comfort they have is from their own righteousness. This good work, and that good duty, they bless themselves in, when any qualm comes over their hearts. The cordial drink which they use to revive and comfort themselves with, is drawn, not from the satisfaction which Christ by his death hath given to God for them poor sinners, but from the righteousness of their own lives; not from Christ's intercession in heaven for them, but [from] their own good prayers on earth for themselves. In a word, when any spark of disquiet kindles in their consciences—as it were strange, if, where so much combustible matter is, there should not at one time or other some smothering fire begin in such a one's bosom—then, not Christ's blood, but their own tears, are cast to quench it. Well, whosever thou art that goest this way to work to obtain peace of conscience, I accuse thee as an enemy to Jesus Christ and his gospel. If any herb could be found growing in thy garden to heal the wounds of thy conscience, why did the Lord Christ commend for such a rarity the balm which he came from heaven on purpose to compound with his own blood? why doth he call sinners from all besides himself as comforters of no value, and bid us come to him, as ever we would find rest for our souls? Matt. 11:28. No; know, poor creature, and believe it—while the knowing of it may do thee good—either

Christ was an impostor, and the gospel a fable, which I hope thou art not such an infidel, worse than the devil himself, to believe; or else thou takest not the right method of healing thy conscience wounded for sin, and laying a sure bottom for solid peace in thy bosom. Prayers and tears—repentance I mean—good works and duties, these are not to be neglected; nay, thou canst never have peace without them in thy conscience; yet these do not, cannot, procure this peace for thee, because they cannot thy peace with God. And peace of conscience is nothing but the echo of pardoning mercy, which, sounding in the conscience, brings the soul into a sweet rest with the pleasant music it makes. And the echo is but the same voice repeated; so that, if prayers and tears, good duties and good works, cannot procure our peace of pardon, then not our peace of comfort. I pray remember I said, ‘You can never have inward peace without these; and yet not have it by these.’ A wound would hardly ever cure, if not wrapped up from the open air, and also kept clean; yet not these, but the balm cures it. Cease therefore, not from praying and the exercise of any other holy exercise of grace or duty, but from expecting thy peace and comfort to grow from their root, or else thou shuttest thyself out from having any benefit of that true peace which the gospel offers. The one resists the other; like those two famous rivers in Germany, whose streams, when they meet, will not mingle together. Gospel peace will not mingle and incorporate, as I may so say, with any other. Thou must drink it pure and unmixed, or have none at all. ‘We,’ saith holy Paul for himself, and all other sincere believers, ‘are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,’ *Phl.* 3:3. As if he had said, ‘We are not short of any in holy duties and services, nay, we exceed them, for we worship God in the Spirit; but this is not the tap from whence we draw our joy and comfort; we rejoice (fiducially) in Christ Jesus, not in the flesh,’ where, that which he called worshipping God in the Spirit, now, in opposition to Christ and rejoicing in him, he calls flesh.

They are to be proved from hence, who do indeed use the balm of the gospel for the healing of conscience-wounds; but who use it very unevangelically. The matter they bottom their peace and comfort on, is right and good—Christ and the mercy of

God through him in the promise to poor sinners. What can be said better? But they do not observe gospel rule and order in the applying it. They snatch the promise presumptuously, force and ravish it, rather than seek to have Christ’s consent—like Saul, who was in such haste that he could not stay till Samuel came to sacrifice for him, but boldly falls to work before he comes, flat against order given him. Thus many are so hot upon having comfort, that they will not stay for the Spirit of God to come and sprinkle their consciences with the blood of Christ in gospel order; but profanely do it themselves, by applying the comfort of those promises which indeed at present does not belong to them. O sirs, can this do well in the end? Should he consult well for his health, that will not stay for the doctor’s direction, but runs into the apothecary’s shop, and on his own head takes his physic, without the counsel of the physician how to prepare it, or himself for the taking of it? This every profane wretch doth, that lives in sin, and yet sprinkles himself with the blood of Christ, and blesseth himself in the pardoning mercy of God. But let such know that, as the blood of the paschal lamb was not struck on the Egyptians’ doors, but the Israelites’; so neither is the blood of Christ to be sprinkled on the obstinate sinner, but on the sincere penitent. Nay, further, as that blood was not to be spilt on the threshold of an Israelite’s door, where it might be trampled on, but on the side posts; so neither is the blood of Christ to be applied to the believer himself while he lies in any sin unrepented of, for his present comfort. This were indeed to throw it under his foot to be trod upon. David confesseth his sin with shame, before Nathan comforts him with the news of a pardon.

[Four characters of gospel peace.]

Use Second. Let this doctrine be as a touchstone to try the truth of your peace and comfort; hath it a gospel stamp upon it? The devil hath his false mint of comfort as well as of grace; put thyself therefore to the trial, while I shall lay before you some characters of the peace that Christ in his gospel speaks to his people.

1. Character of gospel peace. Gospel comfort may be known by the vessel it is poured into, which is

a broken heart. The promise is superscribed by name to such, and such only. 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,' Isa. 57:15. Christ's commission from his Father binds him up; he can comfort none besides. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,' Isa. 61:1. And what he receives himself from the Father, the same he gives to those he sends upon the same errand. First, he gives his Spirit, concerning whom he tells his disciples, that 'the Comforter, when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,' John 16:8. Mark, first of sin; and as for his inferior messengers, they have direction to whom they are to apply the comforts of the gospel. 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not,' Isa. 35:3. And upon their peril be it, if they pour this ointment upon the head of an unhumiliated sinner; to give such any comfort, by promising life to him, as he is. God protests against it; he calls it a lie, a 'strengthening the hands of the wicked,' and as much as in them lies, by blowing him up with a false comfort, to make sure that he shall never have the true peace.

Thus you see the order of the gospel in comforting souls. As in needle-work, the sad groundwork is laid before the beautiful colours; as the statuary cuts and carves his statue before he gilds it; so doth the Spirit of Christ beginning with sadness, ends in joy; first cuts and wounds, then heals and overlays the soul with comfort and peace. I hope that you do not think I limit the Holy One in his workings to the same degree and measure in all. I have opened my thoughts in another place concerning this. But so far the convincing, humbling work of the Spirit goes in every soul before peace and comfort comes, as to empty the soul of all her false comforts and confidences which she had laid up; that the heart becomes like a vessel whose bottom is beat out, and all the water it held thereby split and let out. The sins it loved, now it hates. The hopes and comforts it pleased itself with, they are gone, and the creature left in desolate solitary condition. No way now it sees,

but perish it must, except Christ be her friend, and interpose betwixt hell and it. To him she therefore makes her moan, as willing to follow his counsel, and to be ordered by his direction, as every patient was by his physician, of whose skill and care he is thoroughly satisfied. This I call 'the broken heart,' which if you be wholly strangers to, your acquaintance is to begin with gospel peace. I beseech you, rest not till you have an answer from your consciences. What is it they say? was your wine once water? doth your light arise out of darkness? is your peace the issue of a soul-conflict and trouble? did you bleed before you were healed? You may hope it is a kindly work of God's gracious Spirit; make much of it, and bless thy God that hath given this wine to cheer thy sad heart. But if thou commencest per saltum—by a leap, hast thy wine, before thy pots were filled with water—[if] thy morning be come, before thou hast had thy evening—thy peace be settled, before thy false peace is broken—thy conscience sound and whole, before it is lanced, and the putrid stuff of thy pride, carnal confidence, and other sins thou hast lived in, be let out—[if so,] thou mayest have some ease for a while; but know it, the Lord Jesus denies it to be his cure. The strong man's house kept 'in peace,' Luke 11:21, as well as the good man's. It requires more power to work true sorrow, than false joy and peace. A happier man thou wouldst be, if mourning in the distress of a troubled conscience, than dancing about this idol peace, which the devil, thy sworn enemy, mocks thee withal.

2. Character of gospel peace. Gospel peace is obtained in a gospel way, and that is twofold.

(1.) Gospel peace is given to the soul in a way of obedience and holy walking. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, Gal. 6:16. Now this rule you may see, to be the rule of the 'new creature,' ver. 15. And what is that, but the holy rule of the word? to which the principles of grace planted in the soul of a believer are so fitted, that there is not a more connatural⁹ agreement betwixt the eye and light, than betwixt the disposition of this new nature in a saint, and the rule of holiness in the word. Now, it is

9. Connatural, connected by nature; INBORN; of the same nature. — From Webster's. — SDB

not enough for one to be a new creature, and to have a principle of grace in his bosom, but he must actually walk by this rule, or else he will be to seek for true peace in his conscience. No comfort in the saints is to be found, but what the Comforter brings. And he who commands us to 'withdraw from them' (though our brethren) 'that walk disorderly,' II Thes. 3:6, will himself surely withdraw from such, and withhold his comforts, so long as they are disorderly walkers; which they are as long as they walk beside this rule. And therefore, if thou be such a one, say not the Spirit brought thy comfort to thy hand; for he would not bid thee good speed in an evil way. No; he hath been withdrawn as a Comforter ever since thou hast withdrawn thy foot from walking by the holy rule. All thy peace, which thou pretendest to have in this time, is base-born; and thou hast more cause to be ashamed of it, than to glory in it. It is little credit to the wife, that she hath a child when her husband is abroad, and cannot father it; and as little to pretend to comfort, when the Spirit of Christ will not own it.

(2.) Gospel peace is given in the soul in a way of duty, and close attendance on God in his ordinances. 'Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.' II Thes. 3:16—that is, bless all means of comforting and filling your souls with inward peace, so that he who drives no trade in ordinances, and brags of his peace and comfort, speaks enough to bring the truth of it into suspicion in the thoughts of sober Christians. I know God can by immediate illapses¹⁰ of his Spirit comfort the Christian, and save him the labour of hearing, praying, meditating; but where did he say he would? Why may we not expect a harvest as well without sowing and ploughing, as peace without using the means? If we were like Israel in the wilderness—in such a state and posture, wherein the means is cut from us, and not by pride or sloth put from us, as sometimes it is the Christian's condition [when] he is sick, and knocked off from ordinances, or, by some other providence as pressing, shut out from the help of this means or that—then I should not wonder to see comfort lie as thick in his

soul as manna about the Israelites' tents; but as God would not rain bread any longer, when once they had corn, of which with their labour might make bread, Joshua 5:11, 12, so neither will the Lord comfort by a miracle, when the soul may have it in an ordinance. God could have taught the eunuch, and satisfied him with light from heaven, and never have sent for Philip to preach to him. But he chooseth to do it out of Philip's mouth, rather than immediately out of his own, no doubt to put honour on his ordinance.

3. Character of gospel peace. Gospel peace in the conscience is strengthening and restorative. It makes the Christian strong to fight against sin and Satan. The Christian is revived, and finds his strength come, upon a little tasting of this honey; but O what a slaughter doth he make of his spiritual enemies, when he hath a full meal of this honey, a deep draught of this wine! now he goes like a giant refreshed with wine into the field against them. No lust can stand before him. It makes him strong to work. O how Paul laid about him for Christ! He 'laboured more abundantly than they all.' The good man remembered what a wretch he once was, and what mercy he had obtained; the sense of this love of God lay so glowing at his heart, that it infired him with a zeal for God above his fellow-apostles. This made holy David pray so hard to drink again of this wine, which so long had been locked up from him. 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee,' Ps. 51:12, 13. Pray mark, it was not his lickerish palate after the sweet taste of this wine of comfort that was the only or chief reason why he so longed for it; but the admirable virtue he knew in it, to inspirit and empower him with zeal for God. Whereas the false peace and comfort of hypocrites is more heady than hearty; it leaves them as weak as they were before; yea, it lies rotting, like unwholesome food in the stomach, and leaves a surfeit in their souls—as luscious summer fruits do in the bodies of men—which soon breaks out in loose practices. Thieves commonly spend their money as ill as they get it; and so do hypocrites and formalists their stolen comforts. Stay but a little, and you shall find them feasting some lust or other with them. 'I have peace-offerings with me,' saith the religious whore—the hypocritical harlot—'this day I have paid

10. ILLAPSE, n. illaps'. [See Lapse.] A sliding in; an immission or entrance of one thing into another.

1. A falling on; a sudden attack. — From Webster's 1828 Dictionary — SDB

my vows, therefore I came forth to meet thee,' Prov 7:14, 15. She pacifies her conscience and comforts herself with this religious service she performs; and now, having, as she thought, quit scores with God, she returns to her own lustful trade; yea, emboldens herself from this, in her wickedness. 'Therefore came I forth to meet thee,' as if she durst not have played the whore with man till she had played the hypocrite with God, and stopped the mouth of her conscience with her peace-offering. Look, therefore, I beseech you, very carefully, what effect your peace and comfort have in your hearts and lives. Are you the more humble or proud for your comfort? do you walk more closely or loosely after your peace? how stand you to duties of worship? are you made more ready for communion with God in them, or do you grow strange to and infrequent in them? have you more quickening in them, or lie more formal and lifeless under them? In a word, can you show that grace and peace grow in thee alike? or doth the one less appear, since thou doest more pretend to the other? By this thou mayest know whether thy peace comes from the peace-maker, or peace-marrer, from the God of truth or the father of lies.

4. Character of gospel peace. Gospel peace comforts the soul, and that strongly, when it hath no other comfort to mingle with it. It is a cordial rich enough itself, and needs not any other ingredient to be compounded with it. David singles out God by himself. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,' Ps. 73:25. Give David but his God, and let who will take all besides; let him alone to live comfortably, may he but have his love and favour. Hence it is that the Christian's peace pays him in the greatest revenues of joy and comfort, when outward enjoyments contribute least, yea nothing at all, but bring in matter of trouble. 'But David encouraged himself in his God,' 1 Sam. 30:6. You know when that was. If David's peace had not been right and sound, he would have been more troubled to think of God at such a time than of all his other disasters. 'Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them,' Ps. 119:165. This distinguishes the saint's peace, both from the worldling's and the hypocrite's.

(1.) From the worldling's. His peace and comfort, poor wretch, runs dregs as soon as creature-

enjoyments run a tilt—when poverty, disgrace, sickness, or anything else, crosseth him in that which he fondly doted on, then his night is come, and day shut up in dismal darkness. In this respect it is, that Christ, as I conceive, opposeth his peace to the world's. 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,' John 14:27. Pray mark, Christ is laying in arguments of comfort for his disciples against his departure, which he knew would go so near their hearts. One amongst the rest is taken from the difference of that peace and comfort which he leaves them, from what the world gives. If he had said, If the peace and comfort you have from me lay in such things as the world's peace is made up of—plenty, ease, outward prosperity, and carnal joy—truly then you had reason to be the greatest mourners at my funeral that ever followed friend to the grave; for after my departure you are like to have none of these; nay, rather expect trouble and persecution. But know, the peace I have with you is not in your houses, but hearts; the comfort I give you lies not in silver and gold, but in pardon of sin, hopes of glory, and inward consolations, which the Comforter that is to come from me to dwell with you, shall, upon my appointment, pay into your bosoms; and this shall outlive all the world's joy. This is such a legacy as never any left their children. Many a father dying, hath in a farewell speech to his children, wished them all peace and comfort when he should be dead and gone; but who besides Jesus Christ could send a comforter into their hearts, and thrust peace and comfort into their bosoms? Again, it distinguisheth the true Christian's peace,

(2.) From the hypocrite's. He, though he pretends to place his comfort, not in the creatures, but in God, and seems to take joy in the interest which he lays claim to have in Christ and the precious promises of the gospel; yet, when it comes indeed to the trial, that he sees all his creature-comforts gone, and not like to return anymore—which at this time had his heart, though he would not it should be thought so—and now he sees he must in earnest enter into another world, to stand or fall eternally, as he shall then be found in God's own scrutiny to have been sincere or false-hearted in his pretensions to Christ and his grace; truly, then recoil his thoughts, his conscience

flies in his face, and reproacheth him for spiritual cozenage¹¹ and forgery. Now, soul, speak, is it thus with thee? does thy peace go with thee just to the prison door, and there leave thee? Art thou confident thy sins are pardoned all the while thou art in health and strength, but as soon as ever the sergeant knocks at the door to speak with thee—as soon as death, I mean, comes in sight—do thy thoughts then alter, and thy conscience tells thee he comes to prove thee a liar in thy pretended peace and joy? This is a sad symptom. I know indeed that the time of affliction is a trying time to grace; that is true. The sincere Christian for a while may, like a valiant soldier, be beat from his artillery, and the enemy Satan may seem to possess his peace and confidence; yea, so far have some precious saints been carried down the stream of violent temptations, as to question whether their former comforts were from the Holy Spirit the Comforter, or the evil spirit the deceiver; yet their is great difference between the one and the other.

(a) They differ in their causes. This darkness, which sometimes is upon the sincere Christian's spirit in deep distress, comes from the withdrawing of God's lightsome countenance; but the horror of the other from his own guilty conscience, that before was lullabied asleep with prosperity, but now, being awakened by the hand of God on him, doth accuse him to have been false with God in the whole course of his profession. It is true, some particular guilt may be contracted by the Christian through negligence or strong temptation in his Christian course, for which his conscience may accuse him, and may further embitter the present desertion he is in so far, as from those particular miscarriages to fear his sincerity in the rest, though he hath no reason to do it; but his conscience cannot charge him of an hypocritical design, to have been the spring that hath set him on work through the whole course of his profession.

(b) They differ in their accompaniments. There is something concomitant with the Christian's present darkness of spirit, that distinguisheth it from the hypocrite's horror; and it is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very visible when his peace

and former comfort are most questioned by him. The less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy. The further Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer, as we see in Heman, 'Unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee,' Ps. 88:13. O the fervent prayers that then are shot from his troubled spirit to heaven, the pangs of affection which are springing after God, and his face and favour! Never did banished child more desire admittance into his angry father's presence, than he to have the light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now veiled from him. O how he searcheth his heart, studies the Scripture, wrestles with God for to give him that grace, the non-evidence of which at present makes him so question the comforts he hath formerly had! Might he but have true grace, he will not fall out with God for want of comfort, though he stays for it till the other world. Never did any woman big with child long more to have the child in her arms that is at present in her womb, than such a soul doth to have that grace which is in his heart—but through temptation questioned by him at present—evidenced to him in the truth of it. Whereas the hypocrite in the midst of all his horror doth not, cannot—till he hath a better heart put into his bosom—cordially love or desire grace and holiness for any intrinsic excellency in itself—only as an expedient for escaping the tormentor's hand, which he sees he is now falling into.

(c) They differ in the issue. The Christian—he, like a star in the heavens, wades through the cloud that, for a time, hides his comfort; but the other, like a meteor in the air, blazeth a little, and then drops into some ditch or other, where it is quenched. Or, as the Spirit of God distinguisheth them, 'The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp (or candle, as in the Hebrew) of the wicked shall be put out,' Prov. 13:9. The sincere Christian's joy and comfort is compared there to the light of the sun, that is climbing higher, while it is muffled up with clouds from our eye; and by and by, when it breaks out more gloriously, doth rejoice over those mists and clouds that seemed to obscure it; but the joy of the wicked, like a candle, wastes and spends—being fed with gross fuel of outward prosperity, which in a short time fails—and the

11. Cozenage; to cheat, defraud; the act of cozening or deception — From Webster's. — SDB

wretches comfort goes out in a snuff at last, past all hope of being lighted again. The Christian's trouble of spirit again is compared to a swooning fainting fit, which he within a while recovers. A qualm comes over the holy man's heart from the thought of his sins in the day of his great distress. 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me,' Ps. 40:12; but, before the psalm is at an end, after a few deep groans in prayer, ver. 13, 14, he comes again to himself, and acts his faith strongly on God 'yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer,' ver. 17. But the hypocrite's confidence and hope, when once it begins to sink and falter, it dies and perisheth. 'The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost,' Job 11:20.

THIRD KIND OF PEACE.

[PEACE OF LOVE AND UNITY
the blessing of the gospel.]

We come now to the third kind of peace, which I called a peace of love and unity. A heavenly grace this is, whereby the minds and hearts of men, that even now jarred and rang backwards are made tunable each to other; so as to chime all in to an harmonious consent and concord among themselves. Thus peace in Scripture is frequently taken, as you may see, Mark 9:50; Heb. 12:14; I Thes. 5:13. Now the gospel is a 'gospel of peace,' if taken in this notion also, which we shall briefly speak to from this note.

[The gospel alone can knit the hearts
of men in solid peace.]

The doctrine we lay down is, that the gospel, and only the gospel, can knit the hearts and minds of men together in a solid peace and love. This, next the reconciling us to God and ourselves, is especially designed by Christ in the gospel; and truly those [blessings] without this, would not fill up the saint's happiness; except God should make a heaven for every Christian by himself to live in. John Baptist's minis-

try, which was as it were the preface to and brief contents of, the gospel, was divided into these two heads, 'To turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,' Luke 1:16, and 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' ver. 17; that is, to make them friends with God and one another. This is the natural effect of the gospel, where it is powerfully and sincerely embraced—to unite and endear the hearts of men and women in love and peace together, how contrary soever they were before. This is the strange metamorphosis, which the prophet speaks shall be under the gospel, 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,' Isa. 11:6. That is, men and women, between whom there was a great feud and enmity as betwixt those creatures, they shall yet sweetly agree, and lie in one another's bosoms peaceably. And how all this, but by the efficacy of the gospel on their hearts? So 'for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,' ver. 9. Indeed it is in the dark when men fight, and draw upon one another in wrath and fury. If gospel light comes once savingly in, the sword will soon be put up. The sweet spirit of love will not suffer these doings where he dwells; and so peculiar is this blessing to the gospel, that Christ appoints it for the badge and cognizance by which not only they should know one another, but [by which] even strangers should be able to know them from any other sect and sort of men in the world, John 13:35. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' A nobleman's servant is known as far as he can be seen, by the coat on his back, whose man he is; so, saith Christ, shall all men know you, by your mutual love, that you retain to me and my gospel. If we would judge curiously of wine, [as to] what is its natural relish, we must taste of it, before it comes into the huckster's hands, or after it is refined from its lees. So, the best way to judge of the gospel and the fruit it bears, is to taste of it, either when it is professed and embraced, with most simplicity—and that was without doubt in the first promulgation—or, secondly, when it shall have its full effect on the hearts of men, and that is in heaven. In both these, though chiefly the last, this peace will appear to be the natural fruit of the gospel.

First. When the gospel was first preached and embraced, what a sweet harmony of peace and admir-

able oneness of heart was then amongst the holy professors of it, who but a while before were strangers to or bitter enemies one against another! They lived and loved, as if each Christian's heart had forsaken his own, to creep into his brother's bosom. They alienated their estates to keep their love entire. They could give their bread out of their own mouths to put it into their brethren's that were hungry; yea, when their love to their fellow-Christians was most costly and heavy, it was least grudged and felt by them. See those blessed souls, 'They sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart,' Acts 2:46. More, they are more merry now they have been emptying of their bags by charity, than if they had come from filling them by worldly traffic. So notorious was the love of Christians in the primitive times, that the very heathens would point at them, as Tertullian saith, and say, 'See how they love one another.' And therefore, if less love and peace be found now amongst Christians, the blame lies not on the gospel, but on them. The gospel is as peaceful, but they are *minùs evangelici*—less evangelical, as we shall further show.

Second. Look on the gospel, as at last, in the complement of all in heaven, when the hearts of saints shall be thoroughly gospelized, and the promises concerning the peaceable state of saints have their full accomplishment—then above all this peace of the gospel will appear. Here it puts out and in, like a budding flower in the spring; which one warm day opens a little, and another that is cold and sharp shuts it again. The 'silence' in the lower heaven—the church on earth—is but for 'the space of half an hour,' Rev. 8:1. Now there is a love and peace among Christians; anon, scandals are given, and differences arise, which drive this sweet spring back; but in heaven it is full blown, and so continues to eternity. There dissenting brethren are made thorough friends, never to fall out. There, not only the wound of contention is cured; but the scar which is here oft left upon the place, is not to be seen on the face of heaven's peace, to disfigure the beauty of it, which made the German divine so long to be in heaven—where, said he, Luther and Zuinglius are perfectly

agreed, though they could not be agreed on earth. But I come to give some particular account how the gospel knits the hearts and minds of men in peace together, and why the gospel alone can do this. While I clear one, I shall the other also.

[How the gospel knits the hearts of men in peace, and WHY it alone can do so.]

First. The gospel knits the hearts of men together, as it propounds powerful arguments for peace and unity; and indeed such as are found nowhere else. It hath cords of love to draw and bind souls together that were never weaved in nature's loom: such as we may run through all the topics of morality, and meet with [in] none of them, being all supernatural and of divine revelation, Eph. 4:3. The apostle exhorts them 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' And how doth he persuade them ver. 4-7. First, 'there is one body.' Such a one however, it is, as natural philosophy treats not of; but a mystical one, the church—which consists of several saints, as the natural body of several members; and, as it were strange to see one member to fall out with another—which all are preserved in life by their union together—so much more in the mystical body. Again there is 'one spirit.' That is the same holy Spirit which quickens them all that are true saints, and he is to the whole number of saints as the soul is to the whole man—informing every part. Now, as it were a prodigious violence to the law of nature, if the members, by an intestine war among themselves, should drive the soul out of the body, which gives life to them in union together; so much more would it be for Christians to force the Holy Spirit from them by their contentions and strifes; as indeed a wider door cannot easily be opened for them to go out at. Again, it presseth 'unity,' from the 'one hope of our calling,' where hope is put *pro re speratâ*—for the thing hoped for, the bliss we all hope for in heaven. There is a day coming, and it cannot be far from us, in which we shall meet lovingly in heaven, and sit at one feast without grudging one to see what lies on another's trencher. Full fruition of God shall be the feast, and peace and love the sweet music that shall sound to it. What folly is it then for us to fight here, who shall feast there? draw blood of one another here, that shall so quickly lie in

each other's bosom's? Now the gospel invites to this feast, and calls us to this hope. I might run through the other particulars, which are all as purely evangelical—as these, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism;' but enough to have given you a taste.

Second. The gospel doth this, as it takes away the cause of that feud and enmity which is among the sons and daughters of men. They are chiefly two—the curse of God on them, and their own lusts in them.

1. The feud and hostility that is among men and women is part of that curse which lies upon mankind for his apostasy from God. We read how the ground was cursed for man's sake, 'thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee,' saith God, Gen. 3:18. But a far greater curse it was, that one man should become as a thorn and briar, to fetch blood of another. Some have a fancy that the rose grew in paradise without prickles. To be sure man, had he not sinned, should never have been such a pricking briar as now the best of them is. These thorns that come up so thick in man's dogged, quarrelsome nature, what do they speak but the efficacy of God's curse? The first man that was born in the world proved a murderer; and the first that died, went to his grave by that bloody murderer's hand. May we not wonder as much at the power of God's curse on man's nature, that appeared so soon in Cain's malicious heart, as the disciples did at the sudden withering of the fig tree blasted by Christ's curse? And truly, it was but just with God to mingle a perverse spirit among them who had expressed so false a one to him. They deserved to be confounded in their language, and suffered to bite and devour one another, who durst make an attempt upon God himself, by their disobedience. Very observable is that in Zech. 11:10, compared with ver. 14. When once 'the staff of beauty,' ver. 10—which represented God's covenant with the Jews—was asunder, then presently the 'staff of bands'—which signified the brotherhood between Judah and Jerusalem—was cut asunder, also. When a people break covenant with God, they must not expect peace among themselves. It is the wisdom of a prince, if he can, to find his enemy work at home. As soon as man fell out with God, behold there is a fire of war kindled at his own door, in his own nature. No more bitter enemy now to mankind than itself. One man is a

wolf, yea a devil, to another. Now, before there can be any hope of true solid peace among men, this curse must be reversed; and the gospel, and only the gospel, can do that. There an expedient is found how the quarrel betwixt God and the sinner may be reconciled; which done, the curse ceaseth. A curse is a judiciary doom, whereby God in wrath condemns his rebel creature to something that is evil. But there is 'no condemnation' to him that is in Christ. The curse is gone. No arrow now in the bow of threatening; that was shot into Christ's heart, and can never enter into the believer's. God may whip his people, by some unbrotherly unkindness they receive from one another's hands, by way of fatherly chastisement—and indeed it is as sharp a rod as he can use in his discipline—the more to make them sensible of their falling out with him. But the curse is gone, and his people are under a promise of enjoying peace and unity; which they shall, when best for them, have performed to them.

2. The internal cause of all the hostility and feud that is to be found amongst men is lust that dwells in their own bosoms. This is the principle and root that bears all the bitter fruit of strife and contention in the world: 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' James. 4:1. This breaks the peace with God, ourselves, and others. If there be a fiery exhalation wrapped up in the cloud, we must look for thunder and lightning to follow; if lust in the heart, it will vent itself, though it rends peace of family, church, and kingdom. Now, before there can be a foundation for a firm, solid peace, these unruly lusts of men must be taken to. What peace and quiet can there be while pride, envy, ambition, malice, and such like lusts, continue to sit in throne and hurry men at their pleasure? Neither will it be enough for the procuring peace, to restrain these unruly passions, and bind them up, forcibly. If peace be not made between the hearts of men, it is worth nothing. The chain that ties up the mad dog will in time wear; and so with all cords break, by which men seem at present so strongly bound together, if they be not tied by the heart-strings, and the grounds of the quarrel be there taken away. Now the gospel, and only the gospel, can help us to a plaster, that can draw out of the heart the very core of contention and strife. Hear the apostle telling

us how himself and others his fellow-saints got cure of that malicious heart which once they were in bondage to. 'For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another,' Titus 3:3. Well, what was the physic that recovered them? See ver. 4, 5, 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' As if he had said, Had not this love of God to us in Christ appeared, and we been thus washed by his regenerating Spirit, we might have lain to this day under the power of those lusts, for all the help that any other could afford us. Mortification is a work of the Spirit. 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,' Rom. 8:13. And the gospel is the sacrificing knife in the hand of the Spirit. The word is called 'the sword of the Spirit,' as that which he useth to kill and slay sin within the hearts of his people.

3. As the gospel lays the axe to the root of bitterness and strife, to stub that up; so it fills the hearts of those that embrace it with such gracious principles as to incline to peace and unity. Such are self-denial—that prefers another in honour before himself, and will not jostle for the wall; long-suffering—a grace which is not easily moved and provoked; gentleness—which, if moved by any wrong, keeps the doors open for peace to come in at again, and makes him easy to be entreated. See a whole bundle of these sweet herbs growing in one bed, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,' Gal. 5:22. Mark, I pray, this is not fruit that grows in every hedge, but 'fruit of the Spirit'—fruit that springs from gospel seed. As the stones in the quarry, and cedars as they grew in the wood, would never have lain close and comely together in the temple, so neither could the one cut and polish, nor the other hew and carve themselves into that fitness and beauty which they all had in that stately fabric. No, that was the work of men gifted of God for that purpose. Neither can men and women, with all their skill and tools of morality, square and frame their hearts so as to fall in lovingly into one holy temple. This is the work of the Spirit, and that

also with this instrument and chisel of the gospel, to do; partly by cutting off the knottiness of our churlish natures, by his mortifying grace; as also by carving, polishing, and smoothing them, with those graces which are the emanations of his own sweet, meek, and Holy Spirit.

USE AND APPLICATION.

[Difference between the peace among saints and that of the wicked.]

Use First. What we have now learned of gospel peace as a peace of love and unity, helps us what to think of that peace and love which sometimes is to be found among the wicked of the world. It is not true peace and solid love, because they are strangers to the gospel that alone can unite hearts together. What then shall we call this their peace? In some, it is a mere conspiracy. 'Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy,' Isa. 8:12. The peace of some is rather founded in wrath to the saints that in love among themselves. They are united—but how?—no other way than Samson's foxes, to do mischief to others, rather than good to themselves. Two dogs that are worrying one another, can leave off to run both after a hare that comes by them; who, when the chase is over, can to it as fiercely as before. 'In the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves,' Luke 23:12. Again, the peace and unity of others is founded upon some base lust that ties them together. Thus shall you see a knot of 'good fellows,' as they miscall themselves, set over the pot with abundance of seeming content in one another. And a pack of thieves, when upon a wicked design, jug and call one another together, as partridges their fellows, saying, 'Come with us; cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse,' Prov. 1:14. Here now is peace and unity, but alas! they are only 'brethren in iniquity.' Thirdly, where it is not thus gross; as it cannot indeed be denied but there are some that never felt the power of the gospel so as to be made new creatures by it, who yet hold very fair quarter one with another, and correspond together; and that not on so base and

sordid an account, among whom such offices of love are reciprocated as do much sweeten their lives and endear them one to another; and for this they are much beholden to the gospel, which doth civilize oft, where it doth not sanctify. But this is a peace so fundamentally defective, that it doth not deserve the name of true peace.

1. The peace of the wicked is in cortice non in corde—superficial and external, not inward and cordial. We may say, rather their lusts are chained from open war than their hearts are changed into inward love. As the beasts agreed in the ark pretty well, yet kept their hostile nature, so do unregenerate men.

2. The peace of the wicked is unsanctified peace. (1.) Because, while they seem to have peace with one another, they have not peace with God; and it is peace with God takes away the curse. (2.) Because it proceeds from unsanctified hearts. It is the altar that sanctifies the gift; the heart, the unity. *Amicitia non esti inter bonos*—friendship exists only between the good. A heathen could say this—that true love and friendship can only be between good men; but alas he knew not what made a good man. When God intends in mercy to make the hearts of men ‘one,’ he first makes them ‘new,’ ‘and I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you,’ *Eze. 11:19*. The peace of the right kind is a fruit of the Spirit, and that sanctifies before it unifies. (3.) Because the end that all such propound in their love is carnal, not spiritual. As Austin did not admire Cicero for his eloquence and oratory so much as he did undervalue and pity him because the name of Jesus Christ was not to be found in him; so, this draws a black line upon carnal men’s peace and unity—nothing of God and Christ in it. Is it his glory they aim at? Christ’s command that binds them to the peace? No alas! here is the ‘still voice,’ but God is not in it. Their own quiet and carnal advantage is the *primum mobile*—prime motive. Peace and unity are such good guests, and pay so well for their entertainment, that this makes their men who have no grace, if they have but their wits left, desirous but to keep up an external peace among themselves.

3. The peace of the wicked is, in a word, a peace that will not long last, because it wants a strong cement. Stones may a while lie together without mortar, but not long. The only lasting cement for love is

the blood of Christ; as Austin sayeth of his friend Alypius and himself, they were sanguine *Christi glutinati*—cemented in their friendship by the blood of Christ.

[The sin of ministers who stir up strife.]

Use Second. Is the gospel a gospel of peace in this sense as taken for unity and love?—this dips their sin into a deep die, who abuse the gospel to a quite contrary end, and make it their instrument to promote strife and contention withal. Such the apostle speaks of, ‘Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife,’ *Php. 1:15*. The gospel of peace is a strange text, one would think, to preach division and raise strife from; and the pulpit as strange a mount for to plant the battering pieces of contention on. O how strangely do these men forget their Lord that sent them, who is a Prince of peace! and their work, which is not to blow a trumpet of sedition and confusion, or sound an alarm to battle, but rather a joyful retreat from the bloody fight wherein their lusts had engaged them against God and one another. Indeed there is a war they are to proclaim, but it is only against sin and Satan; and I am sure we are not fit to march out against them till we can agree among ourselves. What would the prince think of that captain who, instead of encouraging his soldiers to fall on with united forces as one man against a common enemy, should make a speech to set his soldiers together by the ears among themselves? surely he would hang him up for a traitor. Good was Luther’s prayer, *A doctore glorioso, à pastore contentioso, et inutilibus quæstionibus liberet ecclesiam Deus*—from a vain-glorious doctor, a contentious pastor, and nice questions, the Lord deliver his church. And we, in these sad times, have reason to say as hearty an amen to it as any since his age. Do we not live in a time when the church is turned into a sophister’s school? where such a wrangling and jangling hath been that the most precious truths of the gospel are lost already to many. Their eyes are put out with the dust these contentions have raised, and they have at last fairly disputed themselves out of all their sober principles; as some ill husbands that light among cunning gamesters, and play all their money out of their purses. O woe to such vile men, who have prostituted the gospel to

such devilish ends! God may have mercy on the cheated souls to bring them back to the love of the truth, but for the cheaters, they are gone too far towards hell that we can look for their return.

This gives us the reason why there is no more peace and unity among the saints themselves. The gospel cannot be faulted that breathes peace. No! it is not because they are gossellers, but because they are but imperfectly gosselled, that they are no more peaceful. The more they partake of the spirit of the gospel, the less will they be haunted with the evil spirit of contention and strife. The best of saints are in part unevangelical in two particulars, from which come all the unkind quarrellings and unbrotherly contests among them.

1. Christians are unevangelical in their judgments; 'they know but in part, and prophesy but in part,' 1 Cor. 13:9. He that pretends to more than this boasts without his measure, and doth thereby discover what he denies—his ignorance, I mean, in the gospel. And this defect and craze that is in the saints' judgments exposeth them sometimes to drink in principles that are not evangelical. Now, these are they that make the bustle and disturb their peace and unity. All truth is reducible to a unity; like lines they lovingly meet in one center—the God of truth—and are so far from jostling and clashing, that, as stones in an arch, they uphold one another. They then which so sweetly agree in one themselves cannot learn us to divide. No, it is this strange error that creeps in among the saints, and will needs be judge; this breaks the peace, and kindles a fire in the house, that in a while, if let alone, will be seen at the house-top. Wholesome food makes no disturbance to a healthy body; but corrupt food doth presently make the body feverish and untoward, and then, when the man is distempered, no wonder if he begins to be pettish and peevish; we have seen it by woful experience. Those from whom we had nothing but sweetness and love while they fed on the same dish of gospel truth with us, how strangely froward are they grown since they have taken down some unevangelical and erroneous principles! We know not well how to carry ourselves towards them they are so captious and quarrelsome; yea, at the very hearing of the word, if they have not yet forgot the way to the ordinance, what a distasteful behaviour do many of them show, as if every word

went against their stomach, and made them sick! O sirs, let us not blame the gospel, it is innocent as to these sad contentions among us. Paul tells us where to find a father for this brat of strife. See at whose door he directs us to lay it: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ye have learned,' Rom. 16:17. I pray observe how he clears the gospel here. This dividing quarrelling spirit is contrary to the gospel; they never learned it in Christ's school. And then he tacitly implies that they have it somewhere else, from some false teacher and false doctrine or other. 'Mark them,' saith he, as if he had said, 'Observe them well, and you shall find them tainted some way or other.' They have been warming themselves at Satan's fire, and from thence have brought a coal with them, that does the mischief.

2. Christians are in part unevangelical in their hearts and lives. The whole root of sin is not stubbed up at once; no wonder some bitter taste remains in the fruit they bear. Saints in heaven shall be all grace, and no sin in them, and then they shall be all love also; but here they are part grace, part corruption, and so their love is not perfect. How can they be fully soldered together in unity never to fall out, as long as they are not so fully reconciled to God, in the point of sanctification, but now and then there are some breeches betwixt them and God himself? And the less progress the gospel hath made in their hearts to mortify lust and strengthen grace, the less peace and love is to be expected among them. The apostle concludes from the contentions among the Christians at Corinth, that they were of little growth in grace, such as were not past the child's spoon and meat. 'I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal,' 1 Cor. 3:2. Nay, he conceives this to be so clear evidence, that he appeals to their consciences if it be not so. 'For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?' ver. 3. But as grace strengthens, and the gospel prevails on the hearts of Christians, so does love and a spirit of unity increase with it. We say 'older and wiser;'—though children, when young, do scratch and fight, yet when they get up into years, they begin to agree better. *Omne invalidum est naturá quærum*—those that are young and weak are

peevish and quarrelsome. Age and strength bring wisdom to overcome those petty differences that now cannot be borne. In the controversy between the servants of Abraham and Lot, Abraham, who was the elder and stronger Christian, was most forward for peace, so as to crave it at the hands of his nephew, every way his inferior. Paul, who was a Christian higher by the head than others—O how he excelled in love!—he saith of himself, 1 Tim. 1:14, ‘The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;’ where, saith Calvin, *fides incredulitati opponitur; dilectio in Christo sævitix quam exercuerat adversus fideles*—faith is opposed to his former obstinate unbelief, when a Pharisee; love in Christ Jesus, to the cruelty he expressed against Christians, when, breathing slaughter, he went on a persecuting errand to Damascus. Now he was as full of faith as then of unbelief, now as fire-hot of love to the saints as then of cruelty against them. But that I quote chiefly the place for, is to see how this pair of graces thrive and grow together; if abundant in faith, then abundant in love.

[Exhortation to saints to maintain
and promote peace.]

Use Third. What we have learned of gospel peace as a peace of love and unity, brings a seasonable exhortation to all the saints, that they would nourish peace what they can among themselves. You all profess to have been baptized into the spirit of the gospel, but you do not show it when you bite and snarl at one another. The gospel, that makes wolves and lambs agree, doth not teach the lambs to turn {into} wolves and devour each other. Our Saviour told the two disciples whose choler was soon up, that they would be fetching fire from heaven to go on their revengeful errand, that they little thought from what hearth that wild-fire of their passion came: ‘Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,’ Luke 9:55. As if he had said, Such fiery wrathful speeches do not suit with the meek Master you serve, nor with the gospel of peace he preacheth to you. And if the gospel will not allow us to pay our enemies in their own coin, and give them wrath for wrath, then much less will it suffer brethren to spit fire at one another’s faces. No, when any such embers of contention begin to smoke

among Christians, we may show who left the spark—no other but Satan; he is the greatest kindle-coal of all their contentions. If there be a tempest, not in the air, but in the spirits of Christians, and the wind of their passions be high and loud, it is easy to tell who is the conjurer. O it is the devil, who is practicing his black art upon their lusts, which yet are so much unmortified as gives him too great an advantage of raising many times sad storms of division and strife among them. Paul and Barnabas set out in a calm together, but the devil sends a storm after them—such a storm as parted them in the midst of their voyage: ‘And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other,’ Acts 15:39. There is nothing, next Christ and heaven, that the devil grudged believers more than their peace and mutual love. If he cannot rend them from Christ, stop them from getting heaven, yet he takes some pleasure in seeing them go thither in a storm; like a shattered fleet severed one from another, that they may have no assistance from, nor comfort of, each other’s company all the way; though, where he can divide he hopes to ruin also, well knowing this to be the most probable means to effect it. One ship is easier taken than a squadron. A town, if it can be but set on fire, the enemy may hope to take it with more ease; Let it therefore be your great care to keep the devil’s spark from your powder. Certainly peace among Christians is no small mercy, that the devil’s arrows fly so thick at its breast. Something I would fain speak to endear this mercy to the people of God. I love, I confess, a clear and still air, but, above all, in the church among believers; and I am made the more sensible what a mercy this would be, by the dismal consequence of these divisions and differences that have for some years together troubled our air, and filled us with such horror and confusion, that we have not been much unlike that land called Terra del Fuego—the land of smoke, because of the frequent flashings of lightnings and abundance of smoke found there. What can I compare error to, better than smoke? and contention to, better than to fire? a kind of emblem of hell itself, where flames and darkness meet together to increase the horror of the place. But, to press the exhortation a little closer, give me leave to provoke you by three arguments to peace and unity.

1. Argument. The Christian should seek peace for Christ's sake. And methinks, when begging for his sake I should have no nay. When you pray to God and do but use his name in the business, you are sure to speed. And why should not an exhortation, that woos you for Christ's sake, move your hearts to duty, as a prayer put up by you in his name, moves God's heart to mercy? Indeed, how can you in faith use Christ's name as an argument to unlock God's heart to thee, which hath not so much credit with thyself as to open thy own heart into a compliance with a duty, which is so strongly set on his heart to promote among his people? This appears,

(1.) By the solemn charge he gave his disciples in this particular: 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another,' John 13:34. I pray observe how he prepares their hearts to open readily, and bid his commandment kindly welcome. He sets his own name upon it—'a new commandment I give unto you.' As if he had said, 'Let this command, though as old as any other, Lev. 19:18, yet go under my name in an especial manner. When I am gone and the fire of strife begins at any time among you, remember what particular charge I now give you, and let it quench it presently.' Again, observe how he delivers this precept, and that is by way of gift and privilege. 'A new commandment I give unto you.' Indeed, this was Christ's farewell sermon, the very streakings of that milk which he had fed them withal. Never dropped a sweeter discourse from his blessed lips. He saved his best wine till the last. He was now making his will, and amongst other things that he bequeaths his disciples, he takes this commandment, as a father would do his seal-ring off his finger, and gives it to them. Again, thirdly, he doth not barely lay the command before them, but, to make it the more effectual, he annexeth in a few words the most powerful argument why they should, as also the most clear and full direction how they might, do this, that is possible to be given—As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

O Christians, what may not the love of Christ command you? If it were to lay down your lives for him that loved you to death, would you deny them? and shall not this his love persuade you to lay down your strifes and divisions? This speaks enough, how

much weight he laid upon this commandment. But then, again, observe how Christ, in the same sermon, over and over again minds them of this; which if he had not been very solicitous of, should not have had so large a room in his thoughts at that time, when he had so little time left in which he was to crowd and sum up all the heavenly counsel and comfort he desired to leave with them before his departure. Nay, so great weight he lays on this, that he seems to lock up his own joy and theirs together in the care that they should take about this one command of loving one another, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full,' John 15:11. What these things were appears by the precedent verse, 'If ye keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love.' These were the things that he spake of in order to {keep} his joy in them, and theirs in him, that they would 'keep his commandments.' Now, to let them know how high a place their obedience to this particular command of love and unity had in his heart, and how eminently it conduced to the continuing his joy in them, and filling up their own; he chooseth that above any for this instance, in order to what he had said, as you may see, ver. 12, 'This is my commandment, That ye love one another.' Observe still, how Christ appropriates this commandment to himself. 'This is my commandment;' as if he would signify to them that as he had one disciple, who went by the name of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' so he would have a darling commandment, in which he takes some singular delight, and that this should be it, 'their loving one another.'

But we are not yet at the last link of this golden chain of Christ's discourse. When he hath put some more warmth into their affections to this duty, by exposing his own love to them in the deepest expression of it, even to die for them, ver. 13, then he comes on more boldly, and tells them he will own them for his friends, as they are careful to observe what he had left in charge with them, ver. 14, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' And now taking it for granted that he had prevailed upon them, and that they would walk in unity and love as he had commanded them, he cannot conceal the pleasure he takes therein, yea and in them for it. He opens his heart to them, and locks no secret from them, yea bids them go and open their heart to God and be free

to him, as he is to them. And mark from what blessed hour all this familiarity that they are admitted to, bears date. 'From henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth,' ver. 15, that is from the time you walk dutiful to me and lovingly to one another. One would think he had now said enough; but he thinks not so. In the very next words he is at it again. 'These things I command you, that ye love one another,' ver. 17, as if all he had left else in charge with them had been subservient to this.

(2.) A second thing that speaks Christ's heart deeply engaged in the promoting of love and unity among Christians, is his fervent prayer for this. Should you hear a preacher with abundance of vehemency press a grace or duty upon the people in his pulpit, and as soon as sermon is done, you should go under his closet window, and hear him as earnestly wrestling with God that he would give his people what he had so zealously pressed upon them; you would easily believe the man was in earnest. Our blessed Saviour hath taught us ministers whither to go when we come out of the pulpit, and what to do. No sooner hath he done his sermon to them, but he is at prayer with God for them. And what he insisted on most in preaching he enlargeth most upon in prayer. Unity and peace was the legacy he desired so much to leave with them, and this is the boon he puts in strongly with God to bestow on them: 'Father, keep through thine own power those whom thou hast given me,' John 17:11. And why all this care?—'that they may be one, as we are.' As if he had said, 'Father, did we ever fall out? was there ever discord betwixt us? why then should they, who are thine and mine, disagree?' So, ver. 21, and again, ver. 23, he is pleading hard for the same mercy. And why so oft? is it so hardly wrung from God, that Christ himself must tug so often for it? No, sure; but as Christ said of the voice that came from heaven, 'This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes;' John 12:30, so may I say here. This ingeminated¹² zeal of Christ for his people's unity and love was for their sakes.

(a) He would by this raise the price of this mercy

in their thoughts. That is sure worth their care which he counted. Worth his redoubled prayer—when not a word was spoken for his own life—or else he misplaced his zeal, and improved not his time with God for the best advantage of his people.

(b) He would make divisions appear more fearful and dreadful things to his people, by putting in so many requests to God for preventing them. Certainly if Christ had known one evil worse than another like to come upon his people at his departure, he would have been so true and kind to his children as to deprecate that above all, and keep that off. He told his children what they must look for at the world's hand—all manner of sufferings and torments that their wit could help their malice to devise—yet he prays not so much for immunity from these, as from unbrotherly contentions among themselves. He makes account, if they can agree together, and be in love, saint with saint, church with church, that they have a mercy that will alleviate the other, and make it tolerable, yea joyous. This heavenly fire of love among themselves will quench the flames of the persecutor's fire, at least the horror of them.

(c) In a word, Christ would, as strengthen our faith to ask boldly for that which he hath bespoke for us, so also aggravate the sin of contention to such a height, that all who have any love to him, when they shall see they cannot live in strife, but they must sin against those prayers which Christ with strong cries put up for peace and unity, may tremble at the thoughts of it.

(3.) The price that Christ gave for the obtaining of this peace and unity. As Christ went from preaching up peace to pulling down peace from heaven by prayer, so he went from praying to paying for it. Indeed Christ's prayers are not beggar's prayers, as ours are; he prays his Father that he may only have what he pays for. He was now on the way to the place of payment, Calvary, where his blood was the coin he laid down for this peace. I confess peace with God was the chief pearl that this wise merchant, Christ, bought up for his people. But he had this in his eye also, viz. love to the brethren; and therefore the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which is the commemoration feast of Christ's death, as it seals our peace with God, so it signifies our love one to another, I Cor. 10. And need I now give you any account why our dear

12. ingeminate — to stress or make more forceful by repeating. From Webster's. — SDB

Lord pursued his design so close of knitting his people in peace and unity together? Truly the church is intended by Christ to be his house, in which he means to take up his rest. And what rest could he take in a house all on fire about him? It is his kingdom; and how can his laws be obeyed, if all his subjects be in a hubbub one against another? *Inter arma silent leges*—laws are silent amid arms. In a word, his church are a people that are called out of the world to be a praise to him in the sight of the nations, as Peter saith, ‘God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name,’ *Acts 15:14*—that is, a people for his honour. But a wrangling divided people would be little credit to the name of Christ. Yea such, where they are found—and where alas are they not to be found?—are to the name of Christ as smoke and dirt to a fair face. They crock and disfigure Christ, so that the world will not acknowledge him to be who he saith he is; they lead them even into temptation to think basely of Christ and his gospel. Christ prays his people may be made perfect in one, and mark his argument—‘That the world may know that thou hast sent me,’ *John 17:23*. Whose heart bleeds not to hear Christ blasphemed at this day by so many black mouths? and what hath opened them more than the saints’ divisions?

2. Argument. The second argument shall be taken from yourselves; for your own sakes live in peace and unity.

(1.) Consider your obligations to love and unity; your relations call for it. If believers, Paul tells you your kindred, ‘Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,’ *Gal. 3:26*; not only children of God, so are all by creation, but by faith in Jesus Christ also. Christ is the foundation of a new brotherhood to believers. O Christians! consider how near you are set one to another. You are conceived in the same womb of the church, begotten by the same seed of the word to this new creation, whereby, as one saith, you become brethren of the whole blood, and therefore there should be more unity and dear affection among you than among any others. Joseph’s heart went out more to Benjamin, than any of the rest of his brethren, because he was his brother both by father and mother. If you fall out, who shall agree? what is it that can rationally break your peace? Those things which use to be bones of contention, and occasion

squabbling among other brethren, Christ hath taken care to remove them all, so that of all others, your quarrellings are most childish, yea sinful. Sometimes one child finds himself grieved at the partiality of his parents’ affection, more set on some others than himself, and this makes him envy them, and they despise him. But there is no such foundling in his God’s family—all dear alike to Christ: ‘Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us,’ *Eph. 5:2*, that is, for one as well as another. Christ in the church is like the soul in the body, he is *totus in toto, et totus in qualibet parte*—every member in Christ hath whole Christ, his whole heart and love, as if there were none besides himself to enjoy it.

Again, among men, though the father shows not so much partiality in his affection, yet oft great inequality in the distribution of his estate. Though all are children, yet not all heirs, and this sows the seed of strife among them; as Jacob found by woeful experience. But Christ hath made his will so, that they are all provided for alike, called therefore the ‘common salvation,’ *Jude 3*, and ‘the inheritance of the saints in light,’ *Col. 1:12*, for the community. All may enjoy their happiness without justling with or prejudicing of one another, as millions of people who look upon the same sun, and at the same time, and none stand in another’s light. Methinks that speech of Christ looks a little this way, ‘The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one,’ *John 17:22*. By ‘glory’ there I would understand heaven’s glory principally. Now saith Christ, ‘I have given it,’ that is, in reversion, I have given it them; not this or that favourite, but ‘them’—I have laid it out as the portion of all sincere believers, and why? ‘that they may be one,’ that all squabbles may be silenced, and none may envy another for what he hath above him, when he sees glory in his. It is true indeed some difference there is in Christians’ outward garb—some poor, some rich—and in common gifts also—some have more of them, some less. But are these tanti? of such weight, to commence a war upon, among those that wait for the same heaven? If the father clothes all his children in the same cloth, it were sad to see them stab one another, because one hath a lace more than the other; nay because one’s lace is red, and the other’s green; for indeed the quarrel among Christians is sometimes, not for having less gifts than another, but

because they are not the same in kind, though another, as good and useful, which possibly he wants whom we envy.

(2.) Consider where you are, and among whom. Are you not in your enemies' quarters? If you fall out, what do you but kindle a fire for them to warm their hands by? 'Aha! so would we have it,' say they. The sea of their rage will weaken this bank fast enough; you need not cut it for them. The unseasonableness of the strife betwixt Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's is aggravated by the near neighbourhood of the heathens to them: 'And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land,' Gen. 13:7. To fall out while these idolaters looked on—this would be town-talk presently, and put themselves and their religion both to shame. And I pray, who have been in our land all the while the people of God have been scuffling? Those that have curiously observed every uncomely behaviour among them, and told all the world of it—such as have wit and malice enough to make use of it for their wicked purposes. They stand on tiptoes to be at work; only we are not yet quite laid up and disabled, by the soreness of those our wounds, which we have given ourselves, from withstanding their fury. They hope it will come to that; and then they will cure us of our wounds, by giving one, if they can, that shall go deep enough to the heart of our life, gospel and all. O Christians! shall Herod and Pilate put you to shame? They clapped up a peace to strengthen their hands against Christ; and will not you unite against your common enemy? It is an ill time for mariners to be fighting, when an enemy is boring a hole at the bottom of their ship.

(3.) Consider the sad consequences of your contentions.

(a) You put a stop to the growth of grace. The body may as well thrive in a fever, as the soul prosper when on a flame with strife and contention. No, first this fire in the bones must be quenched, and brought into its natural temper, and so must this unkindly heat be slaked among Christians before either can grow. I pray observe that place, 'But speaking the truth in love'—or being sincere in love—'may grow up into him in all things,' Eph. 4:15. The apostle is upon a cure, showing how souls that at present are weak

and their grace rather wan and withered than growing, may come to thrive and flourish; and the recipe he gives is a composition of these two rare drugs, sincerity and love. Preserve these, and all will do well; as ver. 16, where the whole body is said to 'edify itself in love.' There may be preaching, but no edifying, without love. Our times are a sad comment upon this text.

(b) You cut off your trade with heaven at the throne of grace. You will be little in prayer to God, I warrant you, if much in squabbling with your brethren. It is impossible to go from wrangling to praying with a free spirit. And if you should be so bold as to knock at God's door, you are sure to have cold welcome. 'Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,' Matt. 5:24. God will not have the incense of prayer put to such strange fire; nor will he eat of our leavened bread, taste of any performance soured with malice and bitterness of spirit. First the peace was renewed, and a covenant of love and friendship struck between Laban and Jacob, Gen. 31:44, and then, 'Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread,' ver. 54. The very heathens thought no serious business could be well done by quarrelling spirits. Therefore the senators of Rome used to visit the temple dedicated Jovi depository, because there they did deponere inimicitias—lay down all their feuds and controversies, before they went into the senate to consult of state affairs. Durst not they go to the senate, till friends? and dare we go up to God's altar, bow our knees to him in prayer, while our hearts are roiled and swollen with anger, envy, and malice? O God humble us.

(c) As we cut off our trade with heaven, so with one another. When two countries fall out, whose great interest lies in their mutual traffic, they must needs both pinch by the war. Truly, the Christians' great gains come in by their mutual commerce, and they are the richest Christians commonly who are seated with the greatest advantage for this trade. As no nation have all their commodities of their own growth, but needs some merchandise with others; so there is no Christian that could well live without borrowing from his brethren. There is 'that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,' Eph. 4:16. Paul himself is

not so well laid in, but he hopes to get something more than he hath from the meanest of those he preacheth to. He tells the Christians at Rome, Rom. 1, he longs to see them, as to impart some spiritual gift to them, ver. 11, so, saith he, 'that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me,' Rom. 1:12; yea, he hopes to be 'filled with their company,' Rom. 15:24. As a man is filled with good cheer, so he hopes to make a feast of their company. Now contentions and divisions spoil all intercourse between believers. They are as baneful to Christian communion, as a great pestilence or plague is to the trade of a market town. Communication flows from communion, and communion that is founded upon union. The church grows under persecution. That sheds the seed all over the field, and brings the gospel where else it had not been heard of. But divisions and contentions, like a furious storm, wash the seed out of the land, with its heart, fatness, and all.

(d) You do not only hazard the decay of grace, but growth of sin. Indeed, it shows there is more than a little corruption got within doors already; but it opens the door to much more, 'If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not,' James 3:14; that is do not think you are such good Christians. This stains all your other excellencies. Had ye the knowledge and gifts of the holy angels, yet this would make you look more like devils than them. He gives the reason, 'For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work,' ver. 16. Contention is the devil's forge, in which if he can but give a Christian a heat or two, he will not doubt but to soften him for his hammer of temptation. Moses himself when his spirit was a little hot 'spake unadvisedly with his lips.' It must needs be an occasion of much sinning, which renders it impossible for a man while in his distemper to do any one righteous action. 'For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,' James 1:20. Now what a sad thing is it for Christians to stay long in that temper in which they can do no good to one another, but provoke lust?

(e) They are prognostics of judgment coming. A lowering sky speaks of foul weather at hand; and mariners look for a storm at sea, when the waves begin to swell and utter a murmuring noise. Hath there been nothing like these among us? What can we think but

a judgment is breeding, by the lowering countenances of Christians, their swellings of heart, and discontented passions vented from their swollen spirits, like the murmuring of waters, or rumbling of thunder in the air before a tempest? When children fight and wrangle, now is the time they may expect their father to come and part them with his rod. 'He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse,' Mal. 4:6. Strife and contention set a people next door to a curse. God makes account he brings a heavy judgment upon a people when himself leaves them. If the master leaves the ship, it is near sinking indeed. And truly no readier way to send him going, than by contentions. These smoke him out of his own house. 'Be of one mind,' saith the apostle, 'and the God of love and peace shall be with you,' II Cor. 13:11—implying, if they did not live in peace, they must not look to have his company long with them. God was coming in Moses with a great salvation to the Israelites, and, as a handsel of the good services he was to do for them, he begins to make peace between two discontented brethren as they strove; but his kindness was not accepted, and this was the occasion of many years' misery more that they endured in Egypt. 'Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian,' Acts 7:29. And there was no news of deliverance for the space of 'forty years' after, ver. 30. And have not our dissensions, or rather our rejecting those overtures which God by men of healing spirits have offered for peace, been the cause why mercy hath fled so fast from us, and we left to groan under those sad miseries that are upon us at this day? and who knows how long? O who can think what a glorious morning shone upon England in that famous Parliament begun 1640, and not weep and weep again to see our hopes for a glorious reformation, that opened with them, now shut up in blood and war, contention and confusion!—miseries too like the fire and brimstone that fell from heaven upon those unhappy cities of the plain.

3. Argument. O labour for peace and unity, for others's sake, I mean those who at present are wicked and ungodly, among whom ye live. We are not, saith Austin, to despair of the wicked, but do our utmost they may be made good and godly: quia numerus

sanctorum, semper de numero impiorum auctus est —because God ever calls his number out of the heap and multitude of the ungodly world. Now, no more winning means to work upon them, and pave a way for their conversion, than to commend the truths and ways of God to them, by the amiableness of your love and unity that profess the same. This is the cumin-seed that would draw souls, like doves, to the window. This is the gold, to overlay the temple of God, the church, so as to make all in love with its beauty that look into it. Every one is afraid to dwell in a house haunted with evil spirits; and hath hell a worse than the spirit of division? O Christians, agree together and your number will increase. It is said, ‘They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,’ Acts 2:46. And mark what follows: ‘They had favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,’ Acts 2:47. The world was so great a stranger to love and peace, that it was amused, and set of considering what heavenly doctrine that was, which could so mollify men’s hearts, plane their rugged natures, and joint them so close in love together, and were the more easily persuaded to adopt themselves into the true family of love. But alas, when this gold became dim—I mean, peace among Christians faded—then the gospel lost credit in the world, and the doctrine of it came under more suspicion in their thoughts, who, seeing such clefts gape in their walls, were more afraid to put their heads under its roof, ‘I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please,’ Song 2:7. Cotton, on the place, ‘by the roes and hinds of the field’—which are fearful creatures, easily scared away, yet otherwise willing to feed with the sheep—takes the Gentiles to be meant; inclinable to embrace the Jewish religion, but very soon scared away by the troublesome state of it, or any offensive carriage of the Jews. And what more offensive carriage than divisions and strifes? See them joined together, ‘Mark them which cause divisions and offences,’ Rom. 16:17. If divisions, then there are sure to be offences taken, and many possibly hardened in their sins thereby. Do not your hearts tremble to lay the stumbling block for any to break his neck over? to roll the stone over any poor sinner’s

grave, and seal him down in it, that he never have a resurrection to grace here or glory hereafter? As you would keep yourselves free of the blood of those that die in their sins, O take heed of lending anything by your divisions to the hardening of their souls in their impenitency!

FOURTH KIND OF PEACE.

[PEACE OF INDEMNITY AND SERVICE
the blessing of the gospel.]

The fourth and last sort of peace which I thought to have spoken of, is a peace with all the creatures, even the most fierce and cruel. I called it a peace of indemnity and service. This, Adam, in his primitive state, enjoyed. While he was innocent, all the creatures were innocent and harmless to him. The whole creation was at his service. No mutinous principle was found in any creature that did incline it in the least to rebel against him. When God sent the beasts of the field and fowls of the air to receive names from him, it was that they should do their homage to him and acknowledge him as their lord; and that he, by exercising that act of authority over them—in giving them names—might have an experiment of his perfect, though not absolute and independent, dominion over them. But no sooner did man withdraw his allegiance from God; than all the creatures—as if they had been sensible of the wrong man by his apostasy had done his and their Maker, by whose patent he had held his lordship over them—presently forget their subjection to him, yea, take up arms in their supreme Lord’s quarrel against apostate man. And thus they continue in array against him, till God and man meet together again in a happy covenant of peace; and then the commission, which God in wrath gave them against rebel man, is called in; and, in the same day that God and the believing soul are made friends, the war ends between him and them. ‘In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven,’ Hosea 2:18. And mark the day from whence this covenant bears date: ‘In that day,’ that is, in the day that ‘I betroth thee unto me.’ So that our peace with the creatures comes in by our peace with God.

And this being the blessing of the gospel, so must that also. But as our peace with God is not so perfectly enjoyed in this life, but God hath left himself a liberty to chastise his reconciled ones, and that sharply too; so our peace with the creatures doth not hinder but that they may be, yea often are, the rod which God useth to correct them with. The water may drown one saint, and the fire consume another to ashes, and yet these creatures at peace with these saints; because they are not sent by God in wrath against them, for any real hurt that God means them thereby. This indeed was the commission he gave all the creatures against apostate man as part of his curse for his sin. He sent the creatures against him—as a prince doth his general against a company of traitors in arms against him—with authority to take vengeance on them for their horrid rebellion against their Maker. But now the commission is altered, and runs in a more comfortable strain. Go, fire, and be the chariot

in which such a saint may be brought home from earth to me in heaven's glory. Go, water, waft another; and so of all the rest. Not a creature comes on a worse message to a saint. It is true they are sharp corrections as to the present smart they bring; but they are ever mercies, and do a friendly office in the intention of God and happy issue to the believer. 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose,' Rom. 8:28. And the apostle speaks it as a common principle well known among the saints. 'We know that all things work,' &c., as if he had said, 'Where is the saint that doth not know this?' And yet it were happy for us {if} we knew it better. Some of us would then pass our days more comfortably than now we do. But I intend not a discourse of this. Let brevity here make amends for prolixity in the former. We come, however, to the third inquiry or question from these words propounded.

DIRECTION VII.—THIRD GENERAL PART.

[WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.]

'Shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace' (Eph. 6:15).

Let us now ask what is meant by this 'preparation of the gospel of peace' with which the Christian's feet are to be 'shod?' or thus, What grace doth this 'preparation,' with which we are to be 'shod,' signify? and, Why called 'the preparation of the gospel of peace.'

QUESTION FIRST—What is meant by this preparation of the gospel of peace?

As for the grace held forth by this 'preparation of the gospel of peace,' I find great variety in the apprehensions of the learned, and indeed variety rather than contrariety. I shall therefore spare the mentioning them—many of which you may find in a bunch collected by the Rev. Dr. Gouge upon the place, with his thoughts upon them—and crave the boldness to lay down with due respect to others, the apprehensions I have had thereon, which I conceive, will rather amplify than thwart their sense. Now what this ἐτοιμασία—or preparation, is, will best appear by considering the part it is designed for—and that is 'the foot,' the only member in the body to be shod—and the piece of armour it is compared to, and that is the soldier's shoe, which (if right) is to be of the strongest make, being not so much intended for finery as defence. So necessary is this piece of armour indeed, that, for want of it alone, the soldier in some cases is disabled for service, as when he is called to march far on hard ways, and those, may be, strewed with sharp stones. How long will he go, if not shod, without wounding or foundering? Or, if the way be good, but the weather bad, and his feet not fenced from the wet and cold, they are not so far from the head but the cold, got in them, may strike up to that; yea [may] bring a disease on the whole body, which will keep him on his bed when he

should be in the field. As many almost are surfeited as slain in armies. Now, what the foot is to the body, that the will is to the soul. The foot carries the whole body, and the will the soul; yea, the whole man, body and soul also. *Voluntas est loco motiva facultas*—we go whither our will sends us. And what the shoe is to the foot, that ‘preparation,’ or, if you please, a readiness and alacrity, is to the will. The man whose feet are well shod fears no ways, but goes through thick and thin, foul or fair, stones or straws; all are alike to him that is well shod; while the barefooted man, or slenderly shod, shrinks when he feels the wet, and shrieks when he lights on a sharp stone. Thus, when the will and heart of a man is prompt, and ready to do any work, the man is, as it were, shod and armed against all trouble and difficulty which he is to go over in the doing of it. They say the Irish tread so light on the ground that they will run over some bogs wherein any other almost would stick or sink. A prepared ready heart, I am sure, will do this in a spiritual sense. None can walk where he can run. He makes nothing of afflictions, yea persecutions, but goes singing over them. David was never so merry as in the cave, Ps. 57. And how came he so? ‘My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared,’ saith he, ‘I will sing and give praise,’ ver. 7. If David’s heart had not been shod with this preparation, he would not have liked the way he was in so well. You would have had him sing to another tune, and heard him quarrel with his destiny, or fall out with his profession, that had put him to so much trouble, and driven him from the pleasures of a prince’s court, to hide himself under ground in a cave from those that hunted for his precious life. He would have spent his breath rather in pitying and be moaning himself than in praising of God. An unprepared heart, that is not well satisfied with its work or condition, hangs back, and, though it may be brought to submit to it with much ado, yet it is but as a foundered horse on a stony way, which goes in pain every step, and would oft be turning out of the path, if bit and whip did not keep him in.

QUESTION SECOND.—But why is it called ‘the preparation of the gospel of peace?’

Because the gospel of peace is the great instrument by which God works the will and heart of man into this readiness and preparation to do or suffer what he calls to. It is the business we are set about, when preaching the gospel, to make ‘a willing people,’ Ps. 110—‘to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,’ Luke 1:17. As a captain is sent to beat up his drum in a city, to call in a company that will voluntarily list themselves to follow the prince’s wars, and be in a readiness to take the field and march at an hour’s warning,—thus the gospel comes to call over the hearts of men to the foot of God, to stand ready for his service, whatever it costs them. Now this it doth, as it is a ‘gospel of peace.’ It brings the joyful tidings of peace concluded betwixt God and man by the blood of Jesus. And this is so welcome to the trembling conscience of poor sinners, who before melted away their sorrowful days in ‘a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation from the Lord to devour them as his adversaries; that no sooner [is] the report of a peace concluded betwixt God and them, sounded in their ears by the preaching of the gospel, and certainly confirmed to be true in their own consciences by the Spirit—who is sent from heaven to seal it to them, and give them some sweet gust [taste] of it, by shedding abroad the sense of it in their souls—but instantly there appears a new life in them; to the effect that they, who before were so fearful and shy of every petty trouble as to start and boggle at the thought of it—knowing it could bring no good news to them—are now, ‘shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,’ able to go out smilingly to meet the greatest sufferings that are, or can be, on the way towards them, and say undauntedly to them, as once Christ did to those that came with swords and staves to attack him, ‘Whom seek ye?’ ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,’ saith the apostle, Rom. 5:1. And this, how mightily doth it work! even to make them ‘glory in tribulations.’ The words opened afford these two points or doctrines. FIRST. It is our duty to be always prepared and ready to meet with any trial, and endure any hardship, which God may lay out for us in our Christian warfare. SECOND. The peace which the gospel brings and speaks to the heart, will make the creature ready to wade through any trial or trouble that meets him in his Christian course.

FIRST DOCTRINE.

[The saints' duty to be
ALWAYS PREPARED FOR TRIALS.]

It is our duty, as Christians, to be always prepared and ready to meet with any trial, and endure any hardship, which God may lay out for us in our Christian warfare. Saints are sure to want no trials and sufferings. 'These,' as Christ saith of the poor, 'we shall have always with us.' The bloody sweat which Christ felt signified, saith Augustine, the sufferings which in his whole mystical body he should endure. Christ's whole body was lift upon the cross, and no member must now look to escape the cross. And, when the cross comes, how must we behave ourselves towards it? It will not speak us Christians, that we are merely passive, and make no notorious resistance against the will of God; but we must be active in our patience, if I may so speak, by showing a holy readiness and alacrity of spirit to be at God's ordering, though it were to be led down into the very chambers of death itself. That epitaph would not become a Christian's gravestone, which I have heard was engraved upon one's tomb, and might too truly on most that die: 'Here lies one against his will.' Holy Paul was of a better mind, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus,' Acts 21:13. But, may be, this was but a flourish of his colours, when he knew the enemy to be far enough off; he may yet live to change his thoughts, when he comes to look death in the face. No, what he hath said he stands to: 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand,' σπένδομαι, II Tim. 4:6. He speaks of it as if it were already done. Indeed he had already laid his head on the block, and was dead before the stroke was given, not with fear (as some have been), but with a free resignation of himself to it; and, if a malefactor be civiliter mortuus—dead in a law sense, as soon as the sentence is out of the judge's mouth, though he lives some weeks after, then I am sure in a gospel sense we may say those are dead already that are ready to die, that have freely put themselves under the sentence of it in their own willingness. And this alacrity and serenity that was on Paul's spirit was the more remarkable if we consider how close he stood to his end. In-

deed, some from the word σπένδομαι—which properly signifieth a libation or drink offering—conceive that Paul knew the very kind of death which he should suffer, namely, beheading; and that he alludes to the pouring out of the blood or wine, used in sacrifice, as that kind of sacrifice which did best illustrate the nature of his death, viz. the pouring out of his blood, which he did as willingly offer up in the service of Christ and his church as they did pour out their wine in a drink-offering to the Lord. We shall now give some rational account of the point why we are to be ready and prompt at suffering-work. The reasons of the point shall fall under two heads. FIRST. [Those] taken from Christ, for or from whom we suffer. SECOND. Those taken from the excellency of such a temper as this readiness to endure any hardship imports.

[WHY we are to be always ready for trials
—REASONS IN REGARD OF CHRIST.]

FIRST. There are reasons taken from Christ, for or from whom we suffer, why we are to be always prepared for trials.

Reason First. Christ commands this frame of spirit. Indeed, this frame of spirit is implied in every duty as the *modus agendi*—that qualification which, like the stamp on coin, makes it current in God's account. 'Put them in mind,' saith the apostle, 'to be ready to every good work,' Titus 3:1; be it active or passive, they must be ready for it, or else all they do is to no purpose. The word there is the same with this in the text, and is taken from a vessel that is fashioned and fitted for the use the master puts it to. We do not like, when we are to use, or to mend and scour, a vessel, cup, or pot, to have them out of the way at the time we call for them; but to find them at hand, on the shelf, clean and fit for present use, or our servants shall hear of it. Thus God expects we should keep our hearts clean from the defilements of sin, and our affections whole and entire for himself—that they be not lent out to the creature, nor broken and battered by any inordinacy of delight in them, lest we should be to seek when he calls us to do or suffer, or be found very unprepared, without much ado to set us to right, and make us willing for the work, as the same apostle, 'If a man therefore purge himself from these,

he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work,' II Tim. 2:21. Now, as God commands this readiness in all, so especially in suffering-work: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,' Luke 9:23. These words may be called the Christian's indenture. Every one that will be Christ's servant must seal to this before he hath leave from Christ to call him Master; wherein you see the chief provision Christ makes is about suffering-work, as that which will most try the man. If the servant can but fadge¹³ with that, no fear but he will like the other part of his work well enough. Now, I pray observe how careful Christ is to engage the heart in this work; he will have his servants not only endure the hardship of his service, but show their readiness in it also. Four remarkable passages are put in for this purpose.

1. The Christian 'must deny himself'—that is, deliver up his own will out of his own hands; and, from that day that he enters into Christ's service, acknowledge himself not to be *sui juris*—at his own disposal. Whatever Christ bears, he cannot {,} to hear his servants, when sent by him on any business, say, 'I will not.'

2. Christ tells his people the worst at first, and chooseth to speak of the cross they must bear, rather than [of] the crown they shall at last wear; and withal, that he expects they should not only 'bear' it—this the wicked do full sore against their wills—but also 'take it up.' Indeed he doth not bid them make the cross, run themselves into trouble of their own head, but he will have them take that up which he makes for them—that is, not step out of the way by any sinful shift to escape any trouble, but to accept of the burden God lays for them, and go cheerfully under it, yea thankfully, as if God did us a favour to employ us in any suffering for him. We do not take so much pains as to stoop to take up that which is not worth something. Christ will have his people take up the cross as one does to take up a pearl that lies on the ground before him.

3. This they must do every day—'take up his cross daily.' When there is none on his back, he must

carry one in his heart, that is, continually be preparing himself to stand ready for the first call, as porters stand at the merchants' doors in London, waiting for when their masters have any burden for them to carry. Thus Paul professeth he 'died daily.' How, but by a readiness of mind to die? He set himself in a posture to bid God's messenger welcome, whenever it came. This indeed is to 'take up the cross daily,' when our present enjoyments do not make us strange to, or fall out with, the thoughts of future trials. The Jews were to eat the passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, and in all haste, Ex. 12:11. When God is feasting the Christian with present comforts, he must have this gospel shoe on, he must not set to it as if he were feasting at home, but as at a running meal on his way in an inn, willing to be gone as soon as he is refreshed a little for his journey.

4. When the cross is on—what then? then the Christian must 'follow Christ.' He is not [to] stand still and fret, but 'follow;' not be drawn and hauled after Christ, but [to] follow, as a soldier his captain, voluntarily. Christ doth not, as some generals, drive the country before him, and make his servants fight whether they will or no; but he invites them in, 'I will allure her...into the wilderness,' Hosea 2:14. Indeed a gracious heart follows Christ into the wilderness of affliction as willing as a lover his beloved into some solitary private arbour or bower, there to sit and enjoy his presence. Christ useth arguments in his word, and by his Spirit, so satisfactory to the Christian, that he is very willing to follow him; as the patient, who at first, may be, shrinks and draws back, when the physician talks of cutting or bleeding, but, when he hath heard the reasons given by him why that course must be taken, and is convinced it is the best way for his health, then he very freely puts forth his arm to the knife, and thanks the physician for his pains.

Reason Second. Christ deserves this frame of spirit at our hands. Of many, take but two particulars, wherein this will appear. 1. If we consider his readiness to endure trouble and sorrow for us. 2. [If we consider] his tender care over us, when he calls us into a suffering condition.

1. Christ deserves this readiness to meet any suffering he lays out in his providence for us, if we consider his readiness to endure sorrow and trouble for

13. Fadge, to suit or fit. — Ed.

us. When God called him to the work of mediatorship, he found the way laid with sharper stones, I hope, than we do in the road that is appointed us to walk in. He was to tread upon swords and spikes, all manner of sorrows—and those edged with the wrath of God; this was the sharpest stone of all, which he hath taken out of our way, and yet how light did he go upon the ground! O had not his feet been well shod with love to our souls, he would soon have turned back, and said the way was unpassable; but he goes on and blinks not; never did we sin more willingly, than he went to suffer for our sin. ‘Lo, I come,’ saith he to his Father, ‘I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart,’ Ps. 40:7, 8. O what a full consent did the heart of Christ rebound to his Father’s call, like some echo that answers what is spoken twice or thrice over! Thus, when his Father speaks to him to undertake the work of saving poor lost man, he doth not give a bare assent to the call, but trebles it; ‘I come...I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.’ He was so ready, that before his enemies laid hands on him, in the instituting of the Lord’s supper, and there did sacramentally rend the flesh of his own body, and broach his own heart to fill that cup with his precious blood, which with his own hand he gave them, that they might not look upon his death now at hand as a mere butchery from the hand of man’s violence, but rather as a sacrifice, wherein he did freely offer up himself to God for them and all believers. And when the time was come that the sad tragedy should be acted, he, knowing the very place whither the traitor with his black guard would come, goes out, and marcheth into the very mouth of them. O what a shame were it, that we should be unwilling to go a mile or two of rugged way to bear so sweet a Saviour company in his sufferings! ‘Could ye not watch with me one hour?’ said Christ to Peter, Matt. 26:40—not with me, who am now going to meet with death itself, and ready to bid the bitterest pangs of it welcome for your sakes? not with me?

2. Christ deserves this readiness to meet any suffering he lays out in his providence for us, if we consider his tender care over his saints, when he calls them into a suffering condition. Kind masters may well expect cheerful servants. The more tender the captain is over his soldiers, the more prodigal they are

of their own lives at his command. And it were strange, if Christ’s care, which deserves more, should meet with less ingenuity in a saint. Now Christ’s care appears,

(1.) In proportioning the burden to the back he lays it on. That which overloads one ship, and would hazard to sink her, is but just ballast for another of a greater burden. Those sufferings which one Christian cannot bear, another sails trim and even under. The weaker shoulder is sure to have the lighter carriage. As Paul burdened some churches, which he knew more able, to spare others; so Christ, to ease the weaker Christian, lays more weight on the stronger. ‘Paul laboured more abundantly than them all,’ he tells us, I Cor. 15:10. But why did Christ so unequally divide the work? Observe the place, and shall find that it was but necessary to employ that abundant grace he had given him. ‘His grace,’ saith he, ‘which was bestowed on me, was not in vain; but I laboured more,’ &c. There was so much grace poured into him, that some of it would have been in vain, if God had not found him more to do and suffer than the rest. Christ hath a perfect rate by him of every saint’s spiritual estate, and according to this all are assessed, and so none are oppressed. The rich in grace can as easily pay his pound, as the poor his penny. Paul laid down his head on the block for the cause of Christ as freely as some—and those true, but weak Christians—would have done a few pounds out of their purse. He endured death with less trouble than some could have done reproach for Christ. All have not a martyr’s faith, nor all the martyr’s fire. This forlorn consists of a few files picked out of the whole army of the saints.

(2.) In the consolations he gives them then (in exceedings) above other of their brethren, that are not called out to such hard service. That part of an army which is upon action in the field is sure to have their pay—if their masters have any money in their purse or care of them—yea, sometimes, when their fellows left in their quarters are made to stay. I am sure, there is more gold and silver—spiritual joy I mean, and comfort—to be found in Christ’s camp, among his suffering ones, than their brethren at home, in peace and prosperity, ordinarily can show. What are the promises, but vessels of cordial wine, tunned on purpose against a groaning hour, when God usually

broacheth them? ‘Call upon me (saith God) in the day of trouble,’ Ps. 50:15. And may we not do so in the day of peace? yes, but he would have us most bold with him in a ‘day of trouble.’ None find such quick despatch at the throne of grace as suffering saints. ‘In the day when I cried (saith David), thou answeredst me, and gavest me strength in my soul,’ Ps. 138:3. He was now at a strait, and God comes in haste to him. Though we may make a well friend stay, that sends for us, yet we will give a sick friend leave to call us up at midnight. In such extremities we usually go with the messenger that comes for us, and so doth God with the prayer. Peter knocks at their gate, who were assembled to seek God for him, almost as soon as their prayer knocked at heaven-gate in his behalf. And truly it is no more than needs, if we consider the temptations of an afflicted condition. We are prone then to be suspicious our best friends forget us, and to think every stay a delay and neglect of us. Therefore God chooseth to show himself most kind at such a time: ‘As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ,’ II Cor. 1:5. As man laid on trouble, so Christ laid on consolation. Both tides rose and fell together. When it was spring-tide with him in affliction, it was so with him in his joy. We relieve the poor as their charge increaseth; so Christ comforts his people as their troubles multiply. And now, Christian, tell me, doth not thy dear Lord deserve a ready spirit in thee to meet any suffering with, for, or from him, who gives his sweetest comforts when his people use to expect their saddest sorrows? Well may the servant do his work cheerfully, when his master is so careful of him as with his own hands to bring him his breakfast into the fields. The Christian stays not till he come to heaven for all his comfort. There indeed shall be the full supper; but there is a breakfast, Christian, of previous joys, more or less, which Christ brings to thee in the field, and shall be eaten on the place where thou endurest thy hardship.

(3.) In seasonable succours which Christ sends to bring them off safe. He doth not only comfort them in, but helps them out of, all their troubles. There is ever a door more than the Christian sees in his prison, by which Christ can, with a turn of his hand, open a way for his saint's escape. And what can we desire more? All is well that ends well. And what

better security can we desire for this than the promise of the great God, with whom to lie is impossible? And I hope the credit which God hath in his people's hearts is not so low, but a bill under his hand will be accepted at first sight by them in exchange of what is dearest to them—life itself not excepted. Look to thyself when thou hast to do with others. None so firm, but may crack under thee, if thou layest too much weight on them. One would have thought so worthy a captain as Uriah was, might have trusted his general, yea his prince, and he so holy a man as David was. But he was unworthily betrayed by them both into the hands of death. Man may, the devil, to be sure, will, leave all in the lurch that do his work. But if God sets thee on, he will bring thee off; never fear a ‘look thou to that’ from his lips, when thy faithfulness to him hath brought thee into the briers. He that would work a wonder, rather than let a runaway prophet perish in his sinful voyage—because a good man in the main—will heap miracle upon miracle rather than thou shalt miscarry and sink in thy duty. Only, be not troubled, if thou beest cast overboard, like Jonah, before thou seest the provision which God makes for thy safety. It is ever at hand, but sometimes lies close, and out of the creature's sight, like Jonah's whale—sent of God to ferry him to shore—underwater, and the prophet in its belly, before he knew where he was. That, which thou thinkest comes to devour thee, maybe the messenger that God sends to bring thee safe to land. Is not thy shoe, Christian, yet on? Art thou not yet ready to march? Canst [thou] fear any stone can now hurt thy foot through so thick a sole?

[Why we are to be always ready for trials—
REASONS FROM THE EXCELLENCY OF SUCH A SPIRIT.]

SECOND. There are reasons why Christians should always be prepared for trials, taken from the excellency of the frame of spirit which such a holy readiness would import.

First. This readiness of heart to stoop to the cross evidenceth a gracious heart. And a gracious spirit, I am sure, is an excellent spirit. Flesh and blood never made any willing to suffer either for God or from God. He that can do this, hath that ‘other spirit’ with Caleb, which proves him of a higher des-

cent than this world, Num. 14:24. A carnal heart can neither act nor suffer freely; *voluntas libera*, in quantum liberata—the will is no more free than it is made free by grace (Luther). So much flesh as is left in a saint, so much awkwardness¹⁴ and unwillingness to come to God's foot; and therefore where there is nothing but flesh, there can be nothing but unwillingness. He that can find his heart following God in his command or providence cheerfully, may know who hath been there (as one said of the famous Grecian limner). This is a line that none but God could draw on thy soul. The midwives said of the Israelitish women, they were not like the Egyptian in bringing forth their children, for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives could come in unto them, Ex. 1:19. Truly thus lively and ready is the gracious heart in anything it is called to do or suffer. It is not delivered with so much difficulty of a duty as a carnal heart, which must have the help and midwifery of some carnal arguments, or else it sticks in the birth. But the gracious heart has done before these come to lend their helping hand. Pure love to God, obedience to the call of his command, and faith on the security of his promise, facilitate the work, so that, be it never so burdensome to the flesh, yet it is not grievous to their spirit. It is ever ready to say, 'Thy will be done, and not mine.' The apostle makes this free submission to the disclosure to the disposal of God's afflicting hand to evidence a son's spirit, 'If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons,' Heb. 12:7. Observe, he doth not say, 'If you be chastened,' but, 'If ye endure chastening.' Naked suffering doth not prove sonship, but ὑπομενεῖν παιδείαν doth—to endure it so as not to sink in our courage, or shrink from under the burden God lays on, but readily to offer our shoulder to it, and patiently carry it, looking with a cheerful eye at the reward when we come—not to throw it off, but to have it taken off by that hand which laid it on, all which the word imports. This shows a childlike spirit. And the evidence thereof must needs be a comfortable companion to the soul, especially at such a time, when that sophister of hell useth the afflictions which lie upon it as an argument to disprove its child's relation to God. Now—to have

this answer to stop the liar's mouth at hand—Satan, if I be not a child, how could I so readily submit to the Lord's family discipline? This is no small mercy.

Second. This frame of spirit makes him a free man that hath it. Now no mean price useth to be set upon the head of liberty. The very birds had rather be abroad in the woods with liberty—though lean with cold and care—to pick up here and there a little livelihood, than in a golden cage with all their attendance. Now truly there is a bondage which few are sensible of, and that is a bondage to the creature—when a man is so enslaved to his enjoyments and low contentments here on earth, that they give law to him that should give law to them, and measure out his joy to him (what he shall have), little or much, as he abounds with or is cut short of them. Thus, some are slaves to their estates; it is said, 'Their heart goes after their covetousness'—that is, as the servant after the master, who dares not be from his back. Their money is the master, and hath the best keeping. Their heart waits on it, shall I say as a servant after his master? yea, as a dog at his master's foot. Others are as great slaves to their honours, so poor-spirited that they cannot enjoy themselves if they have not the cap and knee of all they meet. Such a slave was Haman, the great favourite of his prince. Who but he at court? At the expense of a few words he could get the king's ring to seal a bloody decree for the massacring of so many thousands of innocent persons, against all sense and reason of state, merely to fulfill his lust. Had not this man honour enough put upon him to content his ambitious spirit? No, there is a poor Jew at the king's gate will not make a leg to him as he goes by, and so roils his proud stomach, that he has no joy of all his other greatness, 'Yet all this availeth me nothing,' saith the poor-spirited wretch, 'so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate,' Est. 5:13.

A third sort are as much in bondage to their pleasures. They are said to 'live in pleasure on the earth,' James 5:5. Their life is bound up in their pleasures. As the rush grows in the mud, and the fish lives in the water, they cannot live without their pleasures. Take them from their feasts and sports, and their hearts, with Nabal's, die like a stone in their bosoms. Now this frame of spirit we are speaking of breaks all these chains, and brings the Christian out of every

14. Awkness, clumsiness, oddness. — ED.

house of bondage. It learns him to like what fare God sends. If prosperity comes, he 'knows how to abound,' so, that if he be, by a turn of providence, thrown out of the saddle of his present enjoyments, his foot shall not hang in the stirrup, nor his enslaved soul drag him after it with whining desires. No, through grace he is a free man, and can spare the company of any creature, so long as he may but have Christ's with him. Blessed Paul stands upon his liberty. 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any,' 1 Cor. 6:12. I know the place is meant of those indifferent things, concerning which there was a present dispute. There is but another sense, in which all things here below were indifferent things to that holy man; honour or dishonour, abundance or want, life or death. These were indifferent to Paul, he would not come under the power of any one of them all. It did not become a servant of Christ, he thought, to be so tender of his reputation as to write himself undone when he had not this or that—not to be so in love with abundance as not to be ready to welcome want—not to be endeared so to life as to run from the thoughts of death—nor to be so weary of a suffering life as to hasten death to come for his ease. That mind is to be called superior which chooses rather to meet and show the experiences of life, than to escape them.

Third. This readiness to suffer, as it ennobles with freedom, so it enables the Christian for service. It is a sure truth [that] so far and no more is the Christian fit to live serviceably, than he is prepared to suffer readily. Because there is no duty but hath the cross attending on it; and he that is offended at the cross, will not be long pleased with the service that brings it. Prayer is the daily exercise of a saint. This he cannot do as he should, except he can heartily say, 'Thy will be done.' And who can do that in truth, unless ready to suffer? Praising God is a standing duty; yea, 'in everything we must give thanks,' 1 Thes. 5:18. But, what if affliction befalls us? How shall we tune our hearts to that note, if not ready to suffer? Can we bless God, and murmur?—praise God, and repine? The minister's work is to preach, 'Woe to him if he do not;' and if he do preach, he is sure to suffer. Paul had his orders for the one, and his mittimus for the other, together. He was sent at the same time to preach the grace of God to the world

and to endure the wrath of the world for God. So God told Ananias, 'that he should bear his name before the Gentiles,' and 'suffer great things for his name's sake,' Acts 9:15, 16. And if the gospel did not please the ungrateful world out of Paul's mouth, who had such a rare art of sweetening it, it were strange that any who fall so far short of his gifts to move in the pulpit, and of his grace to win upon the hearts of men when out, should, if they mean to be faithful, think to go without the wages which the world paid him for his pains—reproach and contempt, if not downright blows of bloody persecution, as he met with. And is not this shoe needful for the preacher's foot, that is to walk among so many hissing serpents? Who but a Paul, that had got over the fond love of life, and fear of a bloody death, would have been so willing to go into the very lion's den, and preach the gospel there, where in a manner, he invited death to come unto him?—I mean at Rome itself, the seat of cruel Nero. 'So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,' Rom. 1:15, 16.

In a word, it is the duty of every Christian to make a free profession of Christ. Now this cannot be done without hazard many times. And if the heart be not resolved in this point—what to do; the first storm that riseth will make the poor man put in to any creek or hole, rather than venture abroad in foul weather. 'Among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue,' John 12:42. Poor souls, they could have been content if the coast had been clear to have put forth, but had not courage enough to bear a little scorn that threatened them. O what folly is it to engage for God, except we be willing to lay all at stake for him! It is not worth the while to set out in Christ's company by profession, except we mean to go through with him, and not leave him unkindly when we are half way, because of a slough or two.

Fourth. This readiness of spirit to suffer, gives the Christian the true enjoyment of his life. A man never comes to enjoy himself truly, in any comfort of his life, till prepared to deny himself readily in it. It is a riddle; but two considerations will unfold it.

1. Consideration. When we are prepared to deny ourselves in any comfort we may enjoy, then, and not

till then, is that which hinders the enjoyment of our lives taken away; and that is fear. Where there is, 'there is torment.' The outsetting deer is observed to be lean—though where good food is—because always in fear. And so must they needs be, in the midst of all their enjoyments, on whose heart this virtue is continually feeding. There needs nothing else to bring a man's joy into a consumption, than an inordinate fear of losing what he hath at present. Let but this get hold of a man's spirit, and [he] once become hectical¹⁵, and the comfort of his life is gone past recovery. How many, by this, are more cruel to themselves, than it is possible their worst enemies in the world could be to them? They alas, when they have done their utmost, can kill them but once. But, by antedating their own miseries, they kill themselves a thousand times over, even as oft as the fear of dying comes over their miserable hearts.

When once, however, the Christian hath got this piece of armour on—'the gospel of peace'—his soul is prepared for death and danger. He sits at the feast which God in his present providence allows him, and fears no messenger with ill news to knock at his door. Yea, he can talk of his dying hour, and not spoil the mirth of his present condition, as carnal men think it does. To them a discourse of dying in the midst of their junkets, is like the coming in of the officer to attack a company of thieves that are making merry together with their stolen goods about them; or, like the wet cloth that Hazael clapped on the king his master's face, it makes all the joy, which flushed out before, squat in on a sudden, [so] that the poor creatures sit dispirited and all a mort, as we say, till they get out of this affrighting subject by some divertisement or other. [And even when they do so, the effect is] only to relieve them for the present. It puts them out of that particular fit which this brought upon them; but leaves them deeper in slavery to such amazement of heart, whenever the same ghost shall appear for the future. Whereas, the Christian, that hath this preparation of heart, never tastes more sweetness in the enjoyments of this life, than when he

dips these morsels in the meditation of death and eternity. It is no more grief to his heart to think of the remove of these—which makes way for those far sweeter enjoyments—than it would be to one at a feast, to have the first course taken off, when he hath fed well on it, that the second course of all rare sweetmeats and banqueting stuff may come on, which it cannot till the other be gone. Holy David, Ps. 23:4, 5, brings in (as it were), a death's head with his feast. In the same breath almost he speaks of his dying, ver. 4, and of the rich feast he at present sat at, through the bounty of God, ver. 5. To that however he was not so tied by the teeth, but if God, that gave him this cheer, should call him from it to look death in the face, he could do so and 'fear no evil, when in the valley of the shadow thereof,' Ps. 23:4.

And what think you of the blessed apostle Peter? Had not he, think you, the true enjoyment of his life? when he could sleep so sweetly in a prison—no desirable place—fast bound 'between two soldiers'—no comfortable posture—and this the very 'night' before Herod 'would have brought him forth' in all probability to his execution! This was no likely time (one would think) to get any rest; yet we find him even there, thus, and then, so sound asleep, that the angel who was sent to give him his gaol delivery smote him on the side to awake him, Acts 12:6, 7. I question whether Herod himself slept so well that night as this his prisoner did. And what was the potion that brought this holy man so quietly to rest? No doubt 'this preparation of the gospel of peace.' He was ready to die, and that made him able to sleep. Why should that break his rest in this world, which, if it had been effected, would have brought him to his eternal rest in the other?

2. Consideration. The more ready and prepared the Christian is to suffer from God, or for God, the more God is engaged to take care for him, and of him. A good general is most tender of that soldier's life who is least tender of it himself. The less the Christian values himself and his interests for God's sake, the more careful God is of him, either to keep him from suffering, or in it. Both of these blessings are meant, 'Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it,' Matt. 16:25. Abraham was ready to offer up his son, and then God would not suffer him to do it. But if the Lord at any time takes the Christian's

15. Hectical: — of, relating to, or being a fluctuating but persistent fever (as in tuberculosis); having a hectic fever; FLUSHED, RED; marked by feverish activity. From Webster's. — SDB

offer, and lets the blow be given, though to the severing of soul and body, he yet shows his tender care of him, by the high esteem he sets upon their blood, which is not more prodigally spilt by man's cruelty, than carefully gathered up by God. 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.'

Thus we see, that by resigning ourselves up readily to the dispose of God, we engage God to take care of us whatever befalls us. And that man or woman, sure, if any other in the world, must needs live comfortably, that hath the care of himself wholly taken off his own shoulders, and rolled upon God, at whose finding he now lives. The poor widow was never better off than when the prophet kept house for her. She freely parted with her little meal for the prophet's use, and, [as] a reward of her faith—in crediting the message he brought from the Lord, so far as to give the bread out of her own mouth, and child's, to the prophet—she is provided for by a miracle, 1 Kings 17:12, 13. O when a soul is once thus brought to the foot of God, that it can sincerely say, 'Lord, here I am; willing to deliver up all I have, and am, to be at thy dispose; my will shall be done, when thou hast thy will of me;' God accounts himself deeply obliged to look after that soul!

USE OR APPLICATION.

[True Christians few, shown from the gospel
holy readiness to suffer.]

Use First. Must the Christian stand thus shod in readiness to march at the call of God in any way or weather? This will exceedingly thin and lessen the number of true Christians, to what they appear to be at the first view, by the estimate of an easy cheap profession. He that should come into our assemblies, and see them thracked and wedged in so close with multitudes flocking after the word, might wonder at first to hear the ministers sink the number of Christians so low, and speak of them as so little a company. Surely their eyes fail them, that they cannot see wood for trees, Christians for multitudes of Christians that stand before them. This very thing made one of the disciples ask Christ with no little straining [wondering] at it, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?'

Luke 13:23. Observe the occasion of this question. Christ, 'went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem,' ver. 22. He saw Christ so free of his pains to preach at every town he came to, and people throng after him, with great expressions of joy that fell from many, ver. 17. Then said he, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' As if he had said, This seems very strange and almost incredible. To see the way to heaven strewed so thick with people, and the means of salvation in such request, and yet be few saved at last! how can this be? Now mark our Saviour's unriddling this mystery. 'And he said unto them (it seems the man spoke more than his own scruple), Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,' ver. 24. As if Christ had said, You judge by a wrong rule. If profession would serve the turn, and flocking after sermons, with some seeming joy at the word, were enough to save, heaven would soon be full. But, as you love your souls, do not bould¹⁶ or try yourselves by this coarse sieve; but 'strive to enter,' ἀγωνίζεσθε—fight and wrestle, venture life and limb, rather than fall short of heaven. 'For many shall seek,... but shall not be able;' that is, seek by an easy profession, and cheap religion, such as is hearing the word, performance of duties, and the like. Of this kind there are many that will come and walk about heaven-door—willing enough to enter, if they may do it without ruffling their pride in a crowd, or hazarding their present carnal interest by any contest and scuffle; 'but they shall not be able!' that is, they 'shall not be able to enter'—because their carnal cowardly hearts shall not be able to strive. So that take Christians under the notion of 'seekers,' and by Christ's own words they are 'many.' But consider them under the notion of 'strivers,' such as stand ready shod with a holy resolution to strive even to blood—if such trials meet them in the way to heaven—rather than not enter, and then the number of Christian soldiers will shrink, like Gideon's goodly host, to a 'little troop.' O how easy were it to instance in several sorts of Christians—so called in a large sense—that have not this gospel shoe to their foot, and therefore are

16. Bould, or bolt, to sift, separate the pure from the impure, to examine. — ED.

sure to founder and falter when once brought to go upon sharp stones!

1. Sort. The ignorant Christian—what work is he like to make of suffering for Christ and his gospel? and such are not the least number in many congregations. Now, they who have not so much light of knowledge in their understanding, as to know who Christ is and what he hath done for them, will they have so much heat of love as to march cheerfully after him, when every step they take must fetch blood from them? Nabal thought he gave a rational answer to David's servants, that asked some relief of him in their present strait, when he said, 'Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?' I Sam. 25:11. He thought it too much to part with upon so little acquaintance. And will the ignorant person, think you, be ready to part, not only with his bread and flesh out of the pot—a little of his estate I mean—but the flesh of his own body, if called to suffer, and all this at the command of Christ, who is one he knows not whence he is? Paul gives this as the reason why he suffered and was not ashamed, 'for (saith he) I know whom I have believed,' II Tim. 1:12. Story tells us of the Samaritans—a mongrel kind of people both in their descent and religion—that, when it went well with the people of God, the Israelites, then they would claim kindred with them, and be Jews, but, when the church of God was under any outward affliction, then they would disclaim it again. And we may the less wonder at this base cowardly spirit in them, if we read the character Christ gives of them, to be a people that 'worship they know not what,' John 4:22. Religion hath but loose hold of them, that have no better hold of it than a blind man's hand.

2. Sort. Carnal gospellers, who keep possession of their lusts while they make profession of Christ. A generation these are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians by, but their baptism, and a Christian name which they have obtained thereby; such as, were they to live among Turks and heathens, their language and conversations—did they but conceal whence they came—would never bewray them to be Christians. Can it now be rationally thought then that these are the men and women who stand ready to suffer for Christ and his gospel? No sure; they who

will not wear Christ's yoke will much less bear his burden. If the yoke of command that binds them to duty be thought grievous, they will much more think the burden of the cross insupportable. He that will not do [work] for Christ, will not die for Christ. That servant is very unlike to fight to blood in his master's quarrel, that will not work for him so as to sweat in his service.

3. Sort. The politic professor—a fundamental article in whose creed is, to save himself, not from sin, but from danger. And therefore he studies the times more than the Scriptures; and is often looking what corner the wind lies in, that accordingly he may shape his course, and order his profession, which, like the hedgehog's house, ever opens toward the warm side!

4. Sort. The covetous professor, whose heart and head are so full of worldly projects, that suffering for Christ must needs be very unwelcome to him, and find him far enough from such a disposition. You know what the Egyptians said of the Israelites, 'They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in,' Ex. 14:3. More true is it of this sort of professors. They are entangled in the world, this wilderness hath shut them in. A man whose foot in a snare is as fit to walk and run as they to follow Christ, when to do it may prejudice their worldly interest. Our Saviour, speaking of the miseries that were to come on Jerusalem, saith, 'Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days,' Matt. 24:19—because it would be more difficult for them to escape the danger by flight. But many more woes to them, who in days of trial and persecution for the gospel, shall be found big with the world, or that give suck to any covetous inordinate affection to the creature. Such will find it hard to escape the temptation that these will beset them with. It is impossible in such a time to keep estate and Christ together; and as impossible for a heart that is set upon the world, to be willing to leave it for Christ's company.

5. Sort. The conceited professor, who hath a high opinion of himself, and is so far from a humble holy jealousy and fear of himself, that he is self-confident. Here is a man shod and prepared he thinks, but not with the right gospel shoe. 'By strength shall no man prevail,' I Sam. 2:9. He that, in Queen Mary's days, was so free of his flesh for Christ

[that], as he said, he would see his fat—of which he had a good store—melt in the fire rather than fall back to Popery, lived, poor man, to see this his resolution melt, and himself cowardly part with his faith to save his fat. Those that glory of their valour, when they put on the harness, ever put it off with shame. ‘The heart’ of man ‘is deceitful above all things,’—a very Jacob, that will supplant its own self. He that cannot take the length of his own foot, how can he of himself fit a shoe to it?

[Exhortation to get on this shoe of preparation.]

Use Second. Be exhorted all you that take the name of Christ upon you, to get this shoe of preparation on, and keep it on, that you may be ready at all times to follow the call of God’s providence, though it should lead you into a suffering condition. Take but two motives.

1. Motive. Consider, Christian, suffering work may overtake thee suddenly, before thou art aware of it; therefore be ready shod. Sometimes orders come to soldiers for a sudden march; they have not so much as an hour’s warning, but must be gone as soon as the drum beats. And so mayest thou be called out, Christian, before thou art aware, into the field, either to suffer for God or from God. Abraham had little time given him to deal with his heart, and persuade it into a compliance with God, for offering his son Isaac. A great trial, and short warning, ‘Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac,’ Gen. 22:2, not a year, a month, a week hence, but now. This was in the night, and Abraham is gone ‘early in the morning,’ ver. 3. How would he have entertained this strange news, if he had been then to gain the consent of his heart? But that was not now to do. God had Abraham’s heart already, and therefore he doth not now dispute his order, but obeys. God can make a sudden alteration in thy private affairs, Christian; how couldst thou in thy perfect strength and health, endure to hear the message of death? If God should, before any lingering sickness hath brought thee into some acquaintance with death, say no more, but ‘Up and die,’ as once to Moses, art thou shod for such a journey? Couldst thou say, ‘Good is the word of the Lord?’ What if one day thou wert to step out of honour into

disgrace, to be stripped of thy silks and velvets, and, in vile raiment, called to act a beggar’s part? Couldst thou rejoice that thou art made low, and find thy heart ready to bless the Most High? This would speak thee a soul evangelically shod indeed.

Again, God can as soon change the scene, in the public affairs of the times thou livest in, as to the gospel and profession of it. May be, now, authority smiles on the church of God; but, within a while it may frown, and the storm of persecution arise. ‘Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea,’ Acts 9:31. This was a blessed time. But how long did it last? Alas! not long, see Acts 12. There is sad news of a bloody persecution in the first verse of it. ‘Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.’ In this persecution James the brother of John lost his life by his cruel sword; and Peter we find in prison, like to go to the same shambles. The entire church, indeed, is driven into a corner to pray in the night together, ver. 12. O what a sad change is here! Now in blood, who even now had ‘rest’ on every side. It is observed that in islands the weather is far more variable and uncertain than in the continent. Here you may know, ordinarily, what weather will be for a long time together; but in islands, in the morning we know not what weather will be before night. We have oftentimes summer and winter in the same day. And all this is imputed to the near neighbourhood of the sea that surrounds them. The saints in heaven, they live, as I may so say, on the continent. A blessed constancy of peace and rest is there enjoyed. They may know by what peace and bliss they have at present, what they shall have to eternity. But here below, the church of Christ is as a floating island, compassed with the world—I mean men of the world—as with a sea; and these [i.e. men of the world] sometimes blow hot, and sometimes cold; sometimes they are still and peaceable, and sometimes enraged and cruel, even as God binds up or lets loose their wrath. Now, Christian, doth it not behove thee to be always in a readiness, when thou knowest not but in the next moment the wind may turn into the cold corner, and the times which now favour the gospel, so as to fill the sails of thy profession with all encouragement, on a sudden blow full on thy face, and oppose it as much as it did before countenance it?

2. Motive. Consider, if thy feet be not shod with a preparation to suffer for Christ here on earth, thy head cannot be crowned in heaven. 'If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' Rom. 8:17. Now mark the following words, 'If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.' It is true, all the saints do not die martyrs at a stake; but every saint must have a spirit of martyrdom, as I may so call it—a heart prepared for suffering. God never intended Isaac should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his throat. Thus God will have us lay our neck on the block, and be, as Paul said of himself, 'bound in the spirit,' under a sincere purpose of heart to give up ourselves to his will and pleasure, which is called 'a presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God,' Rom. 12:1. The end in view is, that as the Jew brought the beast alive, and presented it freely before him, to be done withal as God had commanded, so we are to present our bodies before God, to be disposed of as he commands, both in active and passive obedience. He that refuseth to suffer for Christ, refuseth also to reign with Christ. The putting off of the shoe among the Jews was a sign of a man's putting off the right of an inheritance, Deut. 25:9, 10. Thus did Elimelech's kinsman, when he renounced and disclaimed any right that he might have in his estate—he drew off his shoe, Ruth 4:7, 8. O Christian, Talk heed of putting off thy gospel shoe! By this thou dost disclaim thy right in heaven's inheritance. No portion is there laid up for any that will not suffer for Christ. The persecutions which the saints endure for the gospel, are made by Paul an evident token to them of salvation, and that of God, Php. 1:28. Surely then the denying Christ, to escape suffering, is a sad token of perdition. O sirs, is not heaven's inheritance worth enduring a little trouble for it? Naboth's vineyard was no great matter, yet rather than he would—not lose it, but—sell it to its worth, or change it for a better in another place, chose to lay his life at stake by provoking a mighty king. Thou canst, Christian, venture no more for thy heavenly inheritance, than he paid for refusing his petty patrimony of an acre or two of land—thy temporal life I mean. And besides the odds between his vineyard on earth and thy paradise in heaven—which is infinite, and suffers no proportion, thou hast this advantage also of him in thy suf-

ferings for Christ. When Naboth lost his life, he lost his inheritance also that he so strove to keep; but thy persecuting enemies shall do thee this friendly office against their wills, that when they dispossess thee of thy life, they shall help thee into possession of thy inheritance.

[Directions for helping on
this spiritual shoe.]

The great question I expect now to fall from thy mouth, Christian, is not how mayest thou escape these troubles and trials which, as the evil genius of the gospel, do always attend it? but rather, how thou mayest get this shoe on, thy heart ready for a march to go and meet them when they come, and cheerfully wade through them, whatever they be, or how long soever they stay with thee? This is a question well becoming a Christian soldier, to ask for armour wherewith he may fight; whereas the coward throws away his armour, and asks whether he may flee. I shall therefore give the best counsel I can, in these few particulars.

First Direction. Look carefully to the ground of thy active obedience, that it be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God comes with such an errand, 'The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle,' Ps. 78:9. Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange. Read the precedent verse, and you will cease wondering. They are called there 'a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.' Let the armour be what it will, yea, if soldiers were in a castle whose foundation were a rock, and its walls brass, yet, if their hearts be not right to their prince an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that honest hearts within thin and weak works have held the town, when no walls would defend treachery from betraying trust. O labour for sincerity in the engaging at first for God and his gospel! Be oft asking thy own soul for whom thou prayest, hearest, reformest this practice and that. If thou canst get a satisfac-

tory answer from thy soul here, thou mayest hope well. If faith's working hand be sincere, then its fighting hand will be valiant. That place is observable, Heb. 11:33 'Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire,' and with other great things, that faith enabled them to endure, as you may read in vv. 34-36. There note, I pray, how the power of faith enabling the Christian to 'work righteousness'—that is, live holily and righteously—is reckoned among the wonders of sufferings which it strengthened them to endure. Indeed had it not done this, it would never have endured these.

Second Direction. Pray for a suffering spirit. This is not a common gift, which every carnal gospel-ler and slighty professor hath. No; it is a peculiar gift, and bestowed on a few sincere souls. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,' *Php. 1:29*. All the parts and common gifts that a man hath will never enable him to drink deep of this cup for Christ. Such is the pride of man's heart. He had rather suffer any way than this; rather from himself, and for himself, than from Christ or for Christ. You would wonder to see sometimes, how much a child will endure at his play, and never cry for it—this fall, and that knock, and no great matter is made of it, because got in a way that is pleasing to him. But, let his father whip him, though it puts him not to half the smart, yet he roars and takes on, that there is no quieting of him. Thus, men can bring trouble on themselves, and bite in their complaints. They can, one play away his estate at cards and dice, and another whore away his health, or cut off many years from his life by beastly drunkenness; and all is endured patiently. Yea, if they had their money and strength again, they should go the same way. They do not repent of what their lusts have cost them, but mourn they have no more to bestow upon them. Their lusts shall have all they have, to a morsel of bread in their cupboard and drop of blood in their veins; yea, they are not afraid of burning in hell, as their sins' martyrs. But come, and ask these that are so free of their purse, flesh, soul, and all, in lust's service, to lay their estate or life for a few moments at stake in Christ's cause and his truth's, and you shall see that God is not so much

beholden them. And therefore pray and pray again for a suffering spirit in Christ's cause. Yea, saints themselves need earnestly to plead with God for this. Alas! they do not find suffering work follow their hand so easily. The flesh loves to be cockered, not crucified. Many a groan it costs the Christian before he can learn to love this work. Now prayer, if any means, will be helpful to thee in this particular. He that can wrestle with God, need not fear the face of death and danger. Prayer engageth God's strength and wisdom for our help. And what is there too hard for the creature, that hath God at his back for his help, to do or suffer? We are bid to 'count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations,' *James 1:2*—not temptations to sin, but for righteousness. He means troubles for Christ and his gospel. Ah! but might the poor Christian say, it were cause of more joy to be able to stand under these temptations, than to fall into them. Little joy would it be to have the temptation, and not the grace to endure temptation. True indeed; but, for thy comfort, Christian, he that leads thee into this temptation stands ready to help thee through it. Therefore, *ver. 5*, there is a gracious *si quis*—if any one—set up; 'If any of you'—i.e. you suffers chiefly—'lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' This, methinks, should not much strain our faith to believe. There are not many masters so disingenuous to be found, that would twit and upbraid their servant for asking humbly their counsel in a work of peril and difficulty, which they cheerfully undertake out of love to their persons and obedience to their command. How much less then needest thou fear such dealing from thy God? If thou hast so much faith and love as to venture at his command upon the sea of suffering, he will, without doubt, find so much mercy as to keep thee from drowning, if, feeling thyself begin to sink, thou criest earnestly as Peter did to him, 'Lord, save me.' Wert thou even under water, prayer would buoy thee up again. The proverb indeed is, 'He that would learn to pray, let him go to sea.' But I think it were better thus, 'He that would go to sea—this I mean of suffering—let him learn to pray before he comes there.' But, if thou beest not a man of prayer before suffering work come, thou wilt be able to do little at that weapon then.

Third Direction. Be much in the meditation of

a suffering state. He will say his lesson best, when his master calls him forth, that is oftenest conning¹⁷ it over beforehand to himself. Do by the troubles thou mayest meet with, as porters used to do with their burdens—they will lift them again and again, before they take them on their back. Thus do thou. Be often lifting up in thy meditations those evils that may befall thee for Christ and his truth; and try how thou couldst fadge [agree] with them, if called to endure them. Set poverty, prison, banishment, fire, and fagot, before thee, on the one hand; and the precious truths of Christ on the other, with the sweet promises made to those that shall hold fast the word of patience held forth in such an hour of temptation. Suppose it were now thy very case, and thou wert put to thy choice which hand thou wouldst take, study the question seriously, till thou determinest it clearly in thy conscience. And do this often, so that the arguments which flesh and blood will then be sure to use for thy pitying thyself, may not be new and unanswered, nor the encouragements and strong consolations which the word affords be strange and under any suspicion in thy thoughts, when thou art to venture thy life upon their credit and truth. That of Augustine we shall find most true, *non facile inveniuntur præsidia in adversitate, quæ non fuerint in pace quæsita*—the garrisons are not easily found in adversity which were not sought for and known during peace. The promises are our garrison and fastness at such a time; and we shall not find it easy to run to them in a strait, except we were acquainted with them in a time of peace. A stranger that flies to a house for refuge in the dark night, he fumbles about the door, and knows not how to find the latch—his enemy, if nigh, may kill him before he can open the door. But one that lives in the house, or is well acquainted with it, is not long a getting in. ‘Come, my people,’ saith God, ‘enter thou into thy chambers,’ Isa. 26:20. He is showing them their lodgings in his attributes and promises, before it is night and their sufferings be come, that they may readily find the way to them in the dark.

17. Conning: [ME, connen, to be able] to peruse carefully; study; fix in the memory. From Webster’s

— SDB

Fourth Direction. Make a daily resignation of thyself up to the will of God. Indeed this should be, as it were, the lock of the night and the key of the morning. We should open and shut our eyes with this recommending of ourselves into the hands of God. This, if daily performed—not formally, as all duties frequently repeated, without the more care, are like to be; but solemnly—would sweetly dispose the soul for a welcoming of any trial that can befall him. The awkwardness of our hearts to suffer comes much from distrust. An unbelieving soul treads upon the promise as a man upon ice—at the first going upon it, it is full of fears and tumultuous thoughts lest it should crack. Now this daily resignation of thy heart, as it will give thee an occasion of conversing more with the thoughts of God’s power, faithfulness, and other of his attributes—for want of familiarity with which, jealousies arise in our hearts when put to any great plunge—so also it will furnish thee with many experiences of the reality both of his attributes and promises; which, though they need not any testimony from sense to gain them any credit with us, yet, so much are we made of sense, so childish and weak is our faith, that we find our hearts much helped by those experiences we have had, to rely on him for the future. Look therefore carefully to this; every morning leave thyself and ways in God’s hand, as the phrase is, Ps 10:14. And at night, look again, how well God hath looked to his trust, and sleep not till thou hast affected thy heart with his faithfulness, and laid a stronger charge on thy heart to trust itself again in God’s keeping in the night. And when any breach is made, and seeming loss befall thee in any enjoyment, which thou hast by faith insured of thy God, observe how God fills up that breach, and makes up that loss to thee; and rest not till thou hast fully vindicated the good name of God to thy own heart. Be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God’s dealings; but chide thy heart for it, as David did his, Ps. 42. And thus doing, with God’s blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it.

Fifth Direction. Make self-denial appear as rational and reasonable as thou canst to thy soul. The stronger the understanding is able to reason for the equity and rationality of any work or duty, the more readily and cheerfully it is done, if the heart is honest

and sincere. Suppose, Christian, thy God should call for thy estate, liberty, yea, life and all; can it seem unreasonable to thee? especially,

1. If thou considerest that he bids thee deliver his own, not thy own. He lent thee these, but he never gave away the propriety of them from himself. Dost thou wrong thy neighbour to call for that money thou lentest him a year or two past? No sure, thou thinkest he hath reason to thank thee for lending it to him, but none to complain for calling it from him.

2. Consider that he doth not, indeed cannot, bid thee deny so much for him as he hath done for thee. Is reproach for Christ so intolerable, that thy proud spirit cannot brook it? Why, who art thou? what great house comest thou from? See One that had more honour to lay at stake than I hope thou darest pretend to—Jesus Christ—who ‘thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation,’ *Php.* 2:6, 7. Is it pain and torment thou art afraid of? O look up to the cross where the Lord of life hung for thy sins! and thou wilt take up thy own cross more willingly, and thank God too, that he hath made thine so light and easy, when he provided one so heavy and tormenting for his beloved Son.

3. Consider, whatever God calls thee to deny for his truth, it is not more than he can recompense. Moses saw this, and that made him leap out of his honours and riches into the reproach of Christ, ‘for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward,’ *Heb.* 11:26. It is much that a man will deny himself in for something his heart strongly desires in this life. If a man be greedy of gain, he will deny himself half of a night’s sleep to plot in his bed, or rise early from it to be at his work; he will eat homely fare, go in vile raiment, dwell in a smoky hole, as we see in London, for the conveniency of a shop. How men of quality will crowd themselves up into a little corner, though to the prejudice of their healths, and hazard sometimes of their lives! yet, hope of gain recompenseth all. And now, put their gains into the scale with thine Christian, that are sure to come in by denying thyself for Christ, which theirs are not, and ask thy soul whether it blush not to see them so freely deny themselves of the comfort of their lives for an imaginary, uncertain, at best a short advantage, while thou

hucklest¹⁸ so with Christ for a few outward enjoyments, which shall be paid thee over a hundred-fold here, and beyond what thou canst now conceive when thou comest to heaven’s glory!

Sixth Direction. Labour to carry on the work of mortification every day to further degrees than other. It is the sap in the wood that makes it hard to burn, and corruption unmortified that makes the Christian loath to suffer. Dried wood will not kindle sooner, than a heart dried and mortified to the lusts of the world will endure anything for Christ. The apostle speaks of some that were ‘tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection,’ *Heb.* 11:35. They did not like the world so well, as being so far on their journey to heaven—though in hard way—to be willing to come back to live in it any longer. Take heed, Christian, of leaving any worldly lust unmortified in thy soul. This will never consent thou shouldst endure much for Christ. Few ships sink at sea; they are the rocks and shelves that split them. Couldst thou get off the rocks of pride and unbelief, and escape knocking on the sands of fear of man, love of the world, thou wouldst do well enough in the greatest storm that can overtake thee in the sea of this world. ‘If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for his Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work,’ *II Tim.* 2:21. O that we knew the heaven that is in a mortified soul! one that is crucified to the world and lusts of it. He hath the advantage of any other in doing or suffering for Christ, and enjoying Christ in both. A mortified soul lives out of all noise and disturbance from those carnal passions, which put all out of quiet where they come. When the mortified soul goes to duty there are not those rude and unmannerly intrusions of impertinent, carnal, yea sinful thoughts, between him and his God. Is he to go to prison? Here is not such weeping and taking on; no lust to hang about his legs, and break his heart with its insinuations; no self-love to entreat him that he would pity himself. His heart is free, got out of the acquaintance of these troublers of his peace; and a prison to him, if he may go upon so honourable an errand as testifying to the truth, O how welcome to him! Whereas

18. Huckle, i.e. to haggle in trading. — *Imp. Dict.*

SECOND DOCTRINE.

[The gospel's blessing of peace
PREPARES THE SAINT FOR TRIALS.]

a unmortified heart is wedged in with so great acquaintance and kindred, as I may so say, which his heart hath in the world, that it is impossible to get out of their embraces into any willingness to suffer. A man that comes into an inn in a strange place, he may rise at what time he pleaseth, and be gone as early as he pleaseth in the morning. There are none {to} entreat him to stay. But it is hard to get out of a friend's house; these, like the Levite's father-in-law, will be desiring him to stay one day, and then one more, and another after that. The mortified soul is the stranger. He meets with no disturbance—I mean comparatively—in his journey to heaven; while the unmortified one is linked in fast enough for getting on his journey in haste, especially so long as the flesh hath so fair an excuse as the foulness of the way or weather, any hardship likely to be endured for his profession. I have read of one of the Catos, that, in his old age, he withdrew himself from Rome to his country-house, that he might spend his elder years free from care and trouble. And all the Romans, as they ride by his house, used to say, *iste solus scit vivere*—this man alone knows how to live. I know not what art Cato had to disburden himself, by his retiring, of the world's cares. I am sure, a man may go into the country and yet not leave the city behind him. His mind may be in a crowd while his body is in the solitude of a wilderness. Alas! poor man, he was a stranger to the gospel. Had he been but acquainted with this, it could have shown him a way out of the world's crowd in the midst of Rome itself, and that is, by mortifying his heart to the world, both in the pleasures and troubles of it; and then that high commendation might have been given him without any hyperbole. For, to speak truth, he only knows aright how to live in the world that hath learned to die to the world. And so much for the first point; which, we may remind you, was, that the Christian is to stand ready for all trials and troubles that may befall him. The second follows.

The peace which the gospel brings and speaks to the heart, will make the creature ready to wade through any trial or trouble that meets him in his Christian course. He who enjoys in his bosom the peace of the gospel, is the person and the only person, that stands shod for all ways, prepared for all troubles and trials. None can make a shoe to the creature's foot, so as he shall go easy on a hard way, but Christ. He can do it to the creature's full content. And how doth he {do} it? Truly by no other way that by underlaying it, or, if you will, lining it, with the peace of the gospel. What though the way be set with sharp stones? if this shoe go between the Christian's foot and them, they cannot much be felt. Solomon tells us that ways of wisdom,—that is, Christ—'are ways of pleasantness.' But how so, when some of them are ways of suffering? The next words resolve it; 'and all her paths are peace,' *Prov. 3:17*. Where there is peace—such peace as peace with God and conscience—there can want no pleasure. David goes merry to bed when he hath nothing to supper but the gladness that God by this puts into his heart, and promiseth himself a better night's rest than any of them all that are feasted with the world's cheer; 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep,' *Ps. 4:7, 8*. This same peace with God enjoyed in the conscience, redounds to the comfort of the body. Now David can sleep sweetly when he lies on a hard bed. What here he saith he would do, he saith he had done: 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me,' *Ps. 3:5*. The title of the psalm tells us when David had this sweet night's rest, not when he lay on his bed of downs in his stately palace at Jerusalem, but when he fled for his life from his unnatural son Absalom, and possibly was forced to lie in the open field under the canopy of heaven. Truly it must be a soft pillow indeed that could make him forget his danger, who then had such a disloyal army at his back hunting of him. Yea, so transcendent is the sweet influence of this peace, that it can make the creature lie

down as cheerfully to sleep in the grave as on the softest bed. You shall say that child is willing that calls to be put to bed. Some of the saints have desired God to lay them at rest in their beds of dust; and that not in a pet and discontent with their present trouble, as Job did, but from a sweet sense of this peace in their bosoms. 'Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' was the swan-like song of old Simeon. He speaks like a merchant that had got all his goods on shipboard, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail and be gone homewards. Indeed what should a Christian, that is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get this full lading in for heaven? And when hath he that, if not when he is assured of his peace with God? This peace of the gospel, and sense of the love of God in the soul, doth so admirably conduce to the enabling of a person in all difficulties, and temptations, and troubles, that ordinarily before he calls his saints to any hard service or hot work, he gives them a draught of this cordial wine next their hearts, to cheer them up, and embolden them in the conflict. God calls Abram out of his native country, Gen 12:1, and what so fit as a promise of Christ to bring his heart to God's foot? ver. 2, 3. A sad errand it was that sent Jacob to Padan-aram. He fled from an angry wrathful brother, that had murdered him already in his thoughts, to an unkind, deceitful, uncle, under whom he should endure much hardship. Now God comes in a sweet gospel vision to comfort this poor pilgrim; for by that 'ladder, whose foot stood on earth, and top reached heaven,' Christ was signified to his faith, in whom heaven and earth meet, God and man are reconciled; and, by the 'moving up and down of the angels on the ladder,' the ministry of the angels, which Christ by his death and intercession procures for his saints, that they shall tend on them, as servants on their master's children. So that the sum of all is as much as God had said, 'Jacob, thy brother Esau hates thee, but in Christ I am reconciled to thee, thy uncle Laban, he will wrong thee, and deal hardly by thee, but fear him not. As I am in Christ at peace with thee so through him thou shalt have my especial care over thee, and the guardianship of the holy angels about thee, to defend thee wherever thou goest.'

The Israelites when ready to take their march

out of Egypt into a desolate wilderness, where they should be put to many plunges, and their faith tried to purpose; to prepare them the more for these, he entertains them at a gospel supper before they go forth—I mean the passover, which pointed to Christ. And no doubt the sweetness of this feast made some gracious souls among them, that tasted Christ in it, endure the hardship and hunger of the wilderness the more cheerfully. And the same care and love did our Lord Jesus observe in the institution of his supper, choosing that for the time of erecting this sweet ordinance when his disciples' feet stood at the brink of a sea of sorrows and troubles, which his death and the consequences of it would inevitably bring upon them. Now the pardon of their sins, sealed to their souls in the ordinance must needs be welcome, and enable them to wade through their sufferings the more comfortably. Indeed, the great care which Christ took for his disciples, when he left the world, was not to leave them a quiet world to live in, but to arm them against a troublesome world. And to do this, he labours to satisfy their poor hearts with his love to them, and his father's love to them for his sake; he bequeaths unto them his peace, and empties it in the sweet consolations of it into their bosoms; for which end he tells them, as soon as he got to heaven, he would pray his Father to send the Comforter to them with all speed, and sends them to Jerusalem, there to stay privately, and not go into the field, or openly contest with the angry world, till they received the strength and succour which the Spirit in his comforts should bring with him. By all which it doth abundantly appear how powerful this gospel peace is to enable the soul for suffering.

Now I proceed to show how this peace doth prepare the heart for all sufferings. And that it doth these two ways. First. As it brings along with it, and possesseth the soul where it comes, with such glorious privileges as lift it above all danger and damage from any sufferings whatever from God, man, or devils. Second. As it is influential unto the saint's graces and affections, exciting them, and making them act to such a height, as lifts the Christian above the fear of trouble and suffering.

[How gospel peace prepares the soul
for suffering BY ITS PRIVILEGES.]

FIRST. Gospel peace prepares the heart for suffering, as it brings along with it, and possesseth the soul where it comes, with such glorious privileges as lift it above all danger from any sufferings whatever, from God man, or devils. If a man could be assured he might walk as safely on the waves of the sea, or in the flames of fire, as he doth in his garden, he would be no more afraid of the one than he is to do the other. Or, if a man had some coat of mail secretly about him, that would undoubtedly resist all blows and quench all shot that are sent against him, it would be no such scareful thing for him to stand in the midst of swords and guns. Now, the soul that is indeed at peace with God, is invested with such privileges as do set it above all hurt and damage from sufferings. 'The peace of God' is said 'to garrison the believer's heart and mind,' Php. 4:7. He is surrounded with such blessed privileges, that he is as safe as one in an impregnable castle.

1. Privilege. A person at peace with God becomes then a child of God. And when once the Christian comes to know his relation, and the dear love of his heavenly Father to him, afflictions for or sufferings from him, dread him not, because he knows it is inconsistent with the love of a father, either to hurt his child himself, or to suffer him to be hurt by another, if he can help it. I have often wondered at Isaac's patience to submit to be bound for a sacrifice, and see the knife so near his throat, without any hideous outcries or strugglings that we read of. He was old enough to be apprehensive of death, and the horror of it, being conceived by some to be above twenty years of age. That he was of good growth is out of doubt by the wood which Abraham caused him to carry for the sacrifice. But, such was the authority Abraham had over his son, and the confidence that Isaac had in his father, that he durst put his knife into his hands; which, had the knife been in any other hand, he would hardly have done. Whoever may be the instrument of any trouble to a saint, the rod or sword is at God's disposal. Christ saw the cup in his Father's hand, and that made him take it willingly.

2. Privilege. Every soul at peace with God is heir to God. This follows his relation. 'If children, then

heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' Rom. 8:17. This is such a transcendent privilege, that the soul to whom the joyful news of it comes is lift up above the amazing and affrightening fears of any suffering. The apostle having, in the forenamed place, but a little sweetened his thoughts with a few meditations on this soul-ravishing subject, see how his blessed soul is raised into a holy slighting of all the troubles of this life: 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,' Rom. 8:18. He will not allow his own soul, or any that hath the hope of this inheritance, so far to undervalue the glory thereof, or the love of God that settled it on them, as to mention the greatness of their sufferings in anyway of pitying themselves for them. As if he had said, 'Hath God made us his heirs, and bestowed heaven upon us in reversion, and shall we be so poor-spirited to sit down and bemoan ourselves for our present sorrows, that are no more to be compared with the glory that we are going to, than the little point of time, into which our short life with all our sufferings are contracted, is to be compared with the vast circumference of that eternity which we are to spend in endless bliss and happiness?' He is a poor man, we say, that one or two petty losses quite undoes; and he is a poor Christian that cries out he is undone by any cross in this life. We may safely conclude such a one either is heir to nothing in the other world, or hath little or no evidence for what he hath here.

[How gospel peace prepares the soul
for suffering BY ITS INFLUENCES.]

SECOND. Gospel peace prepares the heart for suffering, as it is influential unto the saint's graces and affections, exciting them, and making them act to such a height, as lifts him above the fear of trouble and suffering.

1. Influence. This peace where it is felt, makes the Christian unconquerable in his faith. Nothing is too hard for such a one to believe, that carries a pardon in his conscience, that hath his peace with God sealed to him. Moses was to meet with many difficulties in that great work of conducting Israel out of Egypt towards Canaan. Therefore, to make them all a more easy conquest to his faith, when he should be

assaulted with them, God gives him at his very first entering upon his charge an experiment of his mighty power in some miracles—as the turning {of} his rod into a serpent, and that again into a rod, making his hand leprous, and then restoring it again to be as sound as before—that he might never think anything too hard for that God to do towards their salvation and deliverance, even when things seem most desperate. And how unconquerable Moses was after these in his faith, we see. Truly, when God speaks to a poor soul, he gives such a testimony of his almighty power and love, that, so long as the sweet sense of this lasts in the soul, the creature's faith cannot be posed. What doth God in his pardoning mercy, but turn the serpent of the law—with all its threatenings, from which the sinner fled, as that which would sting him to death—into the blossoming rod of the gospel, that brings forth the sweet fruit of peace and life? And which is the greater miracle of the two, think you?—the leprous hand of Moses made clean and sound, or a poor sinner's heart, leprous with sin, made clean and pure by washing in the blood of Christ? Certainly this miracle of mercy, where it is strongly believed to be done, will make it easy for that soul to trust God in a sea of temporal sufferings, and cheerfully follow him through a whole wilderness of troubles in this life. When David hath comfortable apprehensions of God's pardoning mercy, then his faith is up, and can strongly act on God for temporal deliverance. We find him, Ps. 32:5, under the sweet sense of his peace with God, able to vouch God as reconciled to him. 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' And now see, ver. 7, to what a height his faith acts on God as to outward troubles. 'Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.' He spells this, which is the less, from the other, that is incomparably the greater mercy.

2. Influence. This peace with God, where it is felt, fills the heart with love to Christ. The Christian's love to Christ takes fire at Christ's love to him. And the hotter Christ's love lies on the soul, the stronger reflection doth the creature make of love to him again, 'she loved much,' to whom much was 'forgiven,' Luke 7:47. And the more love, the less fear there will be of suffering. We will venture far for a

dear friend. When Christ told his disciples Lazarus was dead, Thomas would needs go and die with him for company, John 11:16. So powerful is love, even as strong as death. 'For a good man,' saith the apostle, 'some would even dare to die'—that is, a merciful kind man, whose had endeared him to them. How much more daring will a gracious soul be to sacrifice his life for a good God? 'Thy name,' saith the spouse of Christ, 'is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee,' Song 1:3. Then Christ's name is poured forth, when the love of God through him is shed abroad in the soul. Let this precious box be but broke, and the sweet savour of it diffused in the heart, and it will take away the unsavoury scent of the most stinking prison in the world. This heavenly fire of Christ's love, beaming powerfully on the soul, will not only put out the kitchen fire of creature love; but also the hell fire, as I may call it, of slavish fear. What makes us so aghast at the thoughts of death, especially if it comes towards us in a bloody dress, and hath some circumstances of persecutors' cruelty, to put a further grimness on its displeasing countenance? Surely this comes from guilt, and unacquaintance with Christ, and what he hath done for us; who came partly on this very errand into the world, 'To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,' Heb. 2:15. And how hath he done it, but by reconciling us to God, and so reconciling us to the thoughts of death itself, as that which only can do us this kind office—bring us and Christ, that hath done all this for us, together.

3. Influence. This peace enjoyed in the Christian's bosom hath a sweet influence into his self-denial—as grace so necessary to suffering, that Christ lays the cross, as I may so say, upon the back of it. 'Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,' Mark 8:34. Another, with Simon of Cyrene, may be compelled to carry Christ's cross after him a little way. But, it is the self-denying soul that will stoop willingly, and down on his knees, to have this burden laid on him at Christ's hand. Now the sense of a soul's peace with God will enable the creature in a twofold self-denial, and by both, sweetly dispose him for any suffering from or for Christ.

(1.) The sense of this peace will enable the Christian to deny himself in his sinful self. Sin may

well be called ourself; it cleaves so close to us, even as members to our body. [It is] as hard to mortify a lust as to cut off a joint. Some sins too are more ourself than others, as our life is more bound up in some members than others. Well, let them be what they will, there is a good day, in which, if Christ asks the head of the proudest lust among them all, he shall have it with less regret than Herodias obtained the Baptist's at Herod's hands. And what is that gaudy day, in which the Christian can so freely deny his sin, and deliver it up to justice, but when Christ is feasting him with this 'hidden manna' of pardon and peace? A true friend will rather deny himself than one he loves dearly, if it be in his power to grant his request. But, least of all can he deny him, when his friend is doing him a greater kindness at the same time that he asks a less. No such picklock to open the heart as love. When love comes a begging, and that at a time when it is showing itself in some eminent expression of kindness to him at whose door she knocks, there is little fear but to speed. Esther chose that time to engage Ahasuerus' heart against Haman her enemy, when she expressed her love most to Ahasuerus, viz. at a banquet. When doth God give, or indeed when can he give, the like demonstration of his love to a poor soul, as when he entertains it at this gospel banquet? Now sure, if ever, God may prevail with his child to send the cursed Amalekite to the gallows, his lust to the gibbet. Do you think that Mary Magdalene, when that blessed news dropped from Christ into her mournful heart, that her 'sins, which were many, were all forgiven her,' could now have been persuaded to have opened the door to any of her former lovers, and gone out of these embraces of Christ's love to have played the whore again? No, I doubt not but she would sooner have chosen the flames of martyrdom than of lust. Indeed, that which can make the creature deny a lust, can make the creature it shall not deny a cross.

(2.) The sense of this peace will enable the Christian to deny himself in his carnal enjoyments. And these the Christian finds his great pull-backs from suffering. As the heart burns in the hot fit of love to the pleasures and profits of this world when he abounds with them, in that degree will his shaking fit of fear and grief be when Christ calls him to part with them. What the sweet wines and dainty fare of

Capua was to Hannibal's soldiers, that we shall find any intemperance of heart to the creature will be to us. It will enervate our spirits, and so effeminate us, that we shall have little mind to endure hardship when drawn into the field to look an enemy in the face. Now the sense of this gospel peace will deaden the heart to the creature, and facilitate the work of self-denial as to the greatest enjoyments the world hath. 'God forbid,' saith Paul, 'that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world,' Gal. 6:14. Paul's heart is dead to the world. Now mark what gave the death's wound to his carnal affections. 'By whom,' saith he, 'the world is crucified to me, and I unto it;' that is, Christ and his cross. There was a time, indeed, that Paul loved the world as well who most. But, since he hath been acquainted with Christ, and the mercy of God in him to his soul—pardoning his sins and receiving him into favour and fellowship with himself—he is of another mind. He leaves the world, as Saul his seeking of the asses, at the news of a kingdom; his haunt lies another way now. Let the Zibas of the world take the world, and all they can make of it with their best husbandry. He will not grudge them their happiness, forasmuch as his heavenly Lord and King is come in peace to his soul. None can part with the comfort of the creature so cheerfully as he who hath his mouth at the fountain-head, the love of God himself. Parents are near, and friends are dear, yet a loving wife can forget her father's house, and leave her old friends' company, to go with her husband though it be to a prison. How much more will a gracious soul bid adieu to these, yea life itself, to go to Christ, especially when he hath sent the Comforter into his bosom, to cheer him in the solitariness of the way with his sweet company?

4. Influence. This peace, where it is felt, promotes the suffering grace of patience. Affliction and suffering to a patient soul are not grievous. Patience is, as one calls it, *πέψις της ψυχης*—the concoctive faculty of the soul—that grace which digests all things, and turns them into good nourishment. Meats of hard digestion will not do well with squeamish weak stomachs, and therefore they are dainty and nice in their diets; whereas men of strong stomachs, they refuse no meat that is set before them; all fare is alike

to them. Truly thus there are some things which are of very hard digestion to the spirits of men. The peevish, passionate, short-spirited professor will never concoct reproaches, prison, and death itself, but rather quarrel with his profession, if such fare as these attend the gospel. ‘When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended,’ Matt. 13:21. This will not stay in his stomach, but makes him cast up even that which else he could have kept—a profession of Christ—might he have had it with a quiet life and a whole skin. But now the patient soul, he makes his meal of what God in his providence sets before him. If peace and prosperity be served up with the gospel, he is thankful, and enjoys the sweetness of the mercy while it lasts. If God takes these away, and instead of them, will have him eat the gospel feast with sour herbs of affliction and persecution, it shall not make him sick of his cheer. It is but eating more largely of the comforts of the gospel with them, and they go down very well wrapped up in them. Indeed the Christian is beholden to those consolations which flow from the peace of the gospel for his patience. It were impossible for the people of God to endure with what sometimes they meet with from men and devils also, as they do, had they not sweet help from the sense of God’s love in Christ, that lies glowing at their hearts in inward peace and joy. The apostle resolves all the saints’ patience, experience, and hope, yea, glorying in their tribulations, into this, as the cause of all, ‘Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,’ Rom. 5:5. Sin makes suffering intolerable. When that [sin, viz.] is gone, the worst part of the trouble is removed. A light cart goes through that slough easily, where the cart deeply laden is set fast. Guilt loads the soul, and bemires it in any suffering. Take that away, and let God speak peace to his soul, and he that raged before like a madman under the cross, shall carry it without whinching¹⁹ and whining. ‘The peace of God shall

keep your hearts and minds,’ Php. 4:7. Now what is patience but the keeping of the heart and mind composed and serene in all troubles that befall us? But a word or two for application.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. The preceding doctrine informs our judgments in two particulars. 1. What to judge of their patience in affliction that have no interest in the gospel’s peace. 2. What to think of their peace who, in affliction, have no patience at all.

1. What we are to judge of their patience in affliction who have no interest in the gospel’s peace. Some you shall see very still and quiet in affliction, yet mere strangers to this peace, ignorant of Christ the Peace-maker, walking in opposition to the terms God offers peace in the gospel upon, and yet very calm in affliction. Certainly all is not right with this poor creature. If he had any sense how it is with him, he would have little patience to see himself under the hand of God, and not know but it may leave him in hell before it hath done with him. When I see one run over the stones and hard ways barefoot and not complain, I do not admire his patience, but pity the poor creature that hath benumbed his feet, and, as it were, soled them with a brawny, dead kind of flesh, so as to lose his feeling. But, save your pity much more for those whose consciences are so benumbed and hearts petrified into a senseless stupidity, that they feel their misery no more than the stone doth the mason’s saw which cuts it asunder. Of all men out of hell, none [is] more to be pitied than he that hangs over the mouth of it, and yet is fearless of his danger, while thus the poor wretch is incapable of all means for his good. What good does physic put into a dead man’s mouth? If he cannot be chased to some sense of his condition, all applications are in vain. And if afflictions—which are the strongest physic—leave the creature senseless, there is little hope left that any other will work upon him.

19. whinching: After some searching I have been unable to locate the word in any dictionary to ascertain its meaning. However, I think it may be related, as a possible regional variant, to the word whinge, or whingeing, which follows: Whinge; “to complain, esp. about some- (continued...) ”

19. (...continued) thing which does not seem important.” Certainly the context would seem to fit this word. In any event, my source is the Cambridge Dictionaries Online, which can be found here: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org>. — SDB

2. What are we to think of their peace who, in affliction, have no patience at all—those that are great pretenders to gospel peace, yet cannot think with any patience of suffering from God or for God. Certainly, so far as the creature is acquainted with this peace, and hath the true sense of God’s love in Christ lying warm at his heart, he cannot but find proportionably his heart stand ready to submit to any suffering that God lays out for him. And therefore it behooves us well to try our peace and comfort. If thou hast no heart to suffer for God, but chooseth a sin to escape a cross, thy peace is false. If thou hast but little patience under ordinary afflictions, to compose thy spirit from murmuring, and sustain thy heart from sinking, thy faith on the promise is weak. ‘If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small,’ *Prov. 24:10*.

Use Second. Let this doctrine stir thee up, Christian, to be very tender and chary of thy peace with God and thy own conscience. Keep this peace clear and unbroken, and it will keep thy heart whole, when the whole world breaks about thee. So long as this peace of God rules in your hearts, you are safe from fear or danger, though in a prison or at a stake. But if thou sufferest it to be wounded, then thy enemies will come upon thee as Simeon and Levi on the men of Shechem when sore, and be too hard for thee. O it is sad, friends—you will find it so—to go with sore and smarting consciences into a suffering condition. A thorn in the foot will make any way uneasy to the traveller; and guilt in the conscience any condition uncomfortable to the Christian, but most of all a suffering one. Now, if you will keep your peace unbroken, you must bestow some attendance on it, and set as it were a life-guard about it. The choicest flowers need most looking to. The richer the treasure the safer we lay it. This peace is thy treasure; look well where thou layest it. Two ways our Saviour tells us that worldly treasure, such as silver and gold is, may be lost—by thieves that break in and carry it away, and by rust that eats and corrupts it, *Matt. 6:19*. There are two ways something like these, wherein the Christian may go by the loss in this his heavenly treasure of inward peace and comfort.

1. Presumptuous sins, these are the thieves that ‘break through and steal’ the saint’s comfort away. When the Christian comes to look into his soul after

such a bold act, and thinks to entertain himself, as formerly, with the comforts of his pardoned state, interest in Christ, and hopes of heaven through him, alas! he finds a sad change. There is no promise that will give out its consolations to him—the cellar-door is locked, Christ withdrawn, and the keys carried away with him. He may even cry out with a sad complaint, as Mary when she found not Christ’s body in the sepulchre, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.’ Thus the Christian may, with aching heart, bemoan his folly, ‘My pride, my uncleanness, my earthly-mindedness, they have taken away my treasure, robbed me of my comfort. I could never have a comfortable sight of God’s face in any duty or promise since I fell into that foul sin.’ And therefore, Christian, have a care of such robbers of thy peace as this. ‘The spirit of man’ is called ‘the candle of the Lord,’ *Prov. 20:27*. Hath God lighted thy candle, Christian—cheered thy spirit, I mean, with the sense of his love? Take heed of presumptuous sins. If such a thief be suffered in this thy candle, thy comfort will soon sweal out. Hast thou fallen into the hands of any such presumptuous sins as have stolen thy peace from thee? Send speedily thy hue and cry after them—I mean, take thy sad moan to God, renew thy repentance out of hand, and raise heaven upon them by a spirit of prayer. This is no time to delay. The farther thou lettest these sins go without repentance, the harder thou wilt find it to recover thy lost peace and joy out of their hands. And for thy encouragement know, God is ready, upon thy serious and solemn return, to restore thee ‘the joy of his salvation,’ and do justice upon these enemies of thy soul for thee by his mortifying grace, if thou wilt prosecute the law upon them closely and vigorously, without relenting towards them, or being bribed with the pleasure or carnal advantage that they will not spare to offer, so their lives may be spared.

2. Again, as presumptuous sins are the ‘thieves’ that with a high hand rob the Christian of his comfort; so sloth and negligence are as the ‘rust,’ that in time will fret into his comfort and eat out the heart and strength of it. It is impossible that the Christian who is careless and secure in his walking, infrequent and negligent in his communion with God, should long be owner of much peace or comfort that is true. What if thou dost not pour water of presumptuous

sins into the lap of thy joy to quench it? It is enough it. Thou art murderer to thy comfort by starving it, as if thou dost not pour oil of duty to feed and maintain well as by stabbing of it.

END OF VOLUME I.