

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

Christ, a Complete Saviour

John Bunyan

CHRISTIAN
HERITAGE

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ISBN 978 1 84550 544 8

Published by
Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House,
Fearn, Ross-shire, IVzo I TW, Scotland

www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by www.moose77.com

Printed and bound by Norhaven A/S, Denmark

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BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

William S. Barker

When the Westminster Assembly began in 1643, John Bunyan was not yet fifteen years old. As a sixteen-year-old he served in the Parliamentary Army. Although he came to know John Owen, he did not generally travel in the circles of the well-educated Westminster divines. The London Confession of the Calvinistic Baptists, which he may have had a part in producing in 1677, was nevertheless almost identical with the *Westminster Confession* except with regard to the sacraments and polity. Coming from the lower middle-class, Bunyan reflects the impact of the Puritan movement upon mid-seventeenth-century England, and he in turn has become perhaps the most influential of all English Puritans through his literary works, including his autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and the allegorical books, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*.

Bunyan was born in the village of Elstow, Bedfordshire, just south of the town of Bedford, in November of 1628. The ancestors of his father, Thomas Bunyan (1603-1676), had lived in this region since at least the twelfth century. His mother, Margaret Bentley, was also a native of Elstow, born in 1603 of people 'who, though humble in station, were yet decent and worthy in their ways'. His father designated himself in his will a 'brasier', what would later be termed a 'whitesmith, a maker and mender of pots and kettles'. Although John Bunyan would later be styled as 'a tinker and a poor man', he was not a totally itinerant craftsman, but had his forge and workshop by his settled home in Elstow.

Bunyan's mother died in June 1644, and his father remarried within two months. The arrival of a stepmother may have led to his joining the Army by the time of his reaching the regulation age of sixteen in November 1644. Posted to Newport Pagnell, he seems not

to have seen any serious battle action in the Parliamentary Army, although he does refer to a soldier who went to a siege in his place and was shot in the head and killed. Bunyan's regiment was demobilized in July 1647, and he returned to Elstow.

He married a woman whose name is not known, probably in late 1648 or early 1649. She came from a godly home and brought with her two books that were to have a formative influence upon Bunyan's spirituality—Arthur Dent's *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety*. He gave up his habit of swearing and became regular in his attendance at church. Although he became 'a brisk talker on religion', he realized that he lacked the personal knowledge of God that he sensed in some poor women whose conversation he overheard. His quest for spiritual reality and an assurance of his own salvation led to an agonizing inner conflict for a period of three or four years before he found peace of soul, as described in his *Grace Abounding*.

In 1653 he joined the Nonconformist church to which those poor women belonged. It met for worship in St. John's Church, Bedford, a congregation founded by eleven working-men in 1650 as a result of Oliver Cromwell's policy of toleration for Protestant separatists. The rector was John Gifford, whose ministry before his death in 1655 had a positive influence on Bunyan. It was also in 1655 that he lost his wife, who had borne him four children, Mary (who was blind), John, Thomas and Elizabeth. It was probably in this same year that he moved to Bedford.

In 1655 he was elected one of the deacons and began in private ministry to exercise his gift of exhortation. In 1657 he was formally set apart to the office of preacher, and as he travelled, pursuing his trade as a tinker, he used every opportunity to preach, 'in woods, in barns, on village greens, or in town chapels', and his fame as a preacher spread. In some places the official ministers gave him permission, in other places there was opposition.

Bunyan also began to write. His first published work appeared in 1656, *Some Gospel Truths Opened*, which was an attack upon the mysticism of the Quakers. This was answered by Edward Burrough, and Bunyan responded in 1657 with *A Vindication of Gospel Truths*. These early works show an energetic style, a command of plain English, and a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

With the Restoration in 1660, laws against Nonconformity were revived, and Bunyan was arrested for preaching without licence on November 12 at the hamlet of Lower Samsell by Harlington, about thirteen miles south of Bedford. He was imprisoned in the county jail, where he would spend most of the next twelve years, although he was allowed occasional liberty to preach in Bedford and even to visit some Christians in London.

In 1659 Bunyan had married a second wife, Elizabeth, who cared for his four motherless children and eventually bore him two more, Sarah and Joseph. During his lengthy imprisonment she earnestly and diligently pleaded with the authorities for his release, but to no avail. To help support his family from prison, he made long tagged laces, 'many hundred gross of which he sold to the hawkers'. His imprisonment, however, gave him greater time and incentive to write. At least eight minor works were published between 1663 and 1665. Then in 1666 appeared *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Bunyan's spiritual autobiography.

He was released from prison in 1666, but within six weeks he was arrested again because he would not give up preaching. During the next six years in jail his writing productivity dropped off, but in 1672 he produced his *Defence of Justification by Faith*, a vehement attack upon a work by Rev. Edward Fowler, Rector of Northill. Also in that year he produced the *Confession of My Faith and Reason of My Practice* as a vindication of his teaching in order to gain his freedom. Thanks to Charles II's covert intention of favouring Roman Catholics in England, Bunyan was among the Nonconformists pardoned in 1672

and finally gained his release after almost twelve years in jail. He was already called to be the Pastor of the Nonconformist church in Bedford, which was no longer able to meet in St. John's Church, but in a barn in the orchard of a member of the congregation.

From his centre in Bedford, Bunyan spread his ministry throughout the county and beyond. He applied to the authorities for licenses for preachers and preaching sites in the surrounding country:

Among these he made stated circuits, being playfully known as 'Bishop Bunyan', his diocese being a large one, and, in spite of strenuous efforts at repression by the ecclesiastical authorities, steadily increasing in magnitude and importance.

He was imprisoned again in 1676, and it was on this occasion that John Owen sought to aid in gaining his release. It was Owen who recommended the manuscript of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* to his publisher, Nathaniel Ponder, and who, when asked by Charles II why he listened to an uneducated tinker, said, 'Could I possess the tinker's abilities for preaching, please your Majesty, I would gladly relinquish all my learning.'

The Pilgrim's Progress appeared in 1678, with a second edition in the same year and a third in 1679. According to the author's own claim, it was produced in prison. Edmund Venables, following John Brown's 1885 biography, believes this to be his last, six-months imprisonment, but Christopher Hill argues for its having been written no later than 1672, Bunyan delaying its publication because of concern over the propriety of writing fiction about so serious a subject. He need not have worried. As William Haller points out, Bunyan's 'great allegories were but single items coming from a single practitioner—though a genius—in a vast literature, only a portion of which has been preserved...' reflecting the 'similitudes' of many Puritan sermons. J.I. Packer says that '*Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress* serves as a kind of

gazetteer to the contents of their sermons.' He also says that it reflects the fact that the Puritans were great warriors:

The Puritans fought for truth against error, for personal holiness against temptations to sin, for ordered wisdom against chaotic folly, for church purity and national righteousness against corruption and hostility in both areas. One facet of their greatness was their principled hostility to all evils that stood in the way of godliness and true faith, and their willingness, much as they loved peace, to go out and fight those things, and to keep fighting as long as the evils were there.

Bunyan is usually classified as a Baptist. He himself deplored denominational labels and termed himself 'Congregational', but this may refer merely to his church's polity. As his 1673 work *Differences in Judgment about Water-Baptism no Bar to Communion* shows, he would not exclude those who differed with regard to the form or subjects of baptism. Calvinistic in his theology, he is to be regarded as a Particular Baptist of an open sort. Alexander F. Mitchell believes that his influence may have softened the 1677 statement, 'a Confession of Faith put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many congregations of Christians baptized upon profession of their faith', which was reprinted in 1688 and approved by over a hundred congregations in London, July 3-11, 1689, commonly known as 'The London Confession of 1688'.

The Pilgrim's Progress was followed in 1680 by *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* and in 1682 by *The Holy War Made by Shaddai upon Diabolus*. In 1684 there appeared the second part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which Christian's wife Christiana makes her pilgrimage to the heavenly city. By this time Bunyan was famous for both his writing and his preaching. His friend Charles Doe reports that when he preached in London,

if there were but one day's notice given, there would be more people come together to hear him preach than the meeting

house would hold. I have seen to hear him preach by my computation about twelve-hundred at a morning lecture by seven o'clock on a working day in the dark winter time.

A contemporary described Bunyan's appearance as follows:

He was tall of stature, strong-boned though not corpulent, somewhat of a ruddy face with sparkling eyes, wearing his hair on his upper lip after the old British fashion; his hair reddish, but in his latter days had sprinkled with grey; his nose well-set, but not declining or bending, and his mouth moderately large, his forehead something high, and his habit always plain and modest.

His bearing seems to have been consistent with his message.

Another contemporary described him thus:

He appeared in countenance to be of a stern and rough temper, but in his conversation mild and affable, not given to loquacity or much discourse in company, unless some urgent occasion required it, observing never to boast of himself in his parts, but rather seem low in his own eyes, and submit himself to the judgment of others.

A third contemporary wrote:

His countenance was grave and sedate, and did so to the life discover the inward frame of his heart, that it was convincing to the beholders, and did strike something of awe in to them that had nothing of the fear of God.

In the spring of 1688 Bunyan had suffered an attack of the 'sweating sickness', from which he was weakened. In August he travelled on horseback first to Reading, where he sought to reconcile a son to his father, and then through forty miles of drenching rain to London. He preached for the last time on August 19, then was seized with a fever and died on the 31st. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, Finsbury, London. During his dying days he continued to share his

spiritual wisdom: 'No sin against God can be little, because it is against the great God of heaven and earth; but if the sinner can find out a little God, it may be easy to find out little sins.' At the end it was difficult to say much, and that occasioned this remark: `... when you prayest, let your heart be without words than your words without a heart.'

This biographical account is taken from William S. Barker, *Puritan Profiles* (Fearn: Mentor: 1999), a collection of biographical profiles of 54 leading Puritans, most of whom were involved in the compiling of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST EXPLAINED

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25).

The apostle in this chapter presents us with two things: that is, with the greatness of the person and of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus.

He presents us with the greatness of his person: in that he prefers him before Abraham, who is the father of us all; yea, in that he prefers him before Melchizedek, who was above Abraham, and blessed him who had the promises.

As to his priesthood; he shows the greatness of that, in that he was made a priest, not by the law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life. Not without, but with an oath, by him that said, 'The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' Wherefore this man, because he lives ever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

Now my text is drawn from this conclusion, namely, that Christ abides a priest continually: 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

In these words I take notice of four things:

- 1 Of the intercession of Christ. 'He makes intercession.'

2 Of the benefit of his intercession. 'Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost ..' (see chapter 2).

3 Of the persons interested in this intercession of Christ: and they are those 'that come to God by him'.

4 Of the certainty of their reaping this benefit by him, namely, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them: 'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

We will begin with his intercession and will show you: (1) What this is; (2) For what he intercedes; and (3) What is also to be inferred from Christ's making intercession for us.

WHAT IS HIS INTERCESSION?

I begin then with the first, that is, to show you what intercession is. Intercession is prayer; but all prayer is not intercession. Intercession, then, is that prayer that is made by a third person, about the concerns that are between two. And it may be made either to set them at farther difference, or to make them friends. For intercession may be made against, as well as for, a person or people. Wot you not what the scripture saith of Elias, how he makes intercession to God against Israel?' But the intercession that we are now to speak of, is not an intercession of this kind; not an intercession against, but an intercession for a people. 'He ever lives to make intercession for them.' The high priest is ordained for, but not to be against, the people. 'For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people'; or 'that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.' This then, is intercession, and the intercession of Christ is to be between two; between God and man, for man's good.

WHAT DOES HE ASK FOR?

And, secondly, it extends itself to these four things:

1 To pray that all the elect may be brought home to him, that is, to God.

2 To pray that their sins committed after conversion may be forgiven them.

3 To pray that their graces, which they receive at conversion, may be maintained and supplied.

4 To pray that their persons may be preserved to his heavenly kingdom.

This is the intercession of Christ, or that for which he does make intercession.

'Bring Them Home'

He prays for all the elect, that they may be brought home to God, and so into the unity of the faith, etc. This is clear, for that he says, 'Neither pray I for these alone' (that is, for those only that are converted), 'but for them also that shall believe on me through their word' (John 17:20); for all them that shall, that are appointed to believe; or, as you have it a little above, 'for all them which you have given me'. And the reason is, for that he has paid a ransom. Christ, therefore, when he makes intercession for the ungodly (and all the unconverted elect are such), does but ask for his own, his purchased ones, those for whom he died before, that they might be saved by his blood.

'Cleanse Them and Keep Them'

When any of them are brought home to God, he yet prays for them; namely, that the sins which, through infirmity, they after conversion may commit, may also be forgiven them.

This is showed us by the intercession of the high priest under the law, that was to bear away the iniquities of the holy things of the children of Israel; yea, and also by his atonement for them that

sinned: for that it says, 'And the priest shall make an atonement for him for the sin which he has sinned, and it shall be forgiven him' (Lev. 5:10).

This also is intimated even where our Lord does make intercession, saying, 'I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil' (John 17:15).

That Christ prayed that the converted should be kept from all manner of commission of sin, must not be supposed, for that is the way to make his intercession, at least in some things, invalid, and to contradict himself; 'for,' says he, 'I know that you hear me always' (John 11:4.2). But the meaning is, I pray that you would keep them from soul-damning delusions, such as are unavoidably such; also that you would keep them from the soul-destroying evil of every sin, of every temptation. Now this he does by his prevailing, and by his pardoning grace.

` Give Them More Grace'

In his intercession, he prays also that those graces which we receive at conversion may be maintained and supplied. This is clear where he says, 'Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not' (Luke 22:31-2). Ay, may some say, he is said to pray here for the support and supply of faith; but does it therefore follow, that he prayed for the maintaining and supply of all our graces? Yes, in that he prayed for the preservation of our faith, he prayed for the preservation of all our graces; for faith is the mother-grace, the root-grace, the grace that has all others in the bowels of it, and that from the which all others grow; yea, it is that which gives being to all our other graces, and that by which all the rest do live. Let then faith be preserved, and all graces continue and live, that is, according to the present state, health, and degree of faith. So then Christ prayed for the preservation of every grace when he prayed for the preservation of faith. That text

also is of the same tendency, where he says, 'Keep through your own name those whom you have given me' (John 17:11): that is, keep them in your fear, in the faith, in the true religion, in the way of life, by grace, by the power, by the wisdom, etc. This must be much of the meaning of this place; and he that excludes this sense will make but poor work of another exposition.

'Preserve Them'

He also, in his intercession, prays that our persons be preserved, and brought safe to his heavenly kingdom. And this he does: (1) by pleading his interest in them; (2) by pleading that he had given, by promise, glory to them; (3) by pleading his own resolution to have it so; (4) by pleading the reason why it must be so.

Observe, he prays that their persons may come to glory, for that they are his, and that by the best of titles: 'Thine they were, and you gave them me' (John 17:6). Father, I will have them: Father, I will have them, for they are mine: 'Thine they were, and you gave them me.' What is mine, my wife, or my child, or my jewel, or my joy; sure I may have it with me. Thus therefore he pleads, or cries in his intercession, that our persons might be preserved to glory: 'They are mine, and you gave them me.'

He also pleads that he had given, given already (that is, in the promise) glory to them; and therefore they must not go without it. 'And the glory which you gave me I have given them' (John 17:22). Righteous men, when they give a good thing by promise, design the performance of that promise; nay, they more than design it, they purpose, they determine it. As the mad prophet also says of God, in another case, 'Has he said, and shall he not do it? Or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' (Num. 23:19). Has Christ given us glory, and shall we not have it? Yea, has the truth itself bestowed it upon us, and shall those to whom it is given, even given by the scriptures of truth, be yet deprived thereof?

He pleads, in his interceding that they might have glory, his own resolution to have it so: 'Father, I will that those whom you have given me, be with me where I am' (John 17:24). Behold you here, he is resolved to have it so; it must be so; it shall be so; I will have it so. We read of Adonijah, that his father never denied him in anything. How much more will our Father let our Lord Jesus Christ have his mind and his will in this, since he also is as willing to have it so, as is the Son himself: 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom' (Luke 12:32). Resolution will drive things far, especially resolution to do that, which none shall oppose but they that cannot hinder. Why, this is the case, the resolution of our intercessor is, that we be preserved to glory; yea, and this resolution he pleads in his intercession: 'Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me be with me where I am' etc. Must it not therefore now be so?

He also, in the last place, in this his intercession, urges a reason why he will have it so, namely, 'That they may behold my glory, which you have given me: for you loved me before the foundation of the world' (John 17:24).

And this is a reason to the purpose. It is as if he had said, 'Father, these have continued with me in my temptations; these have seen me under all my disadvantages; these have seen me in my poor, low, contemptible condition; these have seen me, what scorn, reproach, slanders, and disgrace, I have borne for your sake in the world: and now I will have them also be where they shall see me in my glory. I have told them that I am your Son, and they have believed that; I have told them that you love me, and they have believed that; I have also told them that you would take me again to glory, and they have believed that: but they have not seen my glory: nor can they but be like the Queen of Sheba; they will but believe by the halves, unless their own eyes do behold it. Besides, Father, these are they that love me; and it will be an increase of their joy, if they may but see me in glory: it will be a heaven to their hearts, to see their Saviour in glory.'

I will therefore that those which you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' This therefore is a reason why Christ Jesus our Lord intercedes to have his people with him in glory.

WHAT DOES CHRIST'S INTERCESSION INFER?

I come now to the third thing, namely, to show you what is to be inferred from Christ's making intercession for us.

Saints Sin

This is to be inferred from hence, that saints (for I will here say nothing of these of the elect uncalled) do oft-times give occasion of offence to God, even they that have received grace. For intercession is made to continue one in the favour of another, and to make up those breaches that at any time shall happen to be made by one, to the alienating of the affections of the other. And thus Jesus makes reconciliation for iniquity. For reconciliation may be made for iniquity in two ways: first, by paying a price; secondly, by insisting upon the price paid for the offender, by way of intercession. Therefore you read, that as a goat was to be killed, so his blood was to be brought by the priest within the veil, and in a way of intercession to be sprinkled before, and upon the mercy seat: 'Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat. And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins. And so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remains among them in the midst of all their uncleanness' (Lev. 16:15-16). This was to be done, as you see, that the tabernacle, which was the place of God's presence and graces, might yet remain among the children of Israel, notwithstanding their uncleannesses and transgressions. This also is the effect of Christ's intercessions; it is that the signs of God's presence and his grace

might remain among his people, notwithstanding they have by their transgressions so often provoked God to depart from them.

We Need a Mediator

By Christ's intercession I gather that awakened men and women, such as the godly are, dare not, after offence given, come in their own names to make to God an application for mercy. God in himself is a consuming fire, and sin has made the best of us as stubble is to fire: wherefore they may not, they cannot, they dare not approach God's presence for help, but by and through a mediator and intercessor. When Israel saw the fire, the blackness and darkness, and heard the thunder and lightning, and the terrible sound of the trumpet, they said to Moses, 'Speak you to us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die' (Exod. 20:19). Guilt, and a sense of the disparity that is betwixt God and us, will make us look out for a man that may lay his hand upon us both; and that may set us right in the eyes of our Father again. This, I say, I infer from the intercession of Christ. For, if there had been a possibility of our approaching God with advantage without, what need had there been of the intercession of Christ?

Absalom durst not approach, no not the presence of his father by himself, without a mediator and intercessor; wherefore he sends to Joab to go to the king and make intercession for him. Also, Joab durst not go upon that errand himself but by the mediation of another. Sin is a fearful thing; it will quash and quell the courage of a man, and make him afraid to approach the presence of him whom he has offended; though the offended is but a man. How much more then shall it discourage man, when once loaded with guilt and shame, from attempting to approach the presence of a holy and a sin-revenging God unless he can come to him through and in the name of an intercessor. But here now is the help and comfort of the people of God. There is, to help them under all their infirmities, an intercessor, prepared and at work: 'He ever lives to make intercession.'

We Need a Blameless Intercessor

I also infer from hence that should we, out of an ignorant boldness and presumption, attempt, when we have offended, by ourselves to approach the presence of God, God would not accept us. He told Eliphaz so. What Eliphaz thought, or was about to do, I know not; but God said to him, 'My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends: for you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job has. Therefore take to you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves (that is, by him) a burnt offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him I will accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, like my servant Job' (Job 42:7-8). See here, an offence is a bar and an obstruction to acceptance with God, but by a mediator, but by an intercessor. He that comes to God by himself, God will answer him by himself, that is, without an intercessor: And I will tell you such are not like to get any pleasant or comfortable answer: 'I the LORD will answer him that (so) comes, according to the multitude of his idols.... And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and you shall know that I am the LORD' (Ezek. 14:4-8).

He that intercedes for another, with a holy and just God, has need to be clean himself; lest he with whom he so busies himself say to him, First clear yourself, and then come and speak for your friend. Wherefore this is the very description and qualification of this our high priest and blessed intercessor: 'For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who need not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins...' (Heb. 7:26-7). Had we not had such an intercessor, we had been but in a very poor case: but we have one that becomes us, one that fits us to the purpose; one against

whom our God has nothing, can object nothing; one in whose mouth no guile could be found.

Christ Answers All Accusations Against Us

Since Christ is an intercessor, I infer that he has wherewith in readiness to answer to any demands that may be propounded by him that has been by us offended, in order to a renewing of peace, and letting out of that grace to us that we have sinned away, and yet have need of. Oft times the offended says to the intercessor, 'Well, you come to me about this man; what interest he has in you is one thing; what offence he has committed against me is another.' (I speak now after the manner of men.) Now, what can an intercessor do, if he is not able to answer this question? But now if he be able to answer this question, that is, according to law and justice, no question but he may prevail with the offended for him for whom he makes intercession.

Why, this is our case; to be sure thus far it is, we have offended a just and a holy God, and Jesus Christ is become intercessor. He also knows full well, that for our parts, if it would save us from hell, we cannot produce, towards a peace with God, so much as poor two farthings; that is, not any thing that can by law and justice be esteemed worth a halfpenny: yet he makes intercession. It follows, therefore, that he has wherewith of his own, if that question afore is propounded, to answer to every reasonable demand.

Hence it is said, that he has gifts as well as sacrifice for sin. 'Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer' (Heb. 8:3). And observe it, that the apostle speaks here of Christ as in heaven, there ministering in the second part of his office: 'for if he were on earth, he should not be a priest' (Heb. 8:4). These gifts therefore, and this sacrifice, he now offers in heaven by way of intercession, urging and pleading, as an intercessor, the valuableness of his gifts, for the pacifying of that wrath that our Father has conceived against us for

the disobedience that we are guilty of. 'A gift in secret pacifies anger; and a reward in the bosom strong wrath' (Prov. 21:14).

What gifts these are, the scripture everywhere testifies. He gave himself, he gave his life, he gave his all, for us. These gifts, as he offered them up at the demand of justice, on Mount Calvary for us; so now he is in heaven, he presents them continually before God, as gifts and sacrifice, valuable for the sins, for all the sins that we through infirmity do commit, from the day of our conversion to the day of our death. And these gifts are so satisfactory, so prevalent with God, that they always prevail for a continual remission of our sins with him. Yea, they prevail with him, for more than for the remission of sins; we have, through their procurement, our graces often renewed, the devil often rebuked, the snare often broken, guilt often taken away from the conscience, and many a blessed smile from God, and love-look from his life-creating countenance.

Believers Should not Rest at the Cross for Comfort

Since Christ is an intercessor, I infer that believers should not rest at the cross for comfort. Justification they should look for there; but being justified by his blood, they should ascend up after him to the throne. At the cross you will see him in his sorrows and humiliations, in his tears and blood; but follow him to where he is now, and then you shall see him in his robes, in his priestly robes, and with his golden girdle about his breast. Then you shall see him wearing the breastplate of judgment, and with your names written upon his heart. Then you shall perceive, that the whole family in heaven and earth is named by him, and how he prevails with God, the Father of mercies, for you. Stand still a while, and listen, yea, enter with boldness into the holiest, and see your Jesus, as he now appears in the presence of God for you; what work he makes against the devil, and sin, and death, and hell for you. Ah, it is brave, following Jesus Christ to the holiest! The veil is rent, you may see with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.

This then is our high priest; this is intercession; these the benefits of it. It lies in our part to improve it; and wisdom to do that also comes from the mercy-seat or throne of grace, where he even our high priest, ever lives to make intercession for us. To whom be glory for ever and ever.

BENEFITS OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION

And thus have I spoken of the first thing, namely, of the intercession of Christ.

And now I come more particularly to speak of the second, the benefits of his intercession, namely, that we are saved hereby. Wherefore he is able also to save them, seeing he makes intercession for them. 'He is able to save them to the uttermost'

In my handling of this head, I must show you:

1 What the apostle means here by 'save': 'Wherefore he is able to save.'

2 What he means here by 'saving to the uttermost': 'He is able to save to the uttermost.'

3 And then, thirdly, we shall do as we did in that foregoing, that is gather some inferences from the whole, and speak of them.

WHAT DOES THE APOSTLE MEAN BY 'SAVE'?

'He is able to save them.' To 'save' may be taken in two ways. In the general, I know it may be taken many ways; for there are many salvations that we enjoy, yea, that we never knew of, nor can know, until we come thither where all secret things shall be seen, and where that which has been done in darkness shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. But I say there are two ways that this word may be taken, in particular:

1 To save in a way of justification. Or,

2 To save in a way of preservation.

Now Christ saves in both these ways; but which of these, or whether both of them are intended in this place, of that I shall tell you my thoughts anon; meanwhile I will show you, what it is to be saved in the first sense; and also how that is brought to pass.

Justification

To be saved is to be delivered from the guilt of sin, which is by the law, as it is the ministration of death and condemnation; or to be set free therefrom before God. This is to be saved; for he that is not set free therefrom, whatever he may think of himself, or whatever others may think concerning him, he is a condemned man. It says not he shall be, but, he 'is condemned already' (John 3:18). The reason is that he has deserved the sentence of 'the ministration of condemnation' which is the law; yea, that law has already arraigned, accused and condemned him before God, for it has found him guilty of sin. Now he that is set free from this (or, as the phrase is, 'being made free from sin', that is, from the imputation of guilt), there can to him be no condemnation, no condemnation to hellfire; but the person thus made free may properly be said to be saved. Wherefore, as sometimes it says, we shall be saved, respecting saving in the second sense, or the utmost completing of salvation; so sometimes it says we are saved, as respecting our being already secured from guilt, and so from condemnation to hell for sin, and so set safe, and quit from the second death before God.

Now, saving thus comes to us by what Christ did for us in this world; by what Christ did for us, as suffering for us. I say, it comes to us thus; that is, it comes to us by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ. And thus to be saved is called justification, justification to life; because one thus saved is, as I said, acquitted from guilt, and that everlasting damnation, to which, for sin, he had made himself obnoxious by the law.

Hence we are said to be saved by his death, justified by his blood, and reconciled to God by the death of his Son; all which must respect his offering of himself on the day he died, and not his improving of his so dying in a way of intercession; because in the same place the apostle reserves a second, or an additional salvation, and applies that to his intercession; 'Much more then being now (or

already) justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him', that is through what he will further do for us: 'for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled (that is, by his death), we shall be saved by his life' (Rom. 5:9-10), his intercession which he ever lives to complete.

See here, we are said to be justified, reconciled already, and therefore shall be saved, justified by his blood and death, and saved through him by his life.

Preservation

Now the saving intended in the text, is saving in this second sense; that is, a saving of us by preserving us, by delivering us from all those hazards that we run betwixt our state of justification and our state of glorification. Yea, such a saving as we that are justified need, to bring us into glory. Therefore, when he says 'he is able to save, seeing he ever lives to make intercession', he adds saving to saving; saving by his life to saving by his death; saving by his improving his blood to saving by his spilling his blood. He gave himself a ransom for us, and now improves that gift in the presence of God by way of intercession.

For, as I have hinted already, the high priests, under the law, took the blood of the sacrifices that were offered for sin, and brought it within the veil, and there sprinkled it before and upon the mercy seat, and by it made intercession for the people—an additional way of saving them: the sum of which, Paul thus applies to Christ, when he says he can save, 'seeing he ever lives to make intercession'.

That also in the Romans is clear to this purpose 'Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died'; that is, who is he that shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect to condemnation to hell, since Christ, by his death, has taken away the curse, from before God? Then he adds that there is nothing that shall yet happen to us, shall destroy

us, since Christ also lives to make intercession for us: 'Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us' (Rom. 8:34).

Christ, then, by his death saved us as we are sinners, enemies, and in a state of condemnation by sin; and Christ by his life saves us as considered justified, and reconciled to God by his blood. So then, we have salvation from that condemnation that sin had brought us into, and salvation from those ruins that all the enemies of our souls would yet bring us to, but cannot; for the intercession of Christ prevents.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law; whatever the law can take hold of to curse us for, that Christ has redeemed us from, by being made a curse for us. But this curse that Christ was made for us, must be confined to his sufferings, not to his exaltation; and consequently, not to his intercession, for Christ is made no curse but when he suffered: not in his intercession. So then, as he died, he took away the curse, and sin that was the cause thereof, by the sacrifice of himself; and by his life, his intercession, he saves us from all those things that attempt to bring us into that condemnation again.

The salvation then that we have by the intercession of Christ as we said (I speak now of them that are capable of receiving comfort and relief by this doctrine), is salvation that follows upon, or that comes after justification. We that are saved as to justification of life, need yet to be saved with that which preserves to glory. For though by the death of Christ we are saved from the curse of the law, yet attempts are made by many, that we may be kept from the glory that justified persons are designed for; and from these we are saved by his intercession.

A man then that must be eternally saved, is to be considered: (i) as an heir of wrath; (2) as an heir of God. An heir of wrath he is in

himself by sin: an heir of God he is by grace through Christ. Now, as an heir of wrath, he is redeemed, and as an heir of God he is preserved: as an heir of wrath he is redeemed by blood, and as an heir of God he is preserved by this intercession.

Christ by death, then, puts me (I being reconciled to God thereby) into a justified state, and God accepts me to grace and favour through him. Yet this does not hinder, but that (al I this notwithstanding) there are enemies, that would frustrate me of the end to which I am designed by this reconciliation to God, by redemption through grace; and from the malice of these enemies, I am saved by the blessed intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Are We Saved from All Punishments?

Objection 1. Perhaps some may say, we are not saved from all punishment of sin by the death of Christ; and if so, then not from all danger of damnation by the intercession of Christ.

Answer. We are saved from all punishment in hellfire by the death of Christ. Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come. So that, as to this great punishment, God for his sake has forgiven us all trespasses. But we being translated from being slaves to Satan to be sons of God, God reserves yet this liberty in his hand to chastise us, if we offend, as a father chastises his son. This chastisement is not in legal wrath, but in fatherly affection; not to destroy us, but that we might be made still to get advantage thereby, even be made partakers of his holiness. This is done, 'that we might not be condemned with the world' (1 Cor. 11:32).

As to the second part of the objection, there do (as we say, many things happen between the cup and the lip) many things attempt to overthrow the work of God, and to cause that we should perish through our weakness, notwithstanding the price that has by Christ been paid for us. But what says the scripture? 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or

persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (as it is written, for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 8:35-9).

Thus the Apostle reckons up all the disadvantages that a justified person is incident to in this life, and by way of challenge declares that not any of them, nor all together, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is towards us by Christ, by his death and his intercession.

What About Sin?

Objection 2. It may be further objected that the apostle does here leave out sin, to which we know the saints are subject, after justification. And sin of itself (we need no other enemies) is of that nature, as to destroy the whole world.

Answer. Sin is sin, in the nature of sin, wherever it is mind. But sin, as to the damning effects thereof, is taken away from them, to whom righteousness is imputed for justification. Nor shall any or all the things afore mentioned (though there is a tendency in every one of them to drive us into sin) drown us through sin, in perdition and destruction. I am persuaded, says Paul, they shall never be able to do that. The apostle therefore does implicitly, though not expressly, challenge sin, yea, sin by all its advantages; and then glories in the love of God in Christ Jesus, from which he concludes it shall never separate the justified. Besides, it would now have been needless to have expressly here put in sin by itself, seeing, before he had argued, that those he speaks of were i-eely justified therefrom.

One word more, before I go to the second head. The Father, as I told you, has reserved to himself a liberty to chastise his sons, namely, with temporal chastisements, if they offend. This still abides to us, notwithstanding God's grace, Christ's death, or blessed intercession. And this punishment is so surely entailed to the transgressions that we who believe shall commit, that it is impossible that we should be utterly freed therefrom. Insomuch that the apostle positively concludes them to be bastards (what pretences to sonship soever they have) that are not, for sin, partakers of fatherly chastisements.

And this is the cause why some that belong to God are yet so under the afflicting hand of God. They have sinned, and God, who is their Father, punishes. Yea, and this is the reason why some, who are dear to God, have this kind of punishment never forgiven, but it abides with them to their lives' end, goes with them to the day of their death, yea, is I the very cause of their death: by this punishment they are cut off out of the land of the living. But all this is, that they 'might not be condemned with the world'.

For the reversing of this punishment it is that we should pray, if perhaps God will remit it when we are taught to say, 'Our Father, forgive us our trespasses.'

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAVE TO THE UTTERMOST?

I shall now show you something of what it is for Christ, by his intercession, to save 'to the uttermost'. 'He is able to save them to the uttermost.'

This is a great expression, and carries with it much. 'Uttermost' signifies 'to the outside, to the end, to the last, to the furthest part'; and it has respect both to persons and things.

Persons Far from Christ

To persons. Some persons are, in their own apprehensions, even further from Christ than any body else; afar off, a great way off, yet a-coming, as the prodigal was. Now these many times are exceedingly afraid; the sight of that distance that they think is betwixt Christ and them makes them afraid. As it is said in another place, 'They that dwell in the uttermost parts, are afraid at your tokens' (Ps. 65:8); so these are afraid they shall not speed, nor obtain that for which they come to God. But the Scripture says, 'He is able to save to the uttermost (to the very hindermost) them that come to God by him.'

Two sorts of men seem to be far, very far from God: (1) the town-sinner; (2) the great backslider. But both these, if they come, he is able to save to the uttermost. He is able to save them from all those dangers that they fear will prevent their obtaining the grace and mercy they would have to help them in time of need. The publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Things that Make Coming Hard

As this scripture respects persons, so it respects things. There are some things with which some are attended, that are coming to God by Christ, that make their coming hard, and very difficult.

Extraordinary Corruption

There is a more than ordinary breaking out in some of the corruption of their nature. It seems as if all their lusts and vile passions of the flesh were become masters, and might now do what they will with the soul. Yea, they take this man, and toss and tumble him like a ball in a large place. This man is not master of himself, of his thoughts, nor of his passions: his iniquities like the wind do carry him away. He thinks to go forward, but this wind blows him backward; he labours against this wind, but cannot find that he gets ground: he takes what advantage opportunity does minister to him; but all he gets is to be beat out of heart, out of breath, out of courage: he stands still, and pants and gasps as for life. I opened my mouth, and

panted,' said David, 'for I longed for your commandments' (Ps. 119:130.) He sets forward again, but has nothing but labour and sorrow.

Satanic Attack

Nay, to help forward his calamity, Satan's angels will not be wanting, both to trouble his head with the fumes of their stinking breath, or to throw up his heels in their dirty places. 'And while he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down and tare him' (Luke 9:42). How many strange, hideous, and amazing blasphemies, have some of those that are coming to Christ, had injected and fixed upon their spirits against him! Nothing so common to such as to have some hellish wish or other against God whom they are coming to, and against Christ too by whom they would come to him. These blasphemies are like those frogs that I have heard of, that will leap up, and catch hold of, and hang by their claws. 'Now help, Lord! Now Lord Jesus, what shall I do? Now Son of David have mercy upon me!' I say, to say these words is hard work for such a one. But Christ is able to save to the uttermost this comer to God by him.

Human Reason

There are also the oppositions of sense and reason hard at work, for the devil, against the soul. The men of his own house are risen up against him. One's sense and reason, one would think, should not fall in with the devil against ourselves; and yet nothing more common, nothing more natural, than for our sense and reason to turn unnatural, and war both against our God and us. And now it is hard coming to God. Better can a man hear, and deal with any objections against himself, than with those that himself does make against himself. They lie close, stick fast, speak aloud, and will be heard; yea, will haunt and hunt him (as the devil does some) in every hole and corner. But come, man; come to Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost.

The Burden of Guilt

Now guilt is the consequence and fruit of all this; and what so intolerable a burden as guilt? They talk of the stones, and of the sands of the sea, but it is guilt that breaks the heart with its burden. And Satan has the art of making the uttermost of every sin; he can blow it up, make it swell, make every hair of the head as big as a cedar. He can tell how to make it a heinous offence, an unpardonable offence, an offence of that continuance, and committed against so much light, that (says he) 'it is impossible it should ever be forgiven'. But, soul, Christ is able to save to the uttermost; he can do 'exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think' (Eph. 3:20).

Persecution

Join to all this, the rage of persecuting men; which thing of itself is sufficient to quash and break to pieces all desires to come to God by Christ; yea, and it does do so to thousands that are not willing to go to hell. Yet you are kept, and made to go panting on; a whole world of men, and devils, and sin, are not able to keep you from coming. But how comes it to pass that you are so hearty, that you set your face against so much wind and weather? I dare say it arises not from yourself; nor from any of your enemies. This comes from God, though you are not aware thereof; and is obtained for you by the intercession of the blessed Son of God, who is able to save you to the uttermost, that comes to God by him.

Christ Is Glorified in Saving All Such

And for conclusion as to this, I will add that there is much of the honour of the Lord Jesus engaged, as to the saving of the coming man to the uttermost. 'I am glorified in them,' says he (John 17:10). He is exalted to be a Saviour; and if the Blessed One does count it an exaltation to be a Saviour, surely it is an exaltation to be a Saviour, and a great one. '... for they shall cry to the LORD because of their oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them' (Isa. 19:20). If it is a glory to be a Saviour, a great

Saviour, then it is a glory for a Saviour, a great one, to save, and save, and save to the uttermost; to the uttermost man, to the uttermost sin, to the uttermost temptation. And hence it is, that he says again, speaking of the transgressions, sins and iniquities that he would pardon, that it should turn to him for a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all nations. He therefore counts it an honour to be a great saviour; to save men to the uttermost.

When Moses said, 'I beseech you show me your glory,' he answer was, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you ; and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you.' And when he came indeed to make proclamation, then he proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty ...' (Exod. 32:19; 33:6-7); that is, and that will by no means clear them that will not come to me, that they may be saved.

See here, if it is not by himself accounted his glory, to make his goodness, all his goodness pass before us: and how can that be, if he saves not to the uttermost them that come to God by him? For goodness is by us nowise seen, but by those acts by which it expresses itself to be so. And I am sure, to save, to save to the uttermost, is one of the most eminent expressions by which we understand it is great goodness. I know goodness has many ways to express itself to be what it is, to the world; but then it expresses its greatness, when it pardons and saves to the uttermost. 'My goodness,' says Christ, 'extends not itself to my Father, but to my saints; my Father has no need of my goodness, but my saints have; and therefore it shall reach forth itself for their help, in whom is all my delight.' 'And O how great is your goodness which you have laid up for them that fear you; which you have wrought for them that trust in you before the sons of men!' (Ps. 31:19).

It is therefore that which tends to get Christ a name, a fame, and glory, to be able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him.

WHY 'ABLE'?

But some may say, 'What is the meaning of this word, "able"? "Wherefore he is able to save." "He is able to save to the uttermost." How comes it to pass that his power to save is rather put in than his willingness? For willingness, says the soul, would better have pleased me.'

I will speak two or three words in answer to this question.

All-sufficient Merit

By this word 'able' is suggested to us the sufficiency of his merit; the great worthiness of his merit: for, as intercessor, he sticks fast by his merit. All his petitions, prayers or supplications are grounded upon the worthiness of his person as mediator, and on the validity of his offering as priest. This is the more clear, if you consider the reason why those priests and sacrifices under the law could not make the worshippers perfect: it was, I say, because there wanted in them worthiness, and merit in their sacrifices. But Christ, when he came and offered his sacrifice, did by that one act `perfect for ever them that are sanctified', or set apart for glory. Wherefore this man, after he had offered up one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.

When Moses prayed for the people of Israel, he thus said, 'And now, I beseech you, let the power of my LORD be great, according as you have spoken.' But what had he spoken? 'The LORD is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty.... Pardon, I beseech you, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your mercy, and as you

have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now' (Num. 14:17-19).

Infinite Power

Has he but power, we know he is willing, else he would not have promised: it is also his glory to pardon and save. So then, in his ability lies our safety. What if he were ever so willing; if he were not of ability sufficient, what would his willingness do? But he has showed, as I said, his willingness by promising, 'Him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37); so that now our comfort lies in his power, in that he is able to make good his word. And this also will then be seen, when he has saved them that come to God by him; when he has saved them to the uttermost; not to the uttermost of his ability, but to the uttermost of our necessity. For to the uttermost of his ability, I believe he never will be put to it to save his church; not that he is loath so to save, but because there is no need so to save. He shall not need to put out all his power, and to press the utmost of his merit for the saving of his church. Alas! There is sufficiency of merit in him to save a thousand times as many as are like to be saved by him. 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think' (Eph. 3:20). Measure not therefore what he can do by what he has done, does or will do; neither do you interpret this word 'to the uttermost', as if it related to the uttermost of his ability, but rather as it relates (for so it does indeed) to the greatness of your necessity: for as he is able to save you, though your condition be, as it may be supposed to be, the worst that ever man was in that was saved; so he is able to save you though your condition were ten times worse than it is.

What! Shall not the worthiness of the Son of God be sufficient to save from the sin of man? Or shall the sin of the world be of that weight to destroy, that it shall put Christ Jesus to the uttermost of the worth of his person and merit, to save therefrom? I believe it is blasphemy to think so. We can easily imagine that he can save all the world, that is, that he is of ability to do it. But we cannot imagine that

he can do more than we think he can. But our imagination and thoughts set no bound to his ability: 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think'; but what that is, I say, no man can think, no man can imagine. So then, Jesus Christ can do more than ever any man thought he could do, as to saving: he can do, we know not what.

This therefore should encourage comers to come to him, and them that come to hope. This, I say, should encourage them to let out, to lengthen and heighten their thoughts by the word, 'to the uttermost'; seeing he can 'save to the uttermost them that come to God by him'.

SOME IMPORTANT INFERENCES

And now I come to the third thing that I told you I should speak of, and that is, of those inferences that may be gathered from these words.

JUSTIFICATION WILL STAND WITH IMPERFECTION

Are they that are justified by Christ's blood such as have wed yet to be saved by his intercession? Then from hence it follows, that justification will stand with imperfection. It does not therefore follow, that a justified man is without infirmity; for he that is without infirmity, that is, perfect with absolute perfection, has no need to be saved by an act yet to be performed by a mediator and his mediation.

When I say justification will stand with imperfection, I do not mean that it will allow, countenance or approve thereof; but I mean there is no necessity of our perfection, of our personal perfection, as to our justification, and that we are justified without it; yea, that that imperfection in justified persons remains.

Again, when I say that justification will stand with imperfection, I do not mean that as to our justification we are imperfect; for in that we are complete: we are complete in him who is our justice. If otherwise, the imperfection is in the matter that justifies us, which is the righteousness of Christ; yea, and to say so would conclude that wrong judgment proceeds from him that imputes that righteousness to us to justification, since an imperfect thing is imputed to us for justification. But far be it from any (that believe that God is true) to imagine such a thing: all his works are perfect, there is nothing wanting in them as to the present design.

The Justified Are Still Sinners

But what then do we mean when we say that justification will stand with a state of imperfection?

Answer. Why, I mean, that justified men are yet sinners in themselves, are yet full of imperfections, yea, sinful imperfections. Justified Paul said, 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing.' While we are yet sinners, we are justified by the blood of Christ; hence again, it is said, he 'justifies the ungodly'. Justification, then, only covers our sin from the sight of God; it makes us not perfect with inherent perfection. But God, for the sake of that righteousness which by his grace is imputed to us, declares us quit and discharged from the curse, and sees sin in us no more to condemnation.

And this is the reason, or one reason, why they that are justified have need of an intercessor; namely, to save us from the evil of the sin that remains in our flesh, after we are justified by grace, through Christ, and set free from the law as to condemnation. Therefore, as it is said, we are saved, so it is said, 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

The godly (for now we will call them the godly, though there is yet abundance of sin in them) feel in themselves many things, even after justification, by which they are convinced they are still attended with personal sinful imperfections.

1 For example, they often feel unbelief, fear, mistrust, doubting, despondings, murmurings, blasphemies, pride, lightness, foolishness, avarice, fleshly lusts, heartlessness to good, wicked desires, low thoughts of Christ, too good thoughts of sin, and, at times, too great an itching after the worst of immoralities.

2 They feel in themselves an aptness to incline to errors; as to lean to the works of the law for justification; to question the truth of the resurrection and judgment to come; to dissemble and play the hypocrite in profession and in performance of duties; to do religious duties rather to please man than God, who tries the heart.

3 They feel an inclination in them, in times of trial, to faint under the cross; to seek too much to save themselves; to dissemble the known truth for obtaining a little favour with men; and to speak things that they ought not, that they may sleep in a whole skin.

4 They feel, at times, wearisomeness in religious duties, but a natural propensity to things of the flesh. They feel a desire to go beyond bounds, both at board, and bed, and bodily exercise, and in all lawful recreation. They feel in themselves an aptness to take the advantage of using things that are lawful—as food, raiment, sleep, talk, estates, relations, beauty, wit, parts, and graces—to unlawful ends. These things, with many more of the like kind, the justified man finds, and feels in himself, to his humbling, and often casting down: and to save himself from the destroying evil of these, Christ ever lives to make intercession for him.

Imperfect in Graces

Again, the justified man is imperfect in his graces; and therefore needs to be saved, by the intercession of Christ, from the bad fruits that that imperfection yields.

Justifying righteousness is accompanied with graces, the graces of the Spirit. Though these graces are not that matter by and through which we are justified, nor any part thereof (that being only the obedience of Christ imputed to, us of mere pleasure and goodwill); yet, I say, they come when justification comes; and though they are not so easily discerned at the first, they show forth themselves afterwards. But, I say, how many soever they are, and how fast soever they grow, their utmost arrivement here is but to a state short of perfection.

None of the graces of God's Spirit in our hearts, can do their work in us without shortness; and that because of their own imperfections, and also because of the opposition that they meet with from our flesh. Take for example:

Faith, which is the root grace, the grand grace; its shortness is sufficiently manifest by its shortness of apprehension of things pertaining to the person, offices, relations and works of Christ, now in the heavenly place, for us. It is also very defective in its fetching comfort from the word to us, and continuing it with us, when, at any time, we attain to it; in its receiving strength to subdue sin, and in its purifyings of the heart. Though indeed it does what it does in reality, yet how short is it of doing it thoroughly? Oftentimes, were it not for supplies, by virtue of the intercession of Christ, faith would fail of performing its office in any measure.

There is hope, another grace of the Spirit, bestowed upon us; and how often is that also, as to the excellency of working, made to flag! 'I shall perish,' said David; 'I am cut off from before your eyes.' And now, where was his hope, in the right gospel-discovery of it? Also, all our fear of men, and fears of death, and fears of judgment, arise from the imperfections of hope. But from all those faults Christ saves us by his intercession.

There is love, that should be in us as hot as fire. It is compared to fire, to fire of the hottest sort; yea, it is said to be hotter than 'the coals of juniper'. But who finds this heat in love, so much as for one poor quarter of an hour together? Some little flashes, perhaps some, at some times, may feel; but where is that constant burning affection, that the word, the love of God, and the love of Christ, call for? (yea, and that the necessities of the poor and afflicted members of Christ call for also?) Ah! Love is cold in these frozen days, and short when it is at the highest.

The grace of humility, where is it? Who has a thimbleful thereof? Where is he that is clothed with humility, and that does what he is commanded 'with all humility of mind'?

For zeal, where is that? Zeal for God against sin, profaneness, superstition and idolatry. I speak now to the godly, who have this zeal

in the root and habit; but, Oh! how little of it puts forth itself into action, in such a day as this is!

There are reverence, fear, and standing in awe of God's word and judgments: where are the excellent workings thereof to be found? And where there are most, how far short of perfect acts are they?

Simplicity, and godly sincerity also, with how much alloy are they mixed in the best, especially among those of the saints that are rich, who have got the poor and beggarly art of complimenting! For the more compliment, the less sincerity. Many words will not fill a bushel; 'but in the multitude of words there lacks not sin'. Plain men are thin come up in this day; to find a mouth without fraud and deceit now is a rare thing.

Thus might one count up all the graces of the Spirit, and show wherein every one of them is scanty, and wanting perfection. Now, look, what they want of perfection is supplied with sin and vanity; for there is a fulness of flesh and sin at hand, to fill up all the vacant places in our souls. There is no place in the souls of the godly, but it is filled up with darkness, when the light is wanting, and with sin, so forth as grace is wanting. Satan also diligently waits to come in at the door, if careless has left it a little ajar. But, Oh! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and by so doing, saves us from all the evils of our imperfect graces, and from all the advantages that flesh and sin and Satan get upon us thereby.

Imperfect in Duties

Further, as Christ Jesus our Lord does save us, by his intercession, from that hurt that would unavoidably come upon us by these; so also, by that we are saved from the evil that is at any time found in any or all our holy duties, or those performances that it is our duty daily to be found in. That our duties are imperfect follows upon what was discoursed before; for if our graces be imperfect, how can our duties but be so too?

Our prayers, how imperfect are they? With how much unbelief are they mixed? How apt is our tongue to run in prayer before our hearts? With how much earnestness do our lips move, while our hearts lie within as cold as a clod? Yea and oft times it is to be feared we ask for that with our mouth that we care not whether we have or no. Where is the man that pursues, with all his might, what but now he seemed to ask for with all his heart? Prayer is become a shell, a piece of formality, a very empty thing, as to the spirit and life of prayer, at this day. I speak now of the prayers of the godly.

I once met with a poor woman, that in the greatest of her distresses, told me, she did use to rise in the night, in cold weather, and pray to God, while she sweat with fears of the loss of her prayer, and desires that her soul might be saved. I have heard of many that have prayed, but of few that have prayed till they have sweat, by reason of their wrestling with God for mercy in that duty.

There is the duty of alms giving, another gospel performance; but how poorly is it done in our days? We have so many foolish ways to lay out money in toys, and fool's baubles for our children that we can spare none, or very little, for the relief of the poor. Also, do not many give that to their dogs, yea, let it lie in their houses until it stinks so vilely that neither dog nor cat will eat it, which had it been bestowed well in time, might have been a succour and nourishment to some poor member of Christ?

There is hearing of the word; but alas! The place of hearing is the place of sleeping with many a fine professor. I have often observed that those that keep shops can briskly attend upon a twopenny customer; but when they come themselves to God's market, they spend their time too much in letting their thoughts wander from God's commandments, or in a nasty drowsy way. The heads, also, and hearts of most hearers are to the word as the sieve is to water; they can hold no sermons, remember no text, bring home no proofs, produce none of the discourse to the edification and profit of others.

And do not the best take up too much in hearing, and mind too little, what the word of God calls for at their hands, to perform it with a good conscience?

There is faithfulness in callings, faithfulness to brethren, faithfulness to the world, faithfulness to children, to servants, to all according to our place and capacity. Oh! I how little of it is there found in the mouths and lives, to speak nothing of the hearts, of professors!

I will proceed no farther in this kind of repetition of things; only thus much give me leave to say over again, even many of the truly godly are very faulty here. But what would they do if there were not one always at the right hand of God, by intercession taking away this kind of iniquities?

SATAN DOES NOT GIVE UP

Are those that are justified by the blood of Christ such, after that, as have need also of a daily saving by Christ's intercession? From hence then we may infer, that as sin, so Satan will not give over from assaulting the best of the saints.

It is not justification that can secure us from being assaulted by Satan: 'Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you.'

There are two things that do encourage the devil to set upon the people of God.

He Does not Know Who Are Elect

He knows not who are the elect; for all that profess are not; and therefore he will make trial if he can get them into his sieve, whether he can cause them to perish. And great success he has had this way. Many a brave professor has he overcome: he has cast some of the stars from heaven to earth. He picked one out from among the apostles, and one, as it is thought from among the seven deacons, and many from Christ's disciples. But how many think you nowadays does he utterly destroy with his net?

He Wants to Defile and Afflict the Church

If it so happens that he cannot destroy, because Christ by his intercession prevails; yet will he set upon the church to defile and afflict it. For if he can but get us to fall with Peter, then he has obtained that dishonour he brought to God, the weak to be stumbled, and the world offended, and the gospel vilified and reproached. Or if he cannot throw up our heels, yet by buffeting us, he can grieve us, afflict us, put us to pain, fright us, drive us to many doubts, and make our life very uncomfortable to us, and make us go groaning to our Father's house. But blessed be God for his Christ, and that 'he ever lives to make intercession for us'.

THE DANGER OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Are those that are justified by the blood of Christ, such as, after that, have need to be saved by Christ's intercession? Then hence I infer that it is dangerous going about any thing in our own name and strength.

If we would have helps from the intercession of Christ, let us have a care that we do what we do according to the word of Christ. Do what he bids us, as well as we can, as he bids us: then we need not doubt but to have help and salvation in those duties, by the intercession of Christ. 'Do all,' says the apostle, 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.' O but then the devil and the world will be most of all offended.' Well well; but if you look to Christ and do nothing but as in his fear, by his word, in his name, you may be sure of what help his intercession can afford you; and that can afford you much help, not only to begin, but to go through with your work, in some good measure, as you should. By that also you shall be secured from those dangers, if not temptations to dangers, that those that go out about business in their own names and strength shall be sure to meet withal.

GOD HATES THE SIN OF HIS PEOPLE

Are those that are justified by the blood of Christ, such as, after that, have need of being saved by Christ's intercession? Then hence I infer again that God has a great dislike of the sins of his own people, and would fall upon them in judgment and anger, much more severe than he does, were it not for Christ's intercession.

The gospel is not, as some think, a loose and licentious doctrine, nor God's discipline of his church a negligent and careless discipline; for though those that believe already have also an intercessor, yet God to show his detestation against sin does often make them feel to purpose the weight of his fingers. The sincere, that fain would walk with God, have felt what I say, and that to the breaking of their bones full oft. The loose ones, and those that God loves not, may be utter strangers as to this; but those that are his own indeed do know it is otherwise: 'You have I known above all others,' says God, 'therefore you will I punish for your iniquities.'

God keeps a very strict house among his children. David found it so; Heman found it so; Job found it so; and the church of God has ever found it so. And I know not that his mind is ever the less against sin, notwithstanding we have an intercessor. True, our intercessor saves us from damning evils, from damning judgments; but he neither does, nor will, secure us from temporal punishment, from spiritual punishment, unless we watch, deny ourselves, and walk in his fear. I would to God that those who are otherwise minded did but feel, for three or four months, something of what I have felt for several years together, for base, sinful thoughts. I wish it, I say, if it might be for their good, and for the better regulating their understandings. But whether they obtain my wish or no, sure I am that God is no countenancer of sin; no, not in his own people: nay, he will bear it least of all in them. And as for others, however he may, for a while, have patience towards them, if perhaps his goodness may lead them to repentance; yet the day is coming, when he will pay the carnal and hypocrites home, with devouring fire for their offences.

But if our holy God will not let us go altogether unpunished, though we have so able and blessed an intercessor, that has always to present God with, on our behalf, so valuable a price of his own blood, now before the throne of grace; what should we have done, if there had been no days-man, none to plead for us, or to make intercession on our behalf? Read Jeremiah 30:11: For I am with you, says the LORD to save you: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered you, yet I will not make a full end of you; but I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished.' If it be so, I say, what had become of us, if we had no intercessor? And what will become of them concerning whom the Lord has said already, 'I will not take up their names in my lips'— 'I pray not for them?'

CHRIST BEGINS AND COMPLETES OUR SALVATION

Are those that are already justified by the blood of Christ, yet such as have need of being saved by his intercession? Then hence I infer, that Christ is not only the beginner, but the completer of our salvation.

He is, as the Holy Ghost calls him, the author and finisher of our faith; or, as he calls him again, the author of our eternal salvation; of salvation throughout, from the beginning to the end, from first to last. His hands have laid the foundation of it, in his own blood; and his hands shall finish it, by his intercession. As he has laid the beginning fastly, so he shall bring forth the head stone with shoutings; and we shall cry, Grace, grace! At the last; salvation belongs only to the Lord!

Many there be that begin with grace, and end with works, and think that this is the only way. Indeed works will save from temporal punishments, when their imperfections are purged from them by the intercession of Christ; but to be saved and brought to glory, to be carried through this dangerous world, from my first moving after Christ, until I set my foot within the gates of paradise, this is the work

of my mediator, of my high priest and intercessor. It is he that fetches us again when we are run away; it is he that lifts us up when the devil and sin have thrown us down; it is he that quickens us when we grow cold; it is he that comforts us when we despair; it is he that obtains fresh pardon when we have contracted sin; and he that purges our consciences when they are loaded with guilt.

I know also that rewards do wait for them in heaven that do believe in Christ and shall do well on earth; but this is not a reward of merit, but of grace. We are saved by Christ; brought to glory by Christ; and all our works are no otherways made acceptable to God, but by the person and personal excellences and works of Christ. Therefore, whatever the jewels are, and the bracelets, and the pearls, that you shall be adorned with as a reward of services done for God in the world; for them you must thank Christ, and before all, confess that he was the meritorious cause thereof. He saves us and saves our services too. They would be all cast back as dung in our faces were they not rinsed and washed in the blood, were they not sweetened and perfumed in the incense, and conveyed to God himself through the white hand of Jesus Christ; for that is his golden censer; from thence alone ascends the smoke that is in the nostrils of God of such a sweet savour.

ALL GLORY TO JESUS

Are those that are already justified by the blood of Christ, such as do still stand in need of being saved by his intercession? Then hence I infer again, that we that have been saved hitherto, and preserved from the dangers that we have met with since our first conversion to this moment, should ascribe the glory to Jesus Christ—to God by Jesus Christ. 'I have prayed that your faith fail not.'—'I pray that you would keep them from the evil'—here is the true cause of our standing, and of our continuing in the faith and holy profession of the gospel to this very day. Wherefore we must give the glory of all to God by Christ. 'I will not trust in my bow (says David), neither shall my

sword save me. But you have saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise your name for ever.' He causes us always to triumph in Christ;' We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' Thus you see, that both in the Old and New Testaments, all the glory is given to the Lord, as well for preservation to heaven as for justification to life. And he that is well acquainted with himself will do this readily; though light-heads, and such as are not acquainted with the desperate evil that is in their natures, will sacrifice to their own net. But such will so sacrifice but a while. Soon Death is coming, and he will put them into the view of what they see not now, and will feed sweetly upon them, because they made not the Lord their trust. And therefore ascribe you the glory of the preservation of your soul in the faith hitherto, to that salvation which Christ Jesus our Lord obtains for you by his intercession.

SAINTS NEED CHRIST TO THE END

Are those that are already justified by the blood of Christ, such as do still stand in need of being saved by his intercession? Then is this also to be inferred from hence, that saints should look to him for that saving that they shall yet have need of, betwixt this and their day of dissolution, yea, from henceforward, even to the day of judgment. I say they should still look to him for the remaining part of their salvation, or for that of their salvation which is yet behind; and let them look for it with confidence, for it is in a faithful hand.

And for your encouragement, to look and hope for the completing of your salvation in glory, let me present you with a few things.

Remember that the hardest or worst part of the work of your Saviour is over. His bloody work, his bearing of your sin and curse, his loss of the light of his Father's face for a time, his dying upon the cursed tree—that was the worst, the sorest, the hardest, and most

difficult part of the work of redemption; and yet this he did willingly, cheerfully, and without your desires; yea, this he did as considering those for whom he did it in a state of rebellion and enmity to him.

Consider also, that he has made a beginning with your soul to reconcile you to God, and to that end has bestowed his justice upon you, put his Spirit within you, and begun to make the unwieldable mountain and rock, your heart, to turn towards him, and desire after him, to believe in him, and rejoice in him.

Consider also, that some comfortable pledges of his love you have already received; namely, such as to feel the sweetness of his love; as to see the light of his countenance; as to be made to know his prayer, in raising you when you were down; and how he has made you stand while hell has been pushing at you, utterly to overthrow you.

You may consider also, that what remains behind of the work of your salvation in his hands, as it is the most easy part, so the most comfortable, and that part which will more immediately issue in his glory; and therefore he will mind it.

That which is behind is also more safe in his hand, than if it was in your own. He is wise, he is powerful, he is faithful, and therefore will well manage that part that is lacking to our salvation until he has completed it. It is his love to you that has made him put no trust in you. He knows that he can himself bring you to his kingdom most surely, and therefore has not left that work to you, no, nor any part thereof.

Live in hope then, in a lively hope, that since Christ is risen from the dead, he lives to make intercession for you; and that you shalt reap the blessed benefit of this twofold salvation that is wrought, and that is working out for you, by Jesus Christ our Lord. And thus have we treated of the benefit of his intercession, in that he is able to save to the uttermost. And this leads me to the third particular.

THE PERSONS INTERESTED IN CHRIST'S INTERCESSION

The third great thing is to show who are the persons interested in this intercession of Christ. And they are those that come to God by him. 'Wherefore he is able also to save them'—`to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

NOT THOSE WHO COME THEIR OWN WAY

A little first to comment upon the order of the words, 'that come to God by him'.

To God, but not to Christ

There are that come to God, but not by him; and these are not included in this text—they have not a share in this privilege. Thus the Jews came to God; the unbelieving Jews, who had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. These submitted not to Christ, the righteousness of God, but thought to come to him by words of their own, or at least, as it were, by them, and so came short of salvation by grace, for that reigns to salvation **only in Christ. To** these Christ's person and undertakings were a stumbling stone; for at him they stumbled, and did split themselves to pieces, though they indeed were such as came to God for life.

To Christ, but not to God by Him

As there are that come to God, but not by Christ; so there are that come to Christ, but not to God by him. Of this sort are they, who hearing that Christ is saviour, therefore come to him for pardon; but cannot abide to come to God by him, for that he is holy, and so will check their lusts and will change their hearts and natures. Mind me what I say: there are a great many that would be saved by Christ, but love not to be sanctified by God through him. These make a stop at Christ and will go no further. Might such have pardon, they care not

whether ever they went to heaven or not. Of this kind of coming to Christ, I think it is, of which he warns his disciples, when he says, 'In that day you shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say to you, whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' As if he should say, 'When you ask for anything, make not a stop at me, but come to my Father by me. For they that come to me, and not to my Father through me, will have nothing of what they come for.'

Righteousness shall be imputed to us if we believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. To come to Christ for a benefit and stop there, and not come to God by him, prevails nothing. Here the mother of Zebedee's children erred, and about this it was that the Lord Jesus cautioned her: 'Lord (says she), grant that these my two sons may sit, one on your right hand, and the other on your left in your kingdom.' But what is the answer of Christ? 'To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of my Father.' As if he should say, 'Woman, of myself I do nothing; my Father works with me. Go therefore to him by me, for I am the way to him: what you can obtain of him by me, you shall have; that is to say, what of the things that pertain to eternal life, whether pardon or glory.'

It is true, the Son has power to give pardon and glory, but he gives it not by himself, but by and according to the will of his Father. They therefore that come to him for an eternal good, and look not to the Father by him, come short thereof. I mean now pardon and glory. And hence, though it be said the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, that is, to show the certainty of his Godhead, and the excellency of his mediation; yet forgiveness of sin is said to lie more particularly in the hand of the Father, and that God for Christ's sake forgives us.

The Father, as we see, will not forgive, unless we come to him by the Son; why then should we conceit that the Son will forgive those that come not to the Father by him?

So then, justifying righteousness is in the Son, and with him also is intercession; but forgiveness is with the Father; yea, the gift of the Holy Ghost, yea, and the power of imputing of the righteousness of Christ is yet in the hand of the Father. Hence Christ prays to the Father to forgive, prays to the Father to send the Spirit, and it is God that imputes righteousness to justification to us. The Father then does nothing but for the sake of, and through the Son; the Son also does nothing derogating from the glory of the Father. But it would be a derogation to the glory of the Father if the Son should grant to save them that come not to the Father by him. Wherefore you that cry, 'Christ, Christ,' delighting yourselves in the thoughts of forgiveness, but care not to come by Christ to the Father for it, you are not at all concerned in this blessed text; for he only saves by his intercession them that come to God by him.

There are three sorts of people that may be said to come to Christ, but not to God by him.

1 They whose utmost design in coming is only that guilt and fear of damning may be removed from them. And there are three signs of such a one.

(a) It is he that takes up in a belief of pardon, and so goes on in his course of carnality, as he did before.

(b) He whose comfort in the belief of pardon stands alone, without other fruits of the Holy Ghost.

(c) He that having been washed, can be content, as the sow, to tumble in the mire again, or as the dog that did spue, to lick up his vomit again.

2 They may be said to come to Christ, but not to God by him, who do pick and choose doctrines; itching only after that which sounds of grace, but secretly abhorring that which presses to moral goodness.

These did never see God, what notions soever they may have of the Lord Jesus, and of forgiveness from him.

3 They surely did never come to God by Christ, however they may boast of the grace of Christ, that will from the freeness of gospel-grace plead an indulgence for sin.

THOSE WHO COME AS GOD INTENDS

And now to speak a few words of coming to God, of coming such as the text intends. And in speaking of this, I must touch upon two things: (1) concerning God; (2) concerning the frame of the heart of him that comes to him.

Of God. God is the chief good: good so as nothing is but himself. He is in himself most happy; yea, all good, and all true happiness is only to be found in God, as that which is essential to his nature; nor is there any good, or any happiness in or with any creature or thing, but what is communicated to it by God. God is the only desirable good; nothing without him is worthy of our hearts. Right thoughts of God are able to ravish the heart; how much more happy is the man that has interest in God! God alone is able by himself to put the soul into a more blessed, comfortable and happy condition than can the whole world; yea, and more than if all the created happiness of all the angels of heaven did dwell in one man's bosom. God is the upholder of all creatures, and whatever they have that is a suitable good to their kind, it is from God. By God all things have their subsistence, and all the good that they enjoy. I cannot tell what to say. I am drowned. The life, the glory, the blessedness, the soul-satisfying goodness that is in God is beyond all expression.

Now there must be in us something of suitableness of spirit to this God, before we can be willing to come to him.

Before, therefore, God has been with a man, and has left some impression of his glory upon him, that man cannot be willing to come

to him aright. Hence it is said concerning Abraham, that, in order to his coming to God (and following him) aright, the Lord himself did show himself to him. 'Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; the God of glory appeared to our father, Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said to him, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you.'

It was this God of glory, the sight and vision of this God of glory, that provoked Abraham to leave his country and kindred to come after God. The reason why men are so careless and so indifferent about their coming to God is because they have their eyes blinded, because they do not perceive his glory. God is so blessed a one, that did he not hide himself, and his glory, the whole world would be ravished with him: but he has, I will not say reasons of state, but reasons of glory; glorious reasons, why he hides himself from the world, and appears but to particular ones. Now, by his thus appearing to Abraham, down fell Abraham's vanity, and his idolatrous fancies and affection; and his heart began to turn to God, for that there was in this appearance an alluring and soul-instructing voice. Hence that which Moses calls here an appearing, Christ calls a hearing, and a teaching, and a learning. 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and learned of the Father, comes to me': that is, to God by me. But, I say, what must they hear and learn of the Father, but that Christ is the way to glory, the way to the God of glory? This is a drawing doctrine: wherefore that which in this verse is called teaching and learning is called in the verse before, the drawing of the Father, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me, draw him'; that is, with powerful proposals, and alluring conclusions, and heart-subduing influences.

Having thus touched upon this, we will now proceed to show you what kind of people they are that come to God by Christ; and then shall draw some inferences from this also.

There are therefore three sorts of people that come to God by Christ: (1) men newly awakened; (2) men turned back from backsliding; (3) the sincere and upright believer.

Newly Awakened

By awakened, I mean awakened thoroughly. So awakened as to be made to see themselves, what they are; the world, what it is; the law, what it is; hell, what it is; death, what it is; Christ, what he is; and God, what he is; and also what judgment is.

A man that will come to God by Christ aright, must needs, precedent to his so coming, have a competent knowledge of things of this kind.

To Sinfulness

First, he must know himself, what a wretched and miserable sinner he is, before he will take one step forward in order to his coming to God by Christ. This is plain from a great many scriptures: as that of the parable of the prodigal, that account of the 3,000, that of the jailer, and those of many more besides. 'The whole have no need of the physician.' They were not the sound and whole, but the lame and diseased that came to him to be cured of their infirmities; and it is not the righteous, but the sinners that do well know them-selves to be such, that come to God by Christ.

It is not in the power of all the men on earth to make one man come to God by Christ, because it is not in their power to make men see their state by nature. And what should a man come to God for, that can live in the world without him? Reason says so, experience says so, the scripture bears witness that so it is of a truth. It is a sight of what I am that must unroost me; that must shake my soul, and make me leave my present rest. No man comes to God by Christ, but he that knows himself, and what sin has done to him. That is the first.

To the Emptiness of the World

Secondly, as he must know himself, and what a wretch he is; so he must know the world, and what an empty thing it is. Cain did see himself, but saw not the emptiness of this world; and therefore, instead of going to God by Christ, he went to the world, and there did take up to his dying-day. The world is a great snare to the soul, even to the souls of awakened sinners, by reason of its big looks and the fair promises that it makes to those that will please to entertain it. It will also make as though it could do as much to the quieting of the spirit, as either sermon, Bible or preacher. Yea, and it has its followers ready at its heels continually to blow its applause abroad, saying, 'Who will show us any (other) good?' And though this their way is their folly, yet their posterity approves their sayings. So that unless a man, under some awakenings, sees the emptiness of the world, he will take up in the good things thereof, and not come to God by Christ. Many there be now in hell that can seal to this truth. It was the world that took awakened Cain, awakened Judas, awakened Demas. Yea, Balaam, though he had some kind of visions of God, yet was kept by the world from coming to him aright. See with what earnestness the young man in the gospel came to Jesus Christ, and that for eternal life. He ran to him, he kneeled down to him, and asked (and that before a multitude), 'Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And yet when he was told that, he could not come; for the world soon steps betwixt that life and him, and persuades him to take up in itself; and so, for aught we know, he never looked after life more.

There are four things in the world that have a tendency to lull an awakened man asleep, if God also makes him not afraid of the world.

1 There is the bustle and cumber of the world, that will call a man off from looking after the salvation of his soul. This is intimated by the parable of the thorny ground. Worldly cumber is a devilish thing. It will hurry a man from his bed without prayer; to a sermon, and from it again, without prayer. It will choke prayer, it will choke the

word, it will choke convictions, it will choke the soul, and cause that awakening shall be to no saving purpose.

2 There is the friendship of this world, to which if a man is not mortified, there is no coming for him to God by Christ. And a man can never be mortified to it, unless he shall see the emptiness and vanity of it. Whosoever makes himself a friend of this world, is the enemy of God: and how then can he come to him by Christ?

3 There are the terrors of the world; if a man stands in fear of them, he also will not come to God by Christ. 'The fear of man brings a snare.' How many have, in all ages, been kept from coming to God aright, by the terrors of the world? Yea, how many are there, who to one's thinking, have almost got to the gates of heaven, and have been scared, and driven quite back again, by nothing but the terrors of this world? This is that which Christ so cautioned his disciples about; for he knew it was a deadly thing. Peter also bids the saints beware of this, as of a thing very destructive.

4 There is also the glory of the world, namely, honours, and greatness, and preferments: an absolute hindrance to convictions and awakenings. 'How can you believe,' says Christ, 'that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that comes from God?' If therefore a man is not in his affection crucified to these, it will keep him from coming to God aright.

To the Severity of the Law

Thirdly, as a man must know himself, how vile he is, and know the world, how empty it is; so he must know the law, how severe it is; else he will not come to God by Jesus Christ our Lord.

A man that is under awakenings is under a double danger of falling short of coming to God by Christ, if he knows not the severity of the law: (1) he is either in danger of slighting its penalty; or, (2) of seeking to make amends to it by doing good works; and nothing can

keep him from splitting his soul upon one of these two rocks but a sound knowledge of the severity of the law.

He is in danger, I say, of slighting the penalty. This is seen by the practice of all the profane in the world. Do they not know the law? Verily, many of them can say the ten commandments without book. But they do not know the severity of the law; and therefore when at any time awakenings come upon their consciences, they strive to drive away the guilt of one sin by wallowing in the filth of another.

But would they do thus if they knew the severity of the law? They would as soon eat fire. The severity of the law would be an intolerable, unsupportable burden to their consciences. It would drive them, and make them fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.

Or, if he slights not the penalty, he will seek to make amends to it, by doing good works, for the sins he has committed. This is manifest by the practice of the Jews and Turks, and all that swerve on that hand, namely, to seek life and happiness by the law. Paul also was here before he met with Jesus in the way. This is natural to consciences that are awakened, unless also they have it given to see the true severity of the law. The which that you may do, if my mite will help, I will cast in for your conviction these four things:

1 The law charges you with its curse, as well for the pollution of your nature, as for the defilements of your life; yea, and if you had never committed sinful acts, your pollution of nature must stand in the way to life, if you come not to God for mercy by Christ.

2 The law takes notice of and charges you with its curse, as well for sinful thoughts as for vile and sinful actions. The very 'thought of foolishness is sin', though it never breaks out into act, and will as surely merit the damnation of the soul, as will the greatest transgression in the world.

3 If now you could keep all the commandments, that will do you no good at all for life, because you have sinned first: 'And the soul that sins, shall die.' Unless then you can endure the curse, and so in a legal way, overcome it, for the sins that you have committed, you are gone, if you come not to God by Christ for mercy and pardon.

4. And never think of repentance, thereby to stop the mouth of the law. For the law calls not for repentance, but life; nor will it accept of any, should you mourn and weep for your sins till you have made a sea of blood with tears. This, I say, you must know, or you wilt not come to God by Christ for life. For the knowledge of this will cause that you shall neither slight the severity of the law, nor trust to the works thereof for life. Now when you do neither of these, you can not but speed you to God by Christ for life; for now you have no stay; pleasures are gone, all hope in yourself is gone. You now die, and that is the way to live; for this inward death is, or feels, like a hunger-bitten stomach, that cannot but crave meat and drink. Now it will be as possible for you to sleep with your finger in the fire, as to forbear craving mercy, so long as this knowledge remains.

To the Reality of Hell

Fourthly, as a man must know himself, the emptiness of this world, and the law of God; so it is necessary for him to know that there is a hell, and how insupportable the torments of it are: for all threatenings, curses, and determinations to punish in the next world will prove but fictions and scarecrows, if there be no woeful place, no woeful state, for the sinner to receive his wages in for sin, when his days are ended in this world. Wherefore this word, saved, supposes such a place and state. 'He is able to save' from hell, from the woeful place, from the woeful state of hell, them that come to God by him.

Christ therefore often insinuates the truth of a hell in his invitations to the sinners of this world to come to him: as where he tells them, they shall be saved if they do; they shall be damned if they

do not. As if he had said, There is a hell, a terrible hell, and they that come to me I will save them from it; but they that come not, the law will damn them in it. Therefore, that you may indeed come to God by Christ for mercy, believe there is a hell, a woeful, terrible place. Hell is God's prison; he has made it deep and large! The punishments are by the power of his wrath, which will issue from his mouth like a stream of burning brimstone, ever kindling itself upon the soul. You must know this by the word, and fly from it, or you shall know it by your sins, and lie and cry in it.

I might enlarge, but if I did I should be swallowed up; for we are, while here, no more able to set forth the torments of hell, than we are, while here, to set forth the joys of heaven. Only this may and ought to be said, that God is able, as to save, so to cast into hell: and as he is able to make heaven sweet, pleasurable, and glorious, beyond thought; so he is able to make the torments of hell so exquisite, so hot, so sharp, so intolerable, that no tongue can utter it, no, not the damned in hell themselves.

If you love your soul, slight not the knowledge of hell, for that, and the law, are the spurs which Christ uses to prick souls forward to himself withal. What is the cause that sinners can play so delightfully with sin? It is that they forget that there is a hell for them to descend into for their so doing, when they go out of this world. For here usually he gives a stop to our sinful course; we perceive that hell has opened her mouth before us. Lest you should forget, I beseech you another time, to retain a knowledge of hell in your understanding, and apply the burning-hot thoughts thereof to your conscience. This is one way to make you gather up your heels, and mend your pace in coming to Jesus Christ, and to God the Father by him.

To What Death Is

Fifthly, it is also necessary, that he that comes to God by the Lord Jesus, should know what death is, and the uncertainty of its

approaches upon us. Death is, as I may call it, the feller, the cutter down. Death is that which puts a stop to a further living here, and that which lays man where it finds him: if he is in the faith in Jesus, it lays him down there to sleep, till the Lord comes: if he be not in the faith, it lays him down in his sins, until the Lord comes. Again, if you have some beginnings that look like good, and death should overtake you before those beginnings are ripe, your fruit will wither, and you wilt fall short of being gathered into God's barn. Some men are cut off like the tops of the ears of corn, and some are even nipped by death in the very bud of their spring; but the safety is, when a man is ripe, and shall be gathered to his grave, as a shock of corn to the barn in its season.

Now, if death should surprise and seize you before you are fit to die, all is lost. For there is no repentance in the grave; or rather, as the wise man has it, 'Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither you go.'

Death is God's sergent, God's bailiff, and he arrests in God's name when he comes, but seldom gives warning before he claps us on the shoulder. And when he arrests us, though he may stay a little while, and give us leave to pant, and tumble, and toss ourselves for a while upon a bed of languishing, yet at last he will prick our lungs, and let out our life, and then our soul will be poured upon the ground, yea, into hell, if we are not ready and prepared for the life everlasting. He that does not watch for, and is not afraid lest death should prevent him, will not make haste to God by Christ. What Job said of temporal afflictions, such a one will death be, if you are not aware: 'When I looked for good, evil came. The day of affliction prevented me.' If you look, or begin to look for good, and the day of death shall cut you off before you have found that good you look for, all is lost, and life, and heaven and all. Wherefore it is convenient that you conclude the grave is your house, and that you make your bed once a day in the grave:

also that you say to corruption, 'You are my father;' and to the worm, 'You are my mother, and my sister.' I say, be acquainted with the grave and death. The fool puts the evil day far away, but the wise man brings it nigh. Better be ready to die seven years before death comes, than want one day, one hour, one moment, one tear, one sorrowful sigh, at the remembrance of the ill-spent life that I have lived. This then is that which I admonish you of, namely, that you know death, what it is, what it does, when it comes; also that you consider well the danger that death leaves that man in, to whom he comes before he is ready, and prepared to be laid by it in the grave.

To What Christ Is

Sixthly, you must also be made by your awakenings to see what Christ is. This is of absolute necessity: for how can or shall a man be willing to come to Christ, that knows not what he is, what God has appointed him to do? He is the Saviour: every man will say so. But to sense, smell and taste what saving is, and so to understand the nature of the office and work of a Saviour, is a rare thing, kept close from most, known but by some. Jesus of Nazareth is the Saviour, or the reconciler of men to God, in the body of his flesh, through death. This is he whose business in coming from heaven to earth was to save his people from their sins. Now, as was said, to know how he does this, is that which is needful to be inquired into: for some say he does it one way, some he does it another; (and it must be remembered, that we are now speaking of the salvation of that man, that from new or first awakenings is coming to God by Christ for life).

1 Some say he does it by giving us precepts and laws to keep, that we might be justified thereby.

2 Some say that he does it by setting himself a pattern for us to follow him.

3 Some again hold, that he does it by our following the light within.

But you must take heed of all these, for he justifies us by none of these means (and you do need to be justified); I say, he justifies us not, either by giving laws to us, or by becoming our example, or by our following him in any sense, but by his blood shed for us. His blood is not laws, nor ordinances, nor commandments, but a price, a redeeming price. He justifies us by bestowing upon us, not by expecting from us. He justifies us by his grace, not by our works. In a word, you must be well grounded in the knowledge of what Christ is, and how men are justified by him, or you wilt not come to God by him.

As you must know him, and how men are justified by him, so you must know the readiness that is in him to receive and to do for those, what they need, that come to God by him. Suppose his merits were ever so efficacious, yet if it could be proved that there is a loathness in him that these merits should be bestowed upon the coming ones, there would but few adventure to wait upon him. But now, as he is full, so he is free. Nothing pleases him better than to give what he has away, than to bestow it upon the poor and needy. And it will be convenient that you, who are a coming soul, should know this for your comfort to encourage you to come to God by him. Take two or three sayings of his for the confirming of what is now said: 'Come to me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'All that the Father gives me, shall come to me; and him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out.' I am not come to call the righteous but sinners, to repentance.' This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'

To Know God

Seventhly, as a man that would come to God by Christ must, antecedent to his so coming, know himself, what he is; the world, how empty it is; the law, how severe it is; death and what it is; and Christ and what he is; so also he must know God. 'He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that

diligently seek him.' God he must know, else how can the sinner propound him as his end, his ultimate end? For so does every one that indeed does come to Christ aright. He comes to Christ, because he is the way; he comes to God, because he is the end. But I say, if he knows him not, how can he propound him as the end? The end is that for the sake of which I propound to myself any thing, and for the sake of which I use any means. Now then, I would be saved; but why? Even because I would enjoy God. I come to Christ to be saved; and why? Because I would enjoy God. I am sensible that sin has made me come short of the glory of God, and that Christ Jesus is he (the only one) that can put me into a condition to obtain the glory of God; and therefore I come to God by him.

But I say again, who will propound God for his end, that knows him not, that knows him not aright? Yea, that knows him not to be worth being propounded as his end, in coming to Jesus Christ? And he that thus knows him, must know him to be above all, best of all, and him in whom the soul shall find that content, that bliss, that glory and happiness, that can by no means be found elsewhere. And, I say, if this be not found in God, the soul will never propound him to himself as the only, the highest, and ultimate end in its coming to Jesus Christ; but it will propound something else, even what it shall imagine to be the best good: perhaps heaven, perhaps ease from guilt, perhaps to be kept out of hell, or the like. I do not say but a man may propound all these to himself, in his coming to Jesus Christ; but if he propound these as his ultimate end, as the chiefest good that he seeks; if the presence and enjoyment of God, of God's glorious majesty, be not a chief design, he is not concerned in the salvation that is propounded in our text. 'He is able,' and so will 'save to the uttermost them that come to God by him.'

What is heaven without God? What is ease without the peace and enjoyment of God? What is deliverance from hell without the enjoyment of God? The propounding therefore these, and only these,

to yourself for your happiness, in your coming to Jesus Christ, is a proposal not a hair's breadth higher than what a man without grace can propound. What, or who is he that would not go to heaven? What, or who is he that would not also have ease from the guilt of sin? And where is the man that chooses to go to hell? But many there be that cannot abide God; no, they like not to go to heaven, because God is there. If the devil had a heaven to bestow upon men, a vicious and a beastly heaven (if it be lawful thus to speak), I durst pawn my soul upon it, were it a thousand times better than it is, that upon a bare invitation the foul fiend would have twenty to God's one. They, I say cannot abide God; nay, for all the devil has nothing but a hell for them, yet how thick men go to him, but how thinly to God Almighty! The nature of God lies cross to the lusts of men; a holy God, a glorious holy God, an infinitely holy God; this spoils all. But to the soul that is awakened, and that is made to see things as they are, to him God is what he is in himself, the blessed, the highest, the only eternal good, and he without the enjoyment of whom all things would sound but empty in the ears of that soul.

Now then, I advise you that hast a mind to come to God by Christ, that you seek the knowledge of God: 'If you seek wisdom as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; then shalt you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.'

And to encourage you yet further, he is so desirous of communion with men, that he pardons sins for that. Hence, he is called, not only loving, but love. 'God is love: and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him.'

Methinks, when I consider what glory there is, at times, upon the creatures, and that all their glory is the workmanship of God, O Lord Jesus, say I, What is God himself? He may well be called the God of glory, as well as the glorious Lord; for as all glory is from him, so in him is an inconceivable well-spring of glory, of glory to be communicated to them that come by Christ to him. Wherefore let the

glory, and love, and bliss, and eternal happiness that is in God, allure you to come to him by Christ.

To Coming Judgment

Eighthly, as you should, nay, must, have a good knowledge of all these, so you must have it of judgment to come. They that come to God by Christ are said to fly from the wrath to come, to fly for refuge—to lay hold on the hope set before them.

The judgment to come is a warm thing to be thought of, an awakening thing to be thought of: it is called the eternal judgment, because it is, and will be, God's final conclusion with men. This day is called the great and notable day of the Lord; the day that shall burn like an oven; the day in which the angels shall gather the wicked together, as tares in bundles, to burn them, but the rest into his kingdom and glory. This day will be it in which all bowels of love and compassion shall be shut up to the wicked, and that in which the floodgates of wrath shall be opened, by which a plentiful reward shall be given to evil doers, but glory to the righteous. This is the day in which men, if they could, would creep into the ground for fear; but because they cannot, therefore they will call and cry to the mountains to fall upon them, but they shall not; therefore they stand bound to bear their judgment.

This day will be the day of breaking up closet-councils, cabinet-councils, secret purposes, hidden thoughts; yea, God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. I say he shall do it then, for he will 'both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart'. This is the day that is appointed to put them to shame and contempt, that have in this world been bold and audacious in their vile and beastly ways. At this day God will cover all such bold and brazen faces with shame. Now they will blush till the blood is ready to burst through their cheeks. O the confusion and shame that will cover their faces, while God is

discovering to them what a vile, what a beastly, what an uncomely, and what an unreasonable life they lived in the world! They shall see the contemned God that fed them, that clothed them, that gave them life and limb, and that maintained their breath in their nostrils. But, Oh! When they see the gulf before them then, and all things ready to receive them in thither, then they will know what sinning against God means!

And I say, you that are for coming to God by Christ must know this, and be well assured of this, or you wilt never come to God by him.

What of the glory of God shall be put upon them that do indeed come to him, will also help in this spiritual journey, if it be well considered by you: but perhaps terror and unbelief will suffer you to consider but little of that. However, the things aforementioned will be goads, and will serve to prick you forward; and if they do so, they will be God's great blessing to you, and that for which you wilt give him your thanks for ever.

Thus I have in few words spoken something as to the first sort of corners to God by Christ; namely, of the coming of the newly awakened man. And I say again, if any of the things aforenamed be wanting, and are not with his heart, it is a question whether, notwithstanding all the noise that he may make about religion, he will ever come to God by Christ.

If he knows not himself and the badness of his condition, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not the world and the emptiness and vanity thereof, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not the law and the severity thereof, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not hell and the torments thereof, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not what death is, wherefore should he come?

If he knows not the Father and the Son, how can he come?

And to know that there is a judgment to come is as necessary to his coming as most of the rest of the things propounded. Coming to God by Christ is for shelter, for safety, for advantage, and everlasting happiness. But he that knows not that, understands not the things aforementioned—sees not this need of taking shelter, of flying for safety, of coming for advantage to God by Christ.

I know there are degrees of this knowledge; and he that has it most warm upon him, in all likelihood, will make most haste, or, as David says, will haste his escape from the windy storm and tempest; and he that sees least, is in danger of being the loiterer, and so of losing the prize. For all that run do not obtain it; all that fight do not win it; and all that strive for it have it not.

The Returning Backslider

I shall now come to the second man mentioned, namely, the man that is turned back from his backsliding, and speak something also about his coming again to God by Christ. There are two things remarkable in the returning of a backslider to God by Christ. The first is that he gives a second testimony to the truth of all things spoken of before. He also gives a second testimony of the necessity of coming to God by Christ.

Of the manner of his coming to God by Christ, perhaps I also may speak a word or two.

Testifies Again to the Truth About Man's Nature

The returning again of the backslider gives a second testimony to the truth of man's state being by nature miserable, of the vanity of

this world, of the severity of the law, certainty of death, and terribleness of judgment to come. His first coming told them so, but his second coming tells them so with a double confirmation of the truth. 'It is so,' says his first coming. 'Oh! It is so,' says his second. The backsliding of a Christian comes through the overmuch persuading of Satan and lust that the man was mistaken, and that there was no such horror in the things from which he fled, nor so much good in the things to which he hasted. 'Turn again, fool,' says the devil, 'turn again to your former course. I wonder what frenzy it was that drove you to your heels, and that made you leave so much good behind you, as other men find in the lusts of the flesh and the good of the world. As for the law, and death, and an imagination of the day of judgment, they are but mere scarecrows, set up by politic heads to keep the ignorant in subjection.' Well,' says the backslider, 'I will go back again and see.' So, fool as he is, he goes back, and has all things ready to entertain him; his conscience sleeps, the world smiles, flesh is sweet, carnal company compliments him, and all that can be got is presented to this backslider to accommodate him. But, behold, he does again begin to see his own nakedness, and he perceives that the law is whetting his axe. As for the world, he perceives it is a bubble. He also smells the smell of brimstone; for God has scattered it upon his tabernacle, and it begins to burn within him. 'Oh! says he, I am deluded. Oh! I am ensnared. My first sight of things was true. I see it is so again.' Now he begins to be for flying again to his first refuge. 'O God,' says he, 'I am undone! I have turned from your truth to lies! I believed them such at first, and find them such at last. Have mercy upon me, O God!'

This, I say, is a testimony, a second testimony by the same man, as to the miserable state of man, the severity of the law, the emptiness of the world, the certainty of death, and the terribleness of judgment. This man has seen it, and seen it again.

A returning backslider is a great blessing (I mean intended to be so) to two sorts of men: (1) to the elect uncalled; (2) to the elect that are called, and that at present stand their ground. The uncalled are made to hear him and consider; the called are made to hear him, and are afraid of falling. Behold therefore the mystery of God's wisdom, and how willing he is that spectators should be warned and made to take heed. Yea, he will permit that some of his own shall fall into the fire, to convince the world that hell is hot, and to warn their brethren to take heed that they slip not with their feet. I have often said in my heart that this was the cause why God suffered so many of the believing Jews to fall, namely, that the Gentiles might take heed. 'O brethren,' says the backslider that is returned, 'did you see how I left my God? Did you see how I turned again to those vanities from which some time before I fled? Oh! I was deluded; I was bewitched; I was deceived: for I found all things from which I fled at first, still worse by far when I went to them the second time. Do not backslide. Oh! Do not backslide. The first ground of your departing from them was good; never tempt God a second time.'

Testifies Again to the Truth about God and Christ

And as he gives us a second testimony, that the world and himself are so as at first he believed they were; so by this his returning, he testifies that God and Christ are the same, and much more than ever he believed at first they were. This man has made a proof before, and a proof after conviction, of the evil of the one and good of the other. This man has made a proof by feeling and seeing, and that before and after grace received. This man God has set up to be a witness. This man is two men; has the testimony of two men; must serve in the place of two men. He knows what it is to be fetched from a state of nature by grace; but this all Christians know as well as he. Ay, but he knows what it is to be fetched from the world, from the devil, and hell, the second time; and that but few professors know: for few that fall away return to God again. Ay, but this man is come again,

wherefore there is news in his mouth; sad news, dreadful news, and news that is to make the standing saint to take heed lest he fall.

The returning backslider therefore is a rare man, a man of worth and intelligence, a man to whom the men of the world should flock, and of whom they should learn to fear the Lord God. He also is a man of whom the saints should receive both caution, counsel and strength in their present standing; and that should, by his harms, learn to serve the Lord with fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

This man has the second time also had a proof of God's goodness in his Christ to him— a proof which the standing Christian has not. I would not tempt him that stands to fall; but the good that a returning backslider has received at God's hands, and at the hand of Christ, is a double good; he has been converted twice; fetched from the world and from the devil, and from himself twice (oh grace!), and has been made to know the stability of God's covenant, the unchangeableness of God's mind, the sure and lasting truth of his promise in Christ, and of the sufficiency of the merits of Christ, over and over.

Of the manner of this man's coming to God by Christ, I shall also speak a word or two.

He comes as the newly awakened sinner comes, and that from the same motives and the knowledge of things. But he has over and above (which he had as good have been without) that which the newly awakened sinner has not, namely, the guilt of his backsliding, which is a guilt of a worse complexion, of a deeper dye, and of a heavier nature than is any guilt else in the world. He is also attended with fears and doubts that arise from other reasons and considerations, than do the doubts and fears of the newly awakened man; doubts built upon the vileness of his backsliding. He has also more dreadful scriptures to consider, and they will look more wishfully in his face (yea, and will also make him take notice of their grim physiognomy) than has the

newly awakened man. Besides, as a punishment of his backsliding, God sometimes seems to withhold the sweet influences of his Spirit, and is as if he would not suffer him to pray, nor to repent any more; as if he would now take all away from him, and leave him to those lusts and idols that he left his God to follow. Swarms of his new rogueries shall haunt him in every place and that not only in the guilt, but in the filth and pollution of them.

None knows the things that haunt the backslider's mind; his new sins are all turned talking devils, threatening devils, roaring devils, within him. Besides, he doubts of the truth of his first conversion; consequently he has it lying upon him, as a strong suspicion, that there was nothing of truth in all his first experience; and this also adds lead to his heels, and makes him come, as to sense and feeling, more heavy, and with the greater difficulty, to God by Christ. As the faithfulness of other men kills him, he cannot see an honest, humble, holy, faithful servant of God, but he is pierced and wounded at the heart. 'Ay,' says he, within himself, 'That man fears God; that man has faithfully followed God; that man, like the elect angels, has kept his place; but I am fallen from my station like a devil. That man honours God, edifies the saints, convinces the world, and condemns them, and is become heir of the righteousness which is by faith. But I have dishonoured God, stumbled and grieved saints, made the world blaspheme, and, for aught I know, been the cause of the damnation of many.'

These are the things, I say, together with many more of the same kind, that come with him, yea, they will come with him, yea, and will stare him in the face, will tell him of his baseness, and laugh him to scorn, all the way that he is coming to God by Christ (I know what I say); and this makes his coming to God by Christ hard and difficult to him. Besides, he thinks saints will be aware of him, will be shy of him, will be afraid to trust him, yea, will tell his Father of him, and make intercession against him, as Elias did against Israel, or as the men did

that were fellow servants with him that took his brother by the throat. Shame covers his face all the way he comes. He does not know what to do; the God he is returning to is the God that he has slighted—the God before whom he has preferred the vilest lost; and he knows God knows it, and has before him his ways. The man that has been a backslider, and is returning to God, can tell strange stories, and yet such as are very true. No man was in the whale's belly, and came out again alive, but backsliding and returning Jonah; consequently no man could tell how he was there, what he felt there, what he saw there, and what workings of heart he had when he was there, so well as he.

The Upright Believer

I come now to the third man, namely, to the sincere and upright believer, that comes to God by Christ. And although this may in some sense be applicable to the two former, for his coming is not worthy to be counted coming to God, that is not in sincerity and uprightness; yet, by such a one, I now mean one that has been called to the faith, and that has in some good measure of sincerity and uprightness therein abode with God.

This man also comes to God by Christ; but his coming is to be distinguished, I mean in the main of it, from **the coming of the** other two.

The other two come for the knowledge of forgiveness, a thing that the upright and faithful Christian for the most part has a comfortable faith of, and that for which he is often helped to give thanks to God. I do not say he doubts not, or that he has not his evidences sometimes clouded. Nor do I say that the knowledge of his reconciliation to God by Christ Jesus is so high, so firm, so fixed, and steadfast, that it cannot be shaken, or that he needs no more. I will then explain myself. He comes not to God as an unconverted sinner comes; he comes not as a backslider comes when he is returning to God from his backslidings: but he comes as a son, as one of the

household of God, and he comes as one that has not, since conversion, wickedly departed from his God.

He then comes to God with that access and godly boldness that is only proper to such as himself, that is, to them that walk with God. Thus every one that shall be saved does not do; thus every one that shall be saved cannot do: for instance, the two spoken of before.

He comes to God by Christ constantly, by prayer, by meditation, by every ordinance; for therefore he makes use of ordinances, because by them, through Christ, he gets into the presence of God.

He comes to God through Christ earnestly, because he judges that God only is that good, that blessedness, that happiness that is worth looking after; that good, and that blessedness, that alone can fill the soul to the brim; that good, and that happiness, that is worthy of our hearts, and souls and spirits. Hence David expressed his coming to God, by panting, by thirsting, by tears, saying, "My soul pants after you, O God." And again, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" And again, "I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy." And hence it was that he so envied the swallow and sparrow, even because they could come to the altar of God, where he had promised to give his presence, when he (as I think) by the rage of Saul, was forced to abide remote. "My soul longeth," says he, "even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in your house; they will be still praising you." Then after a few more words he says, "For a day in your courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper (I would choose rather to sit at the threshold) in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness"—and then renders the reason. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly."

The presence of God, and the glory and soul-ravishing goodness of that presence, is a thing that the world understands not, nor can they, as such, desire to know what it is. But men of the sort I speak of understand it.

Good men come to God upon other accounts also: for so it is, that they have many concerns with God.

They come to him for a more clear discovery of themselves to themselves: for they desire to know how frail they are; because the more they know that, the more they are engaged in their souls to take heed to their ways, and to fear lest they should tempt their God to leave them.

They come to God by Christ for the weakening of their lusts and corruptions; for they are a sore, yea, a plague to a truly sanctified soul. Those, to be rid of which, if it might be, a godly man chooses rather to die than to live. This David did mean, when he cried, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' And Paul, when he cried out, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

They come to God by Christ for the renewing and strengthening of their graces. The graces that the godly have received, are, and they feel they are, subject to decay; yea, they cannot live without a continual supply of grace. This is the meaning of those texts 'Let us have grace' and 'Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help, in time of need.'

They come to God by Christ to be helped against temptations, that they may meet withal. They know that every new temptation has a new snare, and a new evil in it: but what snare, and what evil, that at present they know not; but they know their God knows, and can deliver out of temptation when they are in, and keep them out while they are out.

They come to God by Christ for a blessing upon the means of grace which God has afforded for the succour of the soul, and the building of it up in the faith; knowing that as the means, so a blessing upon it, is from God. And for this they have encouragement, because God has said, 'I will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread.'

They come to God by Christ for the forgiveness of daily infirmities, and for continuing their souls in the light of his countenance, notwithstanding. That he also would always accept them and their services, and grant that an answer of peace may be returned from their Father in their bosoms; for this is the life of their souls.

There are a great many such things that the sincere and upright man comes to God for, too many here to mention. But besides what he asks for himself, I must tell you:

This man also comes to God to beseech him for the flourishing of Christ's kingdom; which he knows will never be until Antichrist is dead, and till the Spirit be more plentifully poured upon us from on high. Therefore he also cries to God for the downfall of the first, and for the pouring out of the other.

He comes to God for hastening the gathering in of his elect; for it is an affliction to him to think that so many of these for whom Christ died should be still in a posture of hostility against him.

He comes to God for a spirit of unity to be poured out among believers; for, 'for the divisions of Reuben he has great thoughts of heart'.

He comes to God to pray for magistrates, and that God would make speed to set them all to that work that is so desirable to his church, that is, to 'hate the whore of Babylon, to eat her flesh, to make her desolate, and burn her with fire.'

He comes to God to beg that he would hasten that great and notable day, the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus; for he knows that Christ will never be exalted as he must be till then; yea, he also knows that God's church will never be as she would, and shall be, till then.

But the main meaning, if I may so call it, of this high text, is this: that they that come to God by him, are those that come by Christ to God, to enjoy him; by faith and spirit here, and by open vision and unspeakable possession of him in the next world. This is the great design of the soul in its coming to God by Jesus Christ; and it comes to him by Jesus Christ, because it dares not come by itself, and because God himself has made him the way, the new and living way.

Here, as I said, the Father meets with that which pleaseth him, and the soul with that which saves her. Here are righteousness and merit to spare, even righteousness that can justify the ungodly. Here is always, how empty soever we be, a fulness of merit always presented to God by Christ, for my obtaining of that which at any time I want, whether wisdom, grace, spirit, or any good thing soever. Only since I was upon this subject, I thought a little to touch upon things in this order, for the enlarging of your thoughts, for the conviction of your spirit, for the stirring of you up to God, and for showing you the good signs of grace, where it is, where it is abused, and where any are seeking after it.

CONCLUSIONS TOUCHING THESE PERSONS

And now I come to draw some inferences from this point also, as I have already done from those going before it.

You see that I have now been speaking to you of the man that comes to God, both with respect to the way he comes, as also with respect to the manner of spirit in which he comes. And hence I may well infer:

HE IS NO FOOL THAT COMES TO GOD BY CHRIST

Firstly, that he is no fool (no fool according to the best judgment) that comes to God by Christ. The world, indeed, will count him one: for the things that be of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them. But, indeed, and in the verdict of true judgment, he is not so. For he now seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom. He has chosen to be concerned with the very head and fountain of wisdom. For Christ is the wisdom of God; and the way to the Father by Christ is the greatest of mysteries; and to choose to walk in that way, the fruit of the most sage advice. Wherefore he is not a fool that thus concerns himself.

It is not a sign of foolishness, timely to prevent ruin, is it? They are the prudent men that foresee an evil and hide themselves, and the fools that go on and are punished. Why, this man foresees an evil, the greatest evil, sin, and the punishment of the soul for sin in hell, and flies to Christ, who is the refuge that God has provided for penitent sinners; and is this a sign of a fool? God make me such a fool, and you that readest these lines such a fool! And then we shall be wiser than all men that are counted wise by the wisdom of this world.

Is it a sign of a fool to agree with one's adversary, while we are in the way with him, even before he delivereth us to the judge? Nay, it is a piece of the highest wisdom.

Is he a fool that chooses for himself long lasters, or he whose best things will rot in a day? Sinners, 'before your pot can feel the thorns (before you can see where you are) God shall take you away with a whirlwind, both living and in his wrath.' But this man has provided for things: like the tortoise, he has got the shell on his back, so strong and sound, that he fears not to suffer a loaded cart go over him. The Lord is his rock, his defence, his refuge, his high tower, to which he does continually resort.

Was the unjust steward a fool in providing for himself for hereafter? For providing friends to receive him to harbour, when others should turn him out of their doors? No more is he that gets another house for his harbour, before death shall turn him out of doors here.

Again, as he that comes to God by Christ is no fool, so he is no little-spirited fellow. There is a generation of men in this world, that count themselves men of the largest capacities, when yet the greatest of their desires lift themselves no higher than to things below. If they can, with their net of craft and policy, encompass a bulky lump of earth, oh! what a treasure have they engrossed to themselves! Meanwhile, the man in the text has laid siege to heaven; has found out the way to get into the city; and is resolved, in and by God's help, to make that his own. Earth is a drossy thing in this man's account; earthly greatness and splendours are but like vanishing bubbles in this man's esteem; none but God as the end of his desires, none but Christ as the means to accomplish this his end, are the things counted great by this man. No company now is acceptable to this man, but the Spirit of God; Christ, and angels, and saints, as fellow heirs with himself. All other men and things he deals with as strangers and pilgrims are wont to do. This man's mind soars higher than the eagle or stork of the heavens. He is for musing about things that are above, and their glory, and for thinking what shall come to pass hereafter.

But as I have showed you what he is not; so now let me, by a few words, tell you plainly what he is.

He is a man concerned for his soul, for his immortal soul. The soul is a thing, though of most worth, least minded by most. The souls of most lie waste, while all other things are enclosed. But this man has got it by the end, that his soul is of more value than the world; wherefore he is concerned for his soul. Soul concerns are concerns of the highest nature, and concerns that arise from thoughts most deep and ponderous. He never yet knew what belonged to great and deep thoughts that is a stranger to soul concerns. Now, the man that comes to God by Christ is a man that is engaged in soul concerns.

He is also a man whose spirit is subjected in love to spiritual things. For a carnal mind cannot suit with, and be delighted with these things. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' This is the man that God has tamed, and keeps tame by himself, while all others run wild, as the asses upon the mountains. If birds could speak, surely they would tell, that those that are kept in the cage have with them another temper than they that range the air and fly in the fields and woods. Yea, and could those kept tame express themselves to the rest, they would tell that they have white bread, and milk, and sugar; while those without make a life of maggots and worms. They are also in a place where there are better things, and their companions are the children of men. Besides, they learn such notes, and can whistle such tunes, as other birds are strangers to. Oh! the man whose spirit is subjected to God, betwixt whom and God there is a reconciliation, not only as to a difference made up, but also as to a oneness of heart—none knows what lumps of sugar God gives that man, nor what notes and tunes God learns that man. 'He has put a new song in my mouth,' says David, 'even praises to our God: many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord.'

HE BELIEVES THERE IS A WORLD TO COME

Secondly, is there a man that comes to God by Christ? Thence I infer, that there is a man that believes there is a world to come.

No man looks after that, which he yet believes is not. Faith must be, before coming to Christ will be: coming is the fruit of faith. He that comes must believe, antecedent to his coming: wherefore it is said, 'We walk by faith'; that is, we come to God, through Christ, by faith. And hence I learn two things: (1) that faith is of a strong and forcible quality; (2) that they who come not to God by Christ, have no faith.

Faith Is Strong and Forcible

Faith is of a strong and forcible quality, and that whether it be true or false.

A false faith has done great things; it has made men believe lies, plead for them, and stand to them, to the damnation of their souls. 'God shall send them strong delusion that they shall believe a lie,' to their damnation. Hence it is said, men make lies their refuge. Why? Because they will trust in a lie. A lie, if believed—if a man has faith in it, it will do great things, because faith is of a forcible quality. Suppose yourself to be twenty miles from home, and there some man comes and possesses you, that your house, your wife and children are all burned with the fire: if you believe it, though indeed there should be nothing of truth in what you have heard, yet will this lie drink up your spirit, even as if the tidings were true. How many are there in the world, whose heart Satan has filled with a belief that their state and condition for another world is good? And these are made to live by lying hope that all should be well with them; and so are kept from seeking for that which will make them happy indeed. Man is naturally apt and willing to be deceived, and therefore a groundless faith is the more taking and forcible. Fancy will help to confirm a false faith, and so will conceit and idleness of spirit. There is also in man a willingness to take things upon trust, without searching into the ground and reason of them. Nor will Satan be behindhand to prompt and

encourage, to your believing of a lie; for that he knows will be a means to bring you to that end to which he greatly desires you should come. Wherefore let men beware, and O that they would! of a false and lying faith.

But if a false faith is so forcible, what is a true? What force, I say, is there in a faith that is begotten by truth, managed by truth, fed by truth, and preserved by the truth of God? Faith will make invisible things visible; not fantastically so, but substantially so. 'Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' True faith carries along with it an evidence of the certainty of what it believes, and that evidence is the infallible word of God. 'There is a God of love, a Christ, a heaven,' says the faith that is good; 'for the word of God does say so. The way to this God, and this heaven, is by Christ; for the word of God does say so. If I run not to this God by this Christ, this heaven shall never be my portion; for the word of God does say so.' So then, thus believing makes the man come to God by him. His thus believing then it is that that carries him away from this world, that makes him trample upon this world, and that gives him the victory over this world. 'For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is he that came by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.'

Those Who Turn from Christ Have no Faith

Now, if this be true, that faith, true faith, is so forcible a thing, as to take a man from his seat of ease, and make him come to God by Christ, as afore; then is it not truly inferred from hence, that they that come not to God by Christ have no faith? What! Is man such a fool as to believe things, and yet not look after them; to believe great things, and yet not to concern himself with them? Who would knowingly go over a pearl, and yet not count it worth stooping for? Believe you are what you are; believe hell is what it is; believe death and judgment

are coming as they are; and believe that the Father and the Son are, as by the Holy Ghost in the word they are described—and still sit in your sins, if you can. You can not sit still. Faith is forcible. Faith is grounded upon the voice of God in the word, upon the teaching of God in the word. And it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; for believing makes them heartily close in with and embrace what by the word is set before them, because it sees the reality of them.

Shall God speak to man's soul, and shall man believe? Shall man believe what God says, and nothing at all regard it? It cannot be. 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' And we know that when faith is come, it purifies the heart of what is opposite to God, and the salvation of the soul.

So then those men that are at ease in a sinful course, or that come not to God by Christ, are such as have no faith, and must therefore perish with the vile and unbelievers.

The whole world is divided into two sorts of men: believers and unbelievers. The godly are called believers. And why believers? But because they are they that have given credit to the great things of the gospel of God. These believers are here in the text called also comers, or they that come to God by Christ, because who so believes, will come; for coming is a fruit of faith in the habit, or, if you will, it is faith in exercise; yet faith must have a being in the soul, before the soul put it into act.

This, therefore, further evidences, that they that come not have no faith—are not believers, belong not to the household of faith, and must perish. 'For he that believes not shall be damned.'

Nor will it be any boot to say, 'I believe there is a God and a Christ'; for still your sitting still does demonstrate that either you lie in what you say, or that you believe with a worse than a false faith. 'But the object of my faith (you say) is true.' I answer, So is the object of

the faith of devils; for they believe that there is one God, and one Christ; yet their faith, as to the root and exercise of it, notwithstanding that, is no such faith as is that faith that saves, or that is intended in the text, and that by which men come to God through Christ.

Wherefore still, O you slothful one, you deceive yourself! Your not coming to God by Christ, declares to your face, that your faith is not good, consequently that you feed on ashes, and your deceived heart has turned you aside, that you can not deliver your soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

THE WORLD TO COME IS BETTER

Thirdly, is there a man that comes to God by Christ? Thence I infer, that the world to come is better than this; yea, so much better, as to quit cost, and bear charges of coming to God, from this, by Christ, to that. Though there is a world to come; yet if it was no better than this, one had as good stay here, as seek that; or if it were better than this, and would bear charges if a man left this for that, and that was all, still the one would be as good as the other. But the man that comes to God by Christ, has chosen the world that is infinitely good, a world betwixt which and this there can be no comparison. This must be granted, because he that comes to God by Christ is said to have made the best choice, even to choose a city that has foundations. There are several things that make it manifest enough, that he that comes to God by Christ, has made the best market, or chosen the best world.

1 That is the world which God commends, but this, that he slights and contemns. Hence that is called the kingdom of God, but this an evil world. Now, let us conclude, that since God made both, he is able to judge which of the two is best; yea, best able so to judge thereof. I choose the rather to refer you to the judgment of God in this matter; for should I put you upon asking of him, that is coming to God by Christ, as to this, perhaps you would say, he is as little able to give

an account of this matter as yourselves. But I hope you think God knows, and there I refer you to the judgment of God, which you have in the scriptures of truth. Heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool. I hope you will say here is some difference. The Lord is the God of that; the devil the god and prince of this. Thus also it appears there is some difference between them.

2 That world, and those that are counted worthy of it, shall all be everlasting; but so shall not this nor the inhabitants of it. The earth, with the works thereof, shall be burned up, and the men that are of it shall die in like manner. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. This world, with the lovers of it, will end in a burning hell; but the world to come fades not away.

3 The world that we are now in, has its best comforts mixed either with crosses or curses; but that to come with neither. There shall be no more curse; and as for crosses, all tears shall be wiped from the eyes of them that dwell there. There will be nothing but ravishing pleasures, and holy; there will be no cessation of joys, nor any speck of pollution. 'In your presence is fulness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures for evermore.'

There men shall be made like angels; neither can they die any more. There shall they behold the face of God and his Son, and move on in the enjoyment of them for ever.

There men shall see themselves beyond all misery, and shall know that it will be utterly impossible that either any thing like sorrow, or grief, or sickness, or discontent should touch them more.

There men shall be rewarded of God for what they have done and suffered, according to his will, for his sake; there they shall eat and drink their comforts, and wear them to their everlasting consolation.

They are all kings that go to that world, and so shall be proclaimed there. They shall also be crowned with crowns, and they shall wear crowns of life and glory, crowns of everlasting joy, crowns of lovingkindness; yea, in that day the Lord of hosts himself shall be for a crown of glory to those that are his people. (See Heb. 2:7; Isa. 35:10; Ps. 103:4; Isa. 28:5.) Now if that world (though no more could be said for it than is said in these few lines) is not infinitely better far than what the present world is, I have missed my thoughts. But the coming man, the man that comes to God by Christ, is satisfied, knows what he does; and if his way, all his way thither, were strewn with burning coals, he would choose, God helping him, to tread that path, rather than to have his portion with them that perish.

MOST MEN ARE MAD

Fourthly, if there be a world to come, and such a way to it, so safe and good, and if God is there to be enjoyed by them that come to him by Christ; then this shows the great madness of the most of men; madness, I say, of the highest degree; for that they come not to God by Christ that they may be inheritors of the world to come. It is a right character which Solomon gives of them: 'The heart,' says he, 'of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.'

A madman is intent upon his joys, upon any thing but that about which he should be intent; and so are they that come not to God by Jesus Christ. A madman has neither ears to hear nor a heart to do what they that are in their right wits advise him for the best: no more have they that come not to God by Christ. A madman sets more by the straws and cock's feathers, by which he decks himself, than he does by all the pearls and jewels in the world. And they that come not to God by Christ set more by the vanishing bubbles of this life than they do by that glory that the wise man shall inherit. 'The wise shall inherit glory: but shame,' says Solomon, 'shall be the promotion of fools.'

What a shame it is to see God's jewels lie unregarded of them that yet think none are wiser than themselves!

I know the wise men of this world will scorn one should think of them that they are mad; but verily it is so. The more wise for this world, the more fool in God's matters, and the more obstinately they stand in their way, the more mad.

When Solomon gave himself to backsliding, he says he gave himself to 'folly and madness'. And when he went about to search out what man is since the fall, he went about to search out foolishness and madness. And is it not said, that when the Jews were angry with Jesus, because he did good on the sabbath, that that anger did flow from their being filled with madness? Does not Paul also plainly tell us that while he opposed himself against Christ, the gospel and professors thereof, he did it even from the highest pitch of madness? 'And being exceeding mad against them, I persecuted them, even to strange cities.' Now, if it is exceeding madness to do thus, how many at this day must be counted exceeding mad, who yet count themselves the only sober men? They oppose themselves; they stand in their own light; they are against their own happiness; they cherish and nourish cockatrices in their own bosoms; they choose to themselves those paths which have written upon them, in large characters, 'These are the ways of death and damnation'. They are offended with them that endeavour to pull them out of their ditch, and choose rather to lie and die there, than to go to God by Christ, that they may be saved from wrath through him: yea, so mad are they, that they count the most sober, the most godly, the most holy man, the mad one; the most earnest for life, the more mad; the more in the Spirit, the more mad; the more desirous to promote the salvation of others, the more mad. But is not this a sign of madness—of madness to perfection? And yet thus mad are many; and mad are all they that while it is called today, while their door is open, and while the golden sceptre of the golden

grace of the blessed God is held forth, stand in their own light, and come not to God by Christ. That is the fourth inference.

HOW GOD DETERMINES OUR END

A fifth inference that I gather from this text is, that the end that God will make with men, will be according as they come or come not to God by Christ. They that come to God by Christ, have taken shelter, and have hid themselves; but they that come not to God by Christ lay themselves open to the windy storm and tempest that will be in that day. And the wind then will be high, and the tempest strong, that will blow upon them that shall be found in themselves. `Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.'

And now, what will be found in that day to be the portion of them that in this day do not come to God by Christ, none knows but God, with whom the reward of unbelievers is.

But writing and preaching is in vain as to such. Let men say what they will, what they can, to persuade to come—to dissuade from neglecting to come, they are resolved not to stir. They will try if God will be so faithful to himself, and to his word, as to dare to condemn them to hell fire, that have refused to hear and comply with the voice of him that speaks from heaven.

Yet this is but a desperate venture. Several things declare that he is determined to be at a point in this matter. (1) The gallows is built: hell is prepared for the wicked. (2) There are those already in chains, and stand bound over to the judgment of that day, that are, as to creation, higher and greater than men, namely, the angels that sinned. Let sinners then look to themselves. (3) The judge is prepared and appointed; and it has fallen out to be he that you have refused to come to God by; and that predicts no good to you; for then will he say

of all such, 'Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.'

But what a surprise will it be to them that now have come to God by Christ, to see themselves in heaven indeed, saved indeed, and possessed of everlasting life indeed! For alas! What is faith to possession? Faith that is mixed with many tears, that is opposed with many assaults, and that seems sometimes to be quite extinguished; I say, what is that to a seeing of myself in heaven? Hence it is said, that Christ shall then come to be admired in them that now believe. Because they did here believe the testimony. Then they shall admire that it was their lot to believe when they were in the world. They shall also admire to think, to see, and behold what believing has brought them to, while the rest, for refusing to come to God by Christ, drink their tears mixed with burning brimstone.

Repentance will not be found in heaven among them that come to God by Christ. No! Hell is the place of untimely repentance! It is there where the tears will be mixed with gnashing of teeth; while they consider how mad, and worse, they were, in not coming to God by Jesus Christ. Then will their hearts and mouths be full of, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But the answer will be, 'You shut me out of doors; I was a stranger, and you took me not in: besides, you refused to come to my Father by me; wherefore now you must go from my Father by me.'

They that will not be saved by Christ must be damned by Christ. No man can escape one of the two. Refuse the first they may, but shun the second they cannot.

And now, they that would not come to God by Christ will have leisure and time enough (if I may call it time) to consider what they have done, in refusing to come to God by Christ. Now they will meditate warmly on this thing; now their thoughts will be burning hot about it, and 'It is too late' will be in each thought such a sting, that like a bow of steel, it will continually strike them through. Now they

will bless those whom formerly they have despised, and commend those they once contemned. Now would the rich man willingly change places with poor Lazarus, though he preferred his own condition before his in the world.

The day of judgment will bring the worst to rights in their opinions. They will not be capable of misapprehending any more. They will never after that day put bitter for sweet, or darkness for light, or evil for good any more. Their madness will now be gone. Hell will be the unbelievers' bedlam-house, and there God will tame them as to all those bedlam tricks and pranks which they played in this world; but not at all to their profit or advantage. The gulf that God has placed and fixed between heaven and hell will spoil all as to that.

But what a joy will it be to the truly godly, to think now that they are come to God by Christ! It was their mercy to begin to come; it was their happiness that they continued coming; but it is their glory that they are come, that they are come to God by Christ. To God! Why? He is all; all that is good—essentially good, and eternally good. To God! The infinite ocean of good. To God in friendly wise, by the means of reconciliation; for the other now will be come to him to receive his anger, because they came not to him by Jesus Christ. Oh! That I could imagine—Oh! That I could think, that I might write more effectually to you of the happy estate of them that come to God by Christ!

UNFAILING EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION

But thus have I passed through the three former things, namely: (1) that of the intercession of Christ; (2) that of the benefit of his intercession; (3) that of the persons that are interested in this intercession. Wherefore now I come to the last head, and that is to show you (4) the certainty of their reaping the benefit of his intercession:

'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

The certainty of their reaping the benefit of being saved, that come to God by Christ, is thus expressed: 'Seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.' The intercession of Christ, and the lastingness of it, is a sure token of the salvation of them that come to God by him.

Of his intercession, what it is, and for whom, we have spoken already. Of the success and prevalency of it, we have also spoken before; but the reason of its successfulness, of that we are to speak now. And that reason, as the apostle suggests, lies in the continuance of it: 'Seeing he ever lives to make intercession.' The apostle also makes very much of the continuation of the priesthood of Christ, in other places of this epistle: 'He abides a priest continually': 'You are a priest for ever': 'He has an unchangeable priesthood': and here, 'He ever lives to make intercession'.

Now, by the text is shown the reason why he so continually harps upon the durableness of it, namely, because by the unchangeableness of his priesthood we are saved; nay, saved demonstratively, apparently. It is evident we are. 'He is also able to

save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

AN UNSHAKEABLE COVENANT

The durableness of his intercession proves that the covenant (in which those that come to God by him are concerned and wrapt up) is not shaken, broken, or made invalid by all their weakness and infirmities.

Christ is a priest according to the new covenant (Heb. 8), and in all his acts of mediation he has regard to that covenant. So long as that covenant abides in its strength, so long Christ's intercession is of worth. Hence, when God cast the old high priest out of doors, he renders this reason for his so doing, 'Because they continued not in my covenant', that is, neither priests, nor people. Therefore were they cast out of the priesthood, and the people pulled down, as to a church state, yea, that covenant was utterly abolished.

Now, in the new covenant by which Christ acts as a priest, so far as we are concerned therein, he also himself acts our part, being indeed the head and mediator of the body. Wherefore, though we sin, God does not count that the new covenant is broken, if Christ Jesus our Lord is found to do by it, what by the law is required of us. Therefore he says (Ps. 89), 'If his children break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, I will visit their sins with the rod', etc. But their sins shall not shake my covenant with my beloved, nor cause that I for ever should reject them: 'My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. His seed will I make to endure for ever, his seed shall endure for ever.' Hence it is clear, that the covenant stands good to us, as long as Christ stands good to God, or before his face; for he is not only our Mediator by covenant, but he himself is our condition to God-ward. Therefore HE is said to be 'the covenant of the people', or that which the holy God by law required of us. Hence again, he is said to be 'our righteousness'; namely, that

which answers to what is required of us by the law. He is 'made to us of God', so; and in our room, and in our stead, presents himself to God.

So then, if any ask me, by what Christ's priesthood is continued? I answer, by covenant: and for that the covenant by which he is made priest, abides of full force. If any ask, whether the church is concerned in that covenant? I answer, Yes: yet, so as that all points and parts thereof, that concern life and death everlasting, are laid upon his shoulders, and he alone is the doer of them. He is the Lord our righteousness, and he is the Saviour of the body. So that my sins break not the covenant; but notwithstanding them, God's covenant stands fast with him—with him for evermore. And good reason, if no fault can be found with Christ, who is the person that did strike hands with his Father upon our account, and for us; that is, to do what was meet should be found upon us, when we came to appear before God by him.

And that God himself does so understand this matter is evident because he also, by his own act, gives and imputes to us that good that we never did, that righteousness which we never wrought out; yea, and for the sake of that, transmitted our sins to Christ, as to one that had not only well satisfied for them, but could carry them so far, both from us and from God, that they should never again come to be charged on the committers, to death and damnation. The scriptures are so plentiful for this, that he must be a Turk, or a Jew, or an atheist, that denies it. Besides, God's commanding that men should believe in his Son 'to righteousness', well enough proves this thing; and the reason of this command does prove it with an over and above; namely, 'For he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

Hence comes out that proclamation from God, at the rising again of Christ from the dead, 'Be it known to you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of

sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.'

If this be so (as indeed it is), then here lies a great deal of the force of this conclusion, 'He ever lives to make intercession'; and of the demonstration of the certain salvation of them that come to God by him, 'seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them'. For if Christ Jesus is a priest by covenant, and so abides as the covenant abides; and if, since the covenant is everlasting, his priesthood is unchangeable, then the man that comes to God by him must needs be certainly saved. For if the covenant—the covenant of salvation—is not broken, none can show a reason why he that comes to Christ should be damned, or why the priesthood of Jesus Christ should cease. Hence, after the apostle had spoken of the excellency of his person and priesthood, he then shows that the benefit of the covenant of God remains with us, namely, that grace should be communicated to us, for his priesthood's sake, and that our sins and our iniquities God would remember no more (Heb. 8).

Now, as I also have already hinted, if this new covenant, of which the Lord Jesus is mediator and high priest, has in the bowels of it, not only grace and remission of sins, but a promise that we shall be partakers thereof through the blood of his priesthood (for so it comes to us); then why should not we have boldness, not only to come to God by him, but to enter also into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that **new and living way**?

But further, this priesthood (as to the unchangeableness of it) is confirmed to him by an oath, by him that said to him, The Lord has sworn and will not repent, you are a priest for ever'. This oath seems to me to be for the confirmation of

the covenant, as it is worded before by Paul to the Hebrews,

when he speaks of it with respect to that establishment that is also had on Christ's part, by the sacrifice which he offered to God for us; yea, he then speaks of the mutual confirmation

of it, both by the Father and the Son. Now, I say, since by this covenant he stands and abides a priest; and since the Lord sware, and will not repent, saying, 'You are a priest for ever'; we are still further confirmed in the certain salvation of him that comes to God by Christ.

The Lord by swearing confirms to Christ, and so to us in him, the immutability of his counsel, and that he is utterly unchangeable in his resolutions to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by Christ. And this also shows, that this covenant, and so the promise of remission of sins, is steadfast and immovable.

And it is worth your noting the manner and nature of this oath, 'The Lord has sworn, and will not repent.' It is as much as to say, 'What I have now sworn, I bind me for ever to stand to; or, I determine never to revoke; and that is, 'You are a priest for ever.' Now, as we said before, since his priesthood stands by covenant, and this covenant of his priesthood is confirmed by an oath, it cannot be, but that he that comes by him to God must be accepted of him; for should such a one be rejected, it must be either for the greatness of his sins, or for want of merit in the sacrifice presented, and urged, as to the merit of it, before the mercy-seat. But let the reason specified, be what it will, the consequence falls harder upon the sacrifice of Christ that it can do any where else, and so on upon the covenant, and at last upon God himself, who has sworn, and will not repent, that he is a priest for ever. I thus discourse, to show you what dangerous conclusions follow from a conceit, that some that come to God by Christ shall not be saved, though he ever lives to make intercession for them.

And this I have further to say, that the Lord by swearing (since the manner of the oath is such as it is, and that it also tends to

establish to Christ his priesthood to be unchangeable) declares, that as to the excellency of Christ's sacrifice he is eternally satisfied in the goodness and merit of it; and that he will never deny him any thing that he should ask for at his hands, for his sufferings' sake. For this oath does not only show God's firm resolution to keep his part of the covenant, in giving to Christ that which was covenanted for by him; but it declares, that, in the judgment of God, Christ's blood is able to save any sinner, and he will never put stop nor check to his intercession, how great soever the sinners be that at any time he shall intercede for. So that the demonstration is clearer and clearer, 'He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

GROUNDING IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

This unchangeableness of the priesthood of Christ depends also upon his own life. 'This man, because he continues ever, has an unchangeable priesthood.' Now, although perhaps at first much may not appear in this text, yet the words that we are upon take their ground from them. 'This man, because he continues ever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also,' that is, by his unchangeable priesthood, 'to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

The life of Christ, then, is a ground of the lastingness of his priesthood, and so a ground of the salvation of them that come to God by him. 'We shall be saved by his life.' Wherefore, in another place, this his life is spoken of with great emphasis; he is made a priest, 'not after the law of a carnal commandment but after the power of an endless life.' An endless life is then a powerful thing; and indeed two things are very considerable in it: (1) that it is above death, and so above him that has the power of death, the devil; (2) in that it capacitates him to be the last in his own cause, and to have the casting voice.

We will speak to the first, and for the better setting of it forth, we will show what life it is of which the apostle here speaks; and then, how, as to life, it comes to be so advantageous, both with respect to his office of priesthood, and with respect to us.

A Life Laid Down and Taken Again

What life is it that is thus the ground of his priesthood? It is a life taken—his own life rescued from the power of the grave; a life that we had forfeited, he being our surety; and a life that he recovered again, being the captain of our salvation. 'I lay down my life (says he) that I may take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.' It is a life then that was once laid down as the price of man's redemption, and a life won, gained, taken, or recovered again, as the token or true effect of the completing, by so dying, that redemption. Wherefore, it says again, 'In that he died, he died to sin once; but in that he lives, he lives to God.' He lives as having pleased God by dying for our sins, as having merited his life by dying for our sins. Now, if this life of his is a life merited and won, by virtue of the death that he died (as Acts 2:24, does clearly manifest);—and if this life is the ground of the unchangeableness of this part of his priesthood, as we see it is—then it follows that this second part of his priesthood, which is called here intercession, is grounded upon the demonstration of the virtue of his sacrifice, which demonstration is his life taken to live again. So then, he holds this part of his priesthood, not by virtue of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life—by the power of a life rescued from death, and eternally exalted above all that anyways would yet assault it. For 'Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him'.

Hence Christ brings in his life (the life that he won to himself by his death) to comfort John withal, when he fainted under the view of that overcoming glory that he saw upon Christ in his vision of him at Patmos. 'And he laid his right hand upon me (says he), saying to me, Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that lives; and was dead;

and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.' Why should Christ bring in his life to comfort John, if it was not a life advantageous to him? But the advantageousness of it to John does lie, not merely in the being of life in Christ, but in that it was a life laid down for his sins, and a life taken up again for his justification; a life lost to ransom him, and a life won to save him. As also the text affirms, saying, 'He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.'

Again, it is yet more manifest that Christ's receiving his life again was the death and destruction of the enemy of his people. And to manifest that it was so, therefore (after he had said, 'And, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen'), he adds, 'And have the keys of hell and of death.' I have the power over them: I have them under me: I tread them down, by being a victor, a conqueror, and one that has got the dominion of life (for he is now the Prince of Life), one that lives for evermore, Amen.' Hence it is said again, 'He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' He has abolished death by his death. By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and brought life— (a very emphatical expression) — and brought it from whence? From God, who raised him from the dead; and brought it to light, to our view and sight, by the word of the truth of the gospel.

So then, the life that he now has is a life once laid down as the price of our redemption; a life obtained and taken to him again as the effect of the merit that was in the laying down thereof; a life by the virtue of which death and sin, and the curse, are overcome; and so a life that is above them for ever. This is the life that he lives (namely, this meriting, purchasing, victorious life), and that he improves, while he ever so lives, to make intercession for us.

This life, then, is a continual plea and argument with God, for them that come to him by Christ, should he make no other intercession, but only show to God that he lives; because his thus

living says that he has satisfied for the sins of them that come to God by him. It testifies, moreover, that those enemies, death, the grave, and hell, are overcome by him for them; because indeed he lives, and has their keys. But now, add to life—to a life meritorious—intercession, or an urging of this meritorious life by way of prayer for his, and against all those that seek to destroy them (since they themselves also have been already overcome by his death), and what an encouraging consideration is here for all them that come to God by him, to hope for life eternal! But,

Our Intercessor Has the Final Word

Let us speak a word to the second point; namely, that his living for ever capacitates him to be last in his own cause, and to have the casting voice; and that is an advantage next to what is chiefest.

His cause! What is his cause, but that the death that he died when he was in the world was, and is, of merit sufficient to secure all those from hell, or, as the text has it, to save them that come to God by him; to save them to the uttermost? Now, if this cause be faulty, why does he live? Yea, he lives by the power of God, by the power of God towards us; or with a respect to our welfare; for he lives to make intercession—intercession against Satan our accuser—for us. Besides, he lives before God, and to God, and that after he had given his life a ransom for us. What can follow more clearly from this, but that amends was made by him for those souls for whose sins he suffered upon the tree? Wherefore, since his Father has given him his life and favour, and that after he died for our sins, it cannot be thought but that the life he now lives is a life that he received as the effect of the merit of his passion for us.

God is just; and yet Christ lives—and yet Christ lives in heaven! God is just; and yet Christ our passover lives there, do what our foes can to the contrary!

And this note, by the way, that though the design of Satan against us, in his labouring continually to accuse us to God, and to prevail against our salvation, seems to terminate here; yet indeed it is also laid against the very life of Christ, and that his priesthood might be utterly overthrown, and in conclusion, that God also might be found unjust in receiving those whose sins have not been satisfied for, and so whose souls are yet under the power of the devil. For he that objects against him for whom Christ intercedes objects against Christ and his merits; and he that objects against Christ's intercession, objects against God who has made him a priest for ever. Behold you therefore, how the cause of God, of Christ, and of the souls that come to God by him, are interwoven! They are wrapt up in one bottom. Mischief one, and you mischief all; overthrow that soul, and you overthrow his intercession; and overthrow him, and you overthrow even him that made him a priest for ever! For the text is without restriction. 'He is able to save to the uttermost, them that come to God by him.' He says not now and then one, or sinners of an inferior rank in sin, but them that come to God by him, how great soever their transgressions are; as is clear in that it adds this clause, 'to the uttermost'. 'He is able to save them to the uttermost.'

But if he were not satisfied, why did the King send, yea, come and loose him, and let him go free? Yea, admit him into his presence; yea, make him Lord over all his people, and deliver all things into his hand?

But he lives! He ever lives, and is admitted to make intercession; yea, is ordained of God so to do! Therefore, he is 'able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him'.

This therefore, that he lives (seeing he lives to God and his judgment, and in justice is made so to do), is chiefly with reference to his life as mediator, for their sakes for whom he makes intercession. 'He lives to make intercession.' And in that it is said he lives ever, what is it but that he must live, and outlive all his enemies? For he

must live, yea, reign, till all his enemies are put under his feet! Yea, his very intercessions must live till they are all as good as dead and gone: for the devil and sin must not live for ever, I mean not for ever to accuse. Time is coming when due course of law will have an end, and all cavillers will be cast over the bar; but then, and after that, Christ our high priest shall live, and so shall his intercessions; yea, and also all them for whom he makes intercession, seeing they come to God by him.

Now, if he lives, and outlives all, and if his intercession has the casting voice; since also he pleads in his prayers a sufficient merit before a just God, against a lying, malicious, clamorous and envious adversary, he must needs carry the cause, the cause for himself and his people, to the glory of God and their salvation. So then, his life and intercession must prevail; there can be no withstanding it. Is not this then, a demonstration, clear as the sun, that they that come to God by him shall be saved, 'seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them'?

GROUNDING UPON HIS MERITS

The duration of Christ's intercession, as it is grounded upon a covenant betwixt God and him, upon an oath also, and upon his life; so it is grounded upon the validity of his merits. This has been promiscuously touched before, but since it is an essential to the lastingness of his intercession, it will be to the purpose to lay it down by itself.

Intercession then, I mean Christ's intercession, is, that those for whom he died with full intention to save them, might be brought into that inheritance which he has purchased for them. Now then, his intercession must, as to length and breadth, reach no further than his merits. For he may not pray for those for whom he died not. Indeed if we take in the utmost extent of his death, then we must beware. For his death is sufficient to save the whole world; but his intercessions

are kept within a narrower compass. The altar of burnt-offerings was a great deal bigger than the altar of incense, which was a figure of Christ's intercession. But this, I say, his intercession is for those for whom he died, with full intention to save them: wherefore it must be grounded upon the validity of his sufferings. And indeed, his intercession is nothing else that I know of, but a presenting of what he did in the world for us to God, and pressing the value of it for our salvation. The blood of sprinkling is that which speaks meritoriously; it is by the value of that, that God measures out and gives to us grace and life eternal; wherefore Christ's intercessions also must be ordered and governed by merit. 'By his own blood he entered into the holy place, having (before by it) obtained eternal redemption for us,' for our souls.

Now, if by blood he entered in thither, by blood he must also make intercession there. His blood made way for his entrance thither, his blood must make way for our entrance thither. Though here again we must beware; for his blood did make way for him as priest to intercede, his blood makes way for us, as for those redeemed by it, that we might be saved.

This then shows sufficiently the worth of the blood of Christ, even his ever living to make intercession for us; for the merit of his blood lasts all the while that he does, and for all them for whom he ever lives to make intercession. O precious blood! O lasting merit!

Blood must be pleaded in Christ's intercession, because of justice—and to stop the mouth of the enemy—and also to encourage us to come to God by him. Justice, since that is the essence of God, must concur in the salvation of the sinner. But how can that be, since it is said at first, 'In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die'; unless a plenary satisfaction be made for sin, to the pleasing of the mighty God? —The enemy also would else never let go his objecting against our salvation.—But now God has declared that our salvation is grounded on justice, because merited by blood. And though God

needed not to have given his Son to die for us, that he might save us, and stop the mouth of the devil in so doing; yet this way of salvation has done both, and so it is declared: 'We are justified freely by his grace; through the redemption that is in Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus.' So then, here is also a ground of intercession, even the blood shed for us before.

And that you may see it yet the more for your comfort, God did at Christ's resurrection, to show what a price he set upon his blood, bid him ask of him the heathen, and he would give him the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. His blood then has value enough in it to ground intercession upon; yea, there is more worth in it than Christ will plead or improve for men by way of intercession. I do not at all doubt but there is virtue enough in the blood of Christ, would God Almighty so apply it, to save the souls of the whole world. But it is the blood of Christ, his own blood, and he may do what he will with his own. It is also the blood of God, and he also may restrain its merits, or apply it as he sees good. But the coming soul shall find and feel the virtue thereof, even the soul that comes to God by Christ; for he is the man concerned in its worth; and Christ ever lives to make intercession for him.

Now, seeing the intercession of Christ is grounded upon a covenant, an oath, a life, and also upon the validity of his merits, it must of necessity be prevalent, and so drive down all opposition before it. This therefore is the last part of the text, and that which demonstrates that he that comes to God by Christ shall be saved, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for him.

LESSONS TAUGHT BY THIS PART

I have now done what I intend upon this part of the subject, when I have drawn a few inferences from this also.

OUR SOULS ARE IN A DEPLORABLE CONDITION

First, then, hence I infer that the souls saved by Christ are in themselves in a most deplorable condition. Oh! What ado, as I may say, is there, before one sinner can be eternally saved! Christ must die; but this is not all. The Spirit of grace must be given to us; but that is not all. Christ must also ever live to make intercession for us; and as he does this for all, so he does it for each one. He interceded for me before I was born, that I might in time, at the set time, come into being: after that he also made intercession for me, that I might be kept from hell in the time of my unregenerate state, until the time of my call and conversion; yet again he then intercedes, that the work now begun in my soul may be perfected, not only to the day of my dissolution, but to the day of Christ, that is, until he comes to judgment. So that as he began to save me before I had being, so he will go on to save me when I am dead and gone, and will never leave off to save me, until he has **set me before his face** for ever.

But, I say, what a deplorable condition has our sin put us into, that there must be all this ado to save us! Oh! How hardly is sin got out of the soul, when once it is in! Blood takes away the guilt; inherent grace weakens the force, but the grave is the place, at the mouth of which, sin and the saved must have a perfect and final parting. Not that the grave of itself is of a sin-purging quality, but God will follow Satan home to his own door (for the grave is the door or gate of hell) and will there, where the devil thought to have swallowed us up, even there by the power of his mercy, make us, at our coming thence, shine like the sun, and look like angels! Christ all this while ever lives to make intercession for us.

SATAN DOES NOT WANT TO LOSE US

Secondly, hence also I infer that as Satan thought he struck home at first (when he polluted our nature, and brought our souls to death), so he is marvellously loath to lose us and to suffer his lawful captives now to escape his hands.

He is full of fire against us —full of the fire of malice —as is manifest, not only by his first attempt upon our first parents, but, behold, when the Deliverer came into the world, how he roared! He sought his death while he was an infant; he hated him in his cradle; he persecuted him while he was but a bud and blossom.

When he was come to riper years, and began to manifest his glory, yet, lest the world should be taken with him, how politicly did this old serpent, called the devil and Satan, work? He possessed people to think that Christ had a devil, and was mad, and a deceiver; that he wrought his miracles by magic art, and by Beelzebub; that the prophets spake nothing of him, and that he sought to overthrow the government, which was God's ordinance. And not being contented with all this, he pursued him to the death, and could never rest until he had spilt his blood upon the ground like water. Yea, so insatiable was his malice, that he set the soldiers to forge lies about him to the denial of his resurrection, and so managed that matter, that what they said has become a stumbling-block to the Jews to this very day.

When Jesus was ascended to God, and so was out of his reach, yet how busily went Satan about to make war with his people! Yea, what horrors and terrors, what troubles and temptations, has God's church met with from that day till now! Nor is he content with persecutions, and general distress; but, oh! How he does haunt the spirits of Christians with blasphemies and troubles, with darkness and frightful fears; sometimes to their distraction, and often to the filling the church with outcries.

Satan's malice is yet in the pursuit; and now his boldness will try what it can do with God, either to tempt him to reject his Son's

mediation, or to reject them that come to God by him for mercy. And this is one cause among many, why Christ ever lives to make intercession for them that come to God by him. For if Satan cannot overthrow; if he knows he cannot overthrow them, yet, he cannot forbear but vex and perplex them, even as he did their Lord, from the day of their conversion to the day of their ascension to glory.

CHRIST'S LOVE NEVER WEARIES

Thirdly, hence I infer that the love of Christ to his is an unwearied love (and it must needs be so), an undaunted love, and it must needs be so. Who but Jesus Christ would have undertaken such a task as the salvation of the sinner is, if Jesus Christ had passed us by? It is true which is written of him, 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.' If he had not set his face like a flint, the greatness of this work would surely have daunted his mind.

For do but consider what sin is, from which they must be saved. Do but consider what the devil and the curse are, from which they must be saved. And it will then easily be concluded by you, that it is he that full rightly deserves to have his name called 'Wonderful', and his love such as verily `passes knowledge'.

Consider again, by what means these souls are saved, even the loss of his life, and together with it, the loss of the light of his Father's face. I pass by here, and forbear to speak of the matchless contradiction of sinners which he endured against himself, which could not but be a great grief, or as himself does word it, a breaking of heart to him; but all this did not, could not hinder.

Join to all this, his everlasting intercession for us, and the effectual management thereof with God for us; and withal, the infinite number of times that we, by sin, provoke him to spue us out of his mouth, instead of interceding for us; and the many times also that his

intercession is repeated by the repeating of our faults—and this love still passes knowledge, and is by us to be wondered at.

What did, or what does, the Lord Jesus see in us to be at all this care, and pains, and cost to save us? What will he get from us by the bargain, but a small pittance of thanks and love? For so it is, and ever will be, when compared with his matchless and unspeakable love and kindness toward us.

Oh! How unworthy are we of this love! How little do we think of it! But most of all, the angels may be astonished to see how little we are affected with that of it which we pretend to know. But neither can this prevail with him, to put us out of the scroll in which all the names of them are written, for whom he does make intercession to God. Let us cry, 'Grace, grace, to it!'

CHRIST WILL SAVE MANY

Fourthly, hence again I infer that they shall be saved that come to God by Christ, when the devil and sin have done what they can to hinder it.

This is clear, for the strife is now, who shall be Lord of all; whether Satan, the prince of this world, or Christ Jesus, the Son of God—or, which can lay the best claim to God's elect; he that produces their sins against them, or he that laid down his heart's blood a price of redemption for them. Who then shall condemn when Christ has died, and does also make intercession? Stand still, angels! And behold how the Father divides the Son a portion with the great, and how he divides the spoil with the strong: 'because he has poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and did bear the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'

The grace of God and the blood of Christ will, before the end of the world, make brave work among the sons of men. They shall come even to a wonderment, to God by Christ, and be saved by a

wonderment for Christ's sake. 'Behold (says the prophet) these shall come from afar; and, lo, these from the north, and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim.' Behold these, and these, and these shall come; and lo, these, and these, and these from the land of Sinim. This is to denote the abundance that shall come in to God by Christ, towards the latter end of the world, that is, when Antichrist is gone to bed in the side of the pit's mouth. Then shall the nations come in and be saved, and shall walk in the light of the Lord.

But, I say, what encouragement would there be for sinners thus to do, if the Lord Jesus, by his intercession, were not able to save, even to the uttermost, them that come to God by him?

HONOUR CHRIST BY BELIEVING

Fifthly, hence again, I infer, that here is ground for confidence to them that come to God by Christ. Confidence to the end becomes us who have such a high priest, such an intercessor as Jesus Christ. Who, by doubting, would dishonour such a Jesus, that all the devils in hell cannot discourage by all their wiles? He is a tried stone, he is a sure foundation. A man may confidently venture his soul in his hand, and not fear but he will bring him safe home. Ability, love to the person, and faithfulness to trust committed to him, will do all; and all these are with infinite fulness in him. He has been a Saviour near six thousand years already; two thousand before the law, two thousand in time of the law, besides the many hundred years that he has in his flesh above continued to make intercession for them that come to God by him. Yet the day is yet to come, yea, will never come, that he can be charged with any fault or neglect of the salvation of any of them that at any time have come to God by him. What ground then is here for confidence that Christ will make a good end with me, since I come to God by him, and since he ever lives to make intercession for me! Let me then honour him, I say, by setting on his head the crown of his undertakings for me; by believing that he is able to save me, even to the uttermost, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for me.

WORTHY IS THE LAMB

Sixthly, hence also I infer that Christ ought to bear and wear the glory of our salvation for ever. He has done it, he has wrought it out. 'Give to the Lord, O you kindreds of the people, give to the Lord glory and strength.' Do not sacrifice to your own inventions; do not give glory to the work of your own hands. Your reformation, your works, your good deeds, and all the glory of your doing, cast them at the feet of this high priest and confess the glory belongs to him. 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' 'And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house; the offspring and the issue; all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.' Oh! the work of our redemption by Christ is such, as wants not provocation to us, to bless and praise him. Glorify him, then, in your body and in your souls, who has bought you with a price, and glorify God and the Father by him.

THE USE: CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

I come now to make some use of this discourse on the efficacy of Christ's intercession: And,

STUDY THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST

Firstly, let me exhort you to the study of this, as of the other truths of our Lord Jesus. The priestly office of Christ is the first and great thing that is presented to us in the gospel; namely, how that he died for our sins, and gave himself to the cross, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us through him. But now, because this priestly office of his is divided into two parts; and because one of them, namely, this of his intercession, is accomplished for us within the veil; therefore (as we say among men, 'Out of sight, out of mind') he is too much as to this forgotten by us. We satisfy ourselves with the slaying of the sacrifice; we look not enough after our Aaron as he goes into the holiest, there to sprinkle the mercy-seat with blood upon our account.

God forbid that the least syllable of what I say should be intended by me, or construed by others, as if I sought to diminish the price paid by Christ for our redemption in this world. But since his dying is his laying down his price, and his intercession the urging and managing the worthiness of it in the presence of God against Satan, there is glory to be found therein, and we should look after him into the holy place.

The second part of the work of the high priest under the law had great glory and sanctity put upon it, forasmuch as the holy garments were provided for him to officiate in within the veil; also it was there that the altar stood on which he offered incense. There was the mercy-seat. And there also were the cherubims of glory, which were figures of the angels that love to be continually looking and prying into the management of this second part of the priesthood of Christ in the presence of God. For although themselves are not the persons so

immediately concerned therein as we, yet the management of it, I say, is with so much grace, and glory, and wisdom, and effectualness, that it is a heaven to the angels to see it. Oh! To enjoy the odorous scent, and sweet material, and heart-refreshing perfumes that ascend continually from the mercy-seat to the place where God is, and also to behold how effectual it is to the end for which it is designed, is glorious; and he that is not somewhat led into this by the grace of God, there is a great thing lacking to his faith, and he misses of many a sweet bit that he might otherwise enjoy.

Wherefore, I say, be exhorted to the study of this part of Christ's work in the managing of our salvation for us. And the ceremonies of the law may be a great help to you as to this; for though they be out of use now as to practice, yet the signification of them is rich, and that from which many believers of the gospel have got much. Wherefore I advise you that you read the five books of Moses often; yea read, and read again, and do not despair of help to understand something of the will and mind of God therein, though you think they are fast locked up from you. Neither trouble your heads though you have not commentaries and expositions; pray and read, and pray and read; for a little from God is better than a great deal from men; also what is from men is uncertain, and is often lost and tumbled over and over by men, but what is from God is fixed as a nail in a sure place. I know there are times of temptation; but I speak now as to the common course of Christianity. There is nothing that so abides with us, as what we receive from God; and the reasons why Christians at this day are at such a loss, as to some things, is because they are content with what comes from men's mouths, without searching and kneeling before God, to know of him the truth of things. Things that we receive at God's hand come to us as things from the minting house; though old in themselves, yet new to us, if they come to us with the smell of heaven upon them.

I speak not this because I would have people despise their ministers; but to show that there is nowadays so much idleness among professors, as hinders them from a diligent search after things, and makes them take up short of that that is sealed by the Spirit of testimony to the conscience. Witness the great decays at this day among us, and the strange revolting from truth once professed by us.

APPLY THIS TRUTH TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Secondly, as I would press you to an earnest study and search after this great truth, so I would press you to a diligent improvement of it to yourselves, and others. To know truth for knowledge sake is short of a gracious disposition of soul; and to communicate truth out of a desire of praise and vainglory for so doing, is also a swerving from godly simplicity; but to improve what I know, for the good of myself and others, is true Christianity indeed.

Now, truths received may be improved with respect to myself and others, and that several ways.

To myself, when I search after the power that belongs to those notions that I have received of truth. There belongs to every true notion of truth a power. The notion is the shell; the power, the kernel and life. Without this last, truth does me no good, nor those to whom I communicate. Hence Paul said to the Corinthians, 'When I come to you again, I will not know the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.' Search then, after the power of what you know; for it is the power that will do you good. Now, this will not be got but by earnest prayer, and much attending upon God. Also your heart must not be stuffed with cumbering cares of this world; for they are of a choking nature.

Take heed, moreover, of slighting that little that you have. A good improvement of a little is the way to make that little thrive; and the way to obtain additions thereto. 'He that is faithful in that which is

least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.'

Improve them to others; and that by labouring to instil them into their hearts by good and wholesome words, presenting all to them with the authority of the scriptures. Labour also to enforce those instillings on them, by showing them by your life the peace they bring, and the glorious effects that they have upon your soul.

Lastly, let this doctrine give you boldness to come to God. Shall Jesus Christ be interceding in heaven? O then, be you a praying man on earth; yea, take courage to pray. Think thus with yourself, 'I go to God—to God before whose throne the Lord Jesus is ready to hand my petitions to him; yea, he ever lives to make intercession for me.' This is a great encouragement to come to God by prayers and supplications for ourselves, and by intercessions for our families, our neighbours, and enemies. Farewell.

