

(6) I shall add but this one word more, and beseech you that you would seriously lay this to heart, as a weighty thing, considering the certification that follows on it. It is not only death, but a horrible death, wrath, and wrath with its aggravation from this ground; like that of Capernaum, that was lifted up to heaven in this respect, having Christ brought so near them. To whom this gospel is not the savor of life into life, it shall be the savor of death unto death: and think not this a common motive, though it be commonly used. It will bring wrath upon wrath, and vengeance upon vengeance on the hearers of this gospel, beyond that of Sodom, if you be rejecters of it. Surely, none of you would think it an easy thing to be punished as Sodom was, nor digest well the curse that came on them. Is there any of you, but you would think it uncouth and strange, yea stupendous, to enter into their judgment, and to have your lands turned into a stinking loch, and yourselves eternally tormented with them? But there is more wrath and vengeance following on the sin of unbelief, and rejecting of Christ, when he comes to your door in his gospel.

To close up all, consider, that Christ is near you, and has been long near you, and wooing you. You know not how many days or years you shall have; how soon this gospel may be taken from you, or you from it; how soon you may be put in the pit, where you will gnash your teeth, gnaw your tongues, and blaspheme God. Therefore be serious while Christ is in your offer, and roll yourselves over upon him, while you have him so near you. Welcome this *hearing* or *report*, while it sounds in your ears, that there may be no just ground of this complaint against you, *Lord, who hath believed our report?*

SERMON 3 ON ISAIAH 53:1

Isaiah 53:1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

The most part of men and women think not much of the preached gospel. Yet, if it were considered what is the Lord's end in it, it would be the most refreshful news that ever people heard, to hear the report of a Savior: that is, and should be, great and glad tidings of great joy to all nations; and we should be so composed to hear such news from God, and concerning his will and our own well [*welfare*], as to be suitably affected with them. It is a wonder that God has sent such a report to people, and in it has laid Christ so near them, that he puts him home to them, and lays him before them,

even at their feet as it were; and as great a wonder, that when the Lord has condescended to give such a Savior, and brought him so near, that all he calls for is faith, to believe the report, or rather faith in him of whom the report is; which is the second thing in the words.

Duty To Believe The Gospel

II. *Doctrine*. The second thing is,¹ the duty that lies on people to whom the Lord sends the gospel, or this report concerning Christ. And you may take it in this general: That it lies on all that hear the gospel to believe the report that it brings concerning Christ, and by faith to receive him, who is held out to them in it. This is clearly implied. Isaiah and all ministers are sent to report concerning him, and to bear witness of him, and it is the duty of all hearers to believe it. And this is the ground of his and their complaint, when people do not believe it. By comparing this text with *Rom. 10:16* and *John 12:38*, we showed that it is saving faith that is here to be understood.

I shall take up this *Doctrine* in three branches,² which we will find in the words, and which will make way for the use.

Believing Ceases Not To Be A Duty Though Ability Lacking

1. That a people, to whom Christ is offered in the gospel, may warrantably accept of Christ; or, the offering of Christ in the gospel is warrant enough to believe in him. Otherwise there had been no just ground of exhortation and complaint for not believing. For though the complaint will not infer that they had ability to believe, yet it will infer they had a warrant to believe; for the complaint is for the neglect of the duty they were called to.

2. That they to whom Christ is offered in the gospel, are called to believe; it is their duty to do. Thus believing is necessary, in all that hear this gospel, by necessity of command; even as are holiness, repentance, etc.

3. That saving faith is the way and means by which these that have Christ offered to them in the gospel, come to get a right to him, and to obtain the benefits that are reported to be had from him. Thus believing is necessary as a [*means*] to the end of getting Christ, and all that is in him. This is also here implied in the regret made of the [*lack*] of faith, which prejudges men of Christ, and of the benefits of the gospel.

All Hearers Have Warrant To Believe

Branch One. We shall shortly put by the first of these, which is that all that hear the gospel preached, have warrant to believe and receive Christ for their eternal peace, and for making up of the breach between God and them. This preached gospel gives you all warrant to accept of Jesus Christ,

1. Ed. See the outline in Sermon 1 on page 86.

2. Ed. In this sermon Durham handles Branch One of Doctrine II, and begins Branch Two, which he continues in Sermon 4. He takes up Branch Three in Sermon 5.

and you would not seek after, nor call for another. I shall first permit two distinctions to clear this, and then secondly confirm it.

Gospel: A Covenant Form On Condition Of Belief; Or As It Holds Forth A Promise

1. As for the first of the two distinctions that serve to clear it, (1) we may take up the gospel more largely and complexly, in a covenant form, holding out Christ and his benefits, on condition of believing; or we may take it up as it holds out a promise, without particular mentioning of a condition. Now, when we say that the gospel commands and warrants all that hear it to accept the offer, we do not mean the last, that all that hear the gospel have warrant to accept the promise, without a condition, but the first; that is, that all the hearers of the gospel are commanded to accept of Christ offered. There is by the preaching of it, a warrant to close with the report, and then to meddle with, and take hold of the promises, and the things promised. So that it is the gospel, conditionally proposed, that gives warrant to believe, as believing rests on Christ for obtaining life in him.

(2) The second distinction is that we would consider faith as it rests on Christ for obtaining union with him, and right to the promises; or as it applies and makes use of the benefits to be gotten in and by Christ. The offer of the gospel gives not to all a warrant to apply the benefits to be gotten by Christ instantly; but it warrants them to close with him first, and then to apply his benefits.

2. For confirmation of this truth, that the general preaching of the gospel is a warrant for believing and exercising faith on Jesus Christ, for making our peace with God; it is clear from these grounds:

(1) From the nature of the gospel; it is the Word of God, as really inviting to do that which it calls for, as if God were speaking from heaven. It is the Word of God, and not the word of man, and has as real authority to call for obedience, as if God spoke it immediately from heaven. And the word of promise is as really his Word, as the word of command, and therefore to be rested on and improved, as well as we are to endeavor obedience to the command. And if we think that God's testimony is true, and if we lay any just weight on these three witnesses testifying from heaven, and on these other three testifying from earth (*1 John 5:7*), then we may rest on Jesus Christ offered in this gospel, and believe that these who rest on him shall have life. For it is as we said, as really God's Word, as if he were speaking it audibly from heaven.

(2) It may be confirmed from these solemn things: the *word* and *oath* of God; whereby he has mightily confirmed the external offer of the gospel, even the two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for him to lie, that these who are fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, may have strong consolation (as it is *Heb. 6:18*). And God having thus said and sworn about this external covenant, for this very end, that the hearers

of the goſpel may know that they who receive Chriſt offered therein ſhall have life, it is warrant ſufficient to believe on him for life. It is alſo for this end that he has put ſeals to the covenant, circumciſion and the paſſover in the old, and baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper in the New Teſtament; which are extended, not only to the elect, but to profeſſors in the viſible Church, that everyone who is baptiſed and admitted to the communion, may have confirmation of this, that the offer that God makes of life through Chriſt is a true and real offer, and will be made good to the perſons that ſhall receive it, and ſo perform the condition.

(3) It may be confirmed from the end for which God appointed the Word and miniſtry in his church, even to make the offer of Chriſt and life through him (*John 20:31, Theſe things are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name*); the Word is both written and preached for this very end.

(4) And laſtly, it is confirmed from the experience of all the ſaints, and from the ground on which they believed, which was the ſame that we have. They had no other ground but the ſame goſpel and Word that we have; it was not the ſecret operation or inſtinct of the Spirit (it is that indeed which works faith); but it was the Word which was the ground of their faith, for there is no warrant for faith but in the Word. And as many believers as have gone before us, are as ſo many inſtances and experiences to confirm this truth to us.

Faith As It Flows From God's Word And Ordinances, The Beſt Dependence

Uſe. It ſerves for good uſe to ſuch as may fall to doubt and diſpute what warrant they have to believe. We ſay you have as good warrant as Abraham, David, Paul, or any of the godly that lived before you had. You have the ſame goſpel, covenant and promiſes; it was always God's Word preached which was the ground of faith. And there needs not be much diſputing, what is God's purpoſe; for we are not called to look to that in the matter of believing, more than in the matter of our duty. And as it were evil reaſoning to diſpute what may be God's purpoſe in the matter of our duty, when we are called to it; it is as bad reaſoning to diſpute his purpoſe in the matter of faith. And therefore we leave this uſe with a word of advertisement, that this goſpel, as it lays Chriſt before you, it gives you warrant to receive him, and reſt upon him; and we may ſay as Paul did (*Acts 13:38-39, Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of ſins, and by him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which ye could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes.* There is the way held out for obtaining pardon of ſin, and peace. The Lord has made the offer, and laid a fair bridge over the gulf of diſtance between God and ſinners, though you ſhould never get good of it, and though you ſhould never ſet a foot on the bridge. None needs to fear to ſtep forward. Behold, our Lord

Jesus has held out the golden scepter; his call may be warrant enough to come. The preaching of this goſpel ſtops all diſputing, and baniſhes debating of the buſineſs. It calls all the hearers of it, and gives them warrant to come forward, and it is ſuch a warrant, as they will be found ſlighters of the great ſalvation offered, who had this door opened to them, and did not ſtep forward. For as the Apoſtle ſays (2 Cor. 6:2), *Behold, now is the day of ſalvation, behold, now is the accepted time*, and (Heb. 2:2) *If the word ſpoken by angels was ſteadfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of reward, how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation? Which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord*, etc. It is the ſame goſpel that from the beginning has been preached to ſinners, and that is the reaſon why the goſpel is called *grace* (2 Cor. 6:1; *We beſeech you that ye receive not this grace of God in vain*; Gal. 2:21, *I do not fruſtrate the grace of God*). For many get the warrant and paſs to come and receive Chriſt, who put it up in the pocket, as it were, and make no uſe of it, as the man that hid the talent in his napkin. The bonds of marriage are proclaimed, and the warrant given forth, and yet they halt, and come not to the wedding.

Believing Both Required And Commanded

Branch Two. We ſhall add the ſecond branch, which is that this goſpel where it comes and offers Jeſus Chriſt to ſinners, men and women are not only warranted to come, but required and commanded to come. The great duty that the goſpel calls for, is believing. It leaves it not indifferent to believe or not, but peremptorily lays it on as a command. You hear many preachings, and Chriſt often ſpoken of; now this is the great thing called for from you, even believing in Chriſt; and while it is not performed, there is no obedience given to the goſpel.

We ſhall firſt confirm, and then make uſe of this branch of the *Doctrin*e.

1. For confirmation, take theſe grounds: (1) From the manner how the goſpel propoſes faith, it is by way of command in the imperative mood, *Believe, Come, ye that are weary*, etc. *Come to the wedding, Open*, etc. Wherein ſomewhat of the nature of faith is held out, all theſe being the ſame with believing.

(2) It is not only commanded as other things are, but peculiarly commanded; and there is a greater weight laid on the obedience of this command, than on the doing of many other commanded duties. It is the ſum of all Chriſt's preaching (*Mark 1:15*) *Repent and believe the goſpel*. It is the only command which Paul propoſes to the jailer (*Acts 17:31*), *Believe in the Lord Jeſus*, etc.

(3) It is, as it were, the peculiar command that Jeſus Chriſt has left to his people (1 *John 3:22*). *This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt*; and this command of believing on him is the peculiar command left to, and laid on miniſters to preſs.

(4) It will be clear if we consider, that the great disobedience that he quarrels for, is when there is not believing. When sinners will not come to him, this is his quarrel (*John 5:40*). *Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life*; and (here), *Who hath believed our report?* (So *Matt. 23:37*; *I would have gathered you, and ye would not*; and *John 12:37*, *Though he did many mighty works among them, yet they believed not on him*).

(5) Look to the nature of the offer made by Christ, and to the end of it, and you will find that the great thing called for is the receiving of it, which is nothing but believing. And all our preachings of Christ, and of his benefits, are useless without it. Without this, he [*lacks*] the satisfaction he calls for, for the travail of his soul; and without it the hearers of this gospel profit not (*1 Pet. 1:9*). *Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls*; the subordinate end of preaching, to wit, the salvation of our souls, cannot be attained without faith.

2. The uses are three. *Use One*. It serves to be a ground for us to propose the main gospel-duty to you, and to teach you what is the great and main thing you are called to. It is even to believe in Jesus Christ, to exercise faith on him. It is not only that your life should be civil and formal, that you should read, pray, frequent ordinances, learn the catechism, and such like. But this is it, to believe on Jesus Christ for the obtaining of life and remission of sins through him. And it is not a thing indifferent to you, but commanded, and with this certification, that if you believe not, you shall never get life nor pardon of sin. And therefore as we tell you that remission of sins is preached to you through Christ, so we command and charge you to believe on him, and receive this gospel, wherein he is offered for the remission of sins.

For clearing of this use, and that we may have the more ready access to application, we shall speak a word to these three. (1) To several kinds of true faith, three whereof are not saving; or to the ordinary distinctions of faith. (2) To the Scripture-expressions that hold out the nature of saving faith. (3) To some difference between this saving faith, and false and counterfeit faith, or these acts of true faith more generally taken, which yet are not saving.

Faith, The Several Kinds And Properties Of It

(1) For the first of these, when we speak of faith, we shall draw it to these four kinds ordinarily spoken of, and shall not alter nor add to the common distinctions of faith, though there may be more given.

Historical Faith

[1] The first is *historical faith*; which may be called true, being it whereby we assent to the truth of a thing, because of his supposed fidelity that tells it; as when an author writes a history, we give it credit upon report that he

was an honest man that wrote it. So historical faith is when people hearing the Word preached or read, they assent to the truth of it all. And [they] do not question, but that Christ came to the world; that he was God and man in one person; that he died and rose the third day, and ascended into heaven; that they that believe on him shall be saved, etc, and taking the word to be God's Word, they may give to it a higher assent than they give to any man's word, because God is worthy, infinitely worthy of more credit than any man, yea than all men, and angels too. There may be, I say, in this historical faith of divine truths, a higher or greater assent than there is in believing of any human history, which may be the reason why many mistake historical faith, and yet it is but of the same kind, and a thing which many reprobates have as it is said (*John 2:23-24*), *Many believed on him; when they saw the miracles which he did, but Jesus did not commit himself unto them.* They were brought to believe, from the signs which they saw, that he was more than a mere man, and that it was the Word of God which he spoke, and yet it was but a historical faith; yea this faith may be and is in devils, who are said (*Jas. 2:9*), *To believe and tremble.* There are many, who if they believe Christ to be God and man, and the Word to be true, think it enough; yet James, having to do with such, tells them that the devils believe as much as that, and more thoroughly than many that have historical faith. He knows God to be true, and one that cannot lie, and he finds it to his cost. He knows that such as believe cannot perish, for he cannot get one of them to hell. He knows that there is a time set, when Christ will come to judge the world, and himself among the rest, and therefore he says often to him, *Torment me not before the time:* and as the devil has this faith, so there are many in hell that have it too. The rich glutton had it; therefore he bids go tell his brethren, that they come not to that place of torment; and it is told him, they have Moses and the prophets, etc, which says that he then felt the truth of many things he would not believe before. This I speak, that you may know that this historical faith is the first step of faith; but it may be in hell, and so in many in whom saving faith is not. It is really a wonder that folks that are called Christians should own this to be saving faith, and think they are well come to, when they are only come the devil's length in believing. Yea, there are many that never came this length, else they would tremble more.

Faith In Miracles

[2] The second sort of faith, is the *faith of miracles*, which is often spoken of in the New Testament; as when the Lord says [*Matt. 17:20*], *If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye should say to this mountain, Be thou removed and cast into the sea, and it should be done.* There was an active faith to work miracles, and a passive faith to receive the particular effect the miracle did produce. Some had the faith of miracles to heal, and others to be healed.

This is an extraordinary thing, and folks may go to heaven without it, and go to hell with it, though they cannot go to heaven without historical faith. Hence it is said, *Many shall come to me in that day, and shall say, We have casten out devils in thy name;* to whom he will say, *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity* (Matt. 7:22-23). And the Apostle says (1 Cor. 13:2), *If I had all faith, and could remove mountains, if I want charity, it avails me nothing.* This faith of miracles avails not alone to salvation, because it acts not on Christ held out in the promises, as a Savior to save from sin; but on Christ, as having power and ability to produce such an effect, which may be, where there is no quitting of man's own righteousness, and if there be not grace in the person that has it, it is an occasion of pride. We call you then to historical faith, as necessary, though not sufficient; but not to this faith of miracles, it being neither necessary nor sufficient.

Temporary Faith

[3] A third sort of faith is *temporary faith*, spoken of [in] Matt. 13, and set out under the parable of the seed sown on stony ground, which soon springs up, but withers. So some hearers of the gospel receive the Word with joy, and are affected with it, but endure not. The difference between this and historical faith, is that historical faith, as such, consists in the judgment, and reaches not the affections; at best it reaches not the affection of joy, for though the devils tremble, yet they are never glad. Temporary faith reaches the affections, and will make a man as to tremble at the threatenings, as Felix did, so some way to delight himself in the promises of the gospel, and to smack them, as it were, from the apprehension of the sweet taste and relish he finds in them. It is even here (as it were) told a whole man, that a physician is come to town, he is neither up nor down with it; but tell it to a sick man, and he is faïn [*glad*], from an apprehended possibility of the cure. Yet the apprehended possibility of the cure never sends him to the Physician, nor puts him to apply the cure.

Saving Faith

[4] The fourth sort is *saving faith*, which goes beyond all the rest, and brings the sick man to the Physician and to make use of the cure. There may be some measure of true saving faith, where there is not much temporary faith or moving of the affections; and there may be a considerable measure of temporary faith, where there is no saving faith at all. Even as a fallen star may seem to glance more than a fixed one that is overclouded, yet it has no solid light. Know then, that faith is called for; but take not every sort of faith for saving faith. It would make tender hearts bleed, to see so many mistaken in the matter of their faith; there are some who say, they had faith all their days. O that you were convinced of the lamentable deceit and delusion that you are under, and that you could distinguish between faith

and presumption, between historical and temporary faith, and true saving faith. Though the two former be not delusions; but in so far as you rest on the same, and take them for saving faith, you are deluded; for saving faith puts you out of yourselves, to rest on Jesus Christ.

SERMON 4 ON ISAIAH 53:1

Isaiah 53:1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

The gospel is a sweet message, and ought to be glad news when it comes to a people; and therefore, when this report of our Lord Jesus Christ is made to sinners, O! but it is a sad complaint that follows on the refusal and not welcoming of it. There is no better news a minister can carry, than these brought to the shepherds by the angels (*Luke 2:10-11*), *Fear not, behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy to all people; unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.* But were it an Isaiah, it will weight him when he looks on a fruitless ministry and despised gospel, and will make him complain, *Who hath believed our report?* O that we may experimentally know the cheerfulness and gladness that follows the gospel where it is embraced; and that we may not know the sorrow and sadness that will follow the challenge for despising of it. One of these two the preached gospel will be: either it will be joyful news to you, or sad ground of complaint to God against you.

We entered to speak of the great duty of a people that hears the gospel, and the great means whereby this news becomes delightful,¹ and that is by faith to receive the report of the gospel, or to believe on Christ reported of in it. This is clearly implied, for the regrate [*lament; complaint*] which holds out the sin is, *Who hath believed our report?* We come now to speak of the *Use*; and because it is the great design of the whole gospel, yea, it is the design of the law also, both of which level at this end and scope, even faith in Christ, it will be expedient, and noways impertinent, that we insist a little on this, especially when so many thousands are utterly ignorant of faith, being strangers to what believing in Christ is, and so great strangers to the native end of the gospel, and out of the way of getting good by the preaching of it; so that, to this day, they have not learned this one lesson, to wit, concerning faith in Christ; and other lessons will be to little or no purpose, till this be learnt.

1. Ed. Durham continues Doctrine II Branch Two. See page 86 and page 102.

Faith In Christ, How Absolutely Necessary To Salvation

We shall not insist to speak at large of the doctrine of faith, but only in a plain way, glance at what this great duty is, that is required of the hearers of the gospel. It is believing in Christ savingly, or saving faith, for no other thing will hold off the complaint against you. You will be complained of, though you would believe with all other faith; therefore it is this faith that is here meant.

That we may come the sooner to that which we would be at, we shall premit two or three words.

1. When we speak of believing here, we presuppose these things that are necessary for clearing the object of faith, and capacitating us to believe, though that be not saving faith; as namely:

(1) That the offer of the gospel must come to people, that the object of faith be held out to them, that it be told them that there is a way for a sinner's justification through Christ Jesus, and that sinners may be accepted before God on his account, or through him.

(2) There must also be an understanding of this, a conceiving in the judgment what it is; folks cannot believe, except they hear, and understand what they hear, in so far as distinctly to fix their faith on the thing known; they must know and understand the Mediator's fullness, the covenant's freeness, and the efficacy of faith to make Christ theirs.

(3) Yea it is necessary there be some acquaintance with our own condition; as that we are naturally under sin; that we are lost, and under the curse; sick, and utterly unable, and even desperate to get ourselves recovered, by anything that is in, or by anything that we can do of ourselves; that we are forever undone, if we get not a Savior, that our mouth may be stopped.

(4) Not only must we know this, but it is necessary there be an historical faith of it, to believe that there is fullness and sufficiency in Christ, that he is able to cure, and take away the guilt of sin in all that rest on him; these must be believed in general, ere ever sinners can rest on him for their own salvation; which supposes, that there may be an historical, where there is not a saving faith. Now, when all this length is gone, saving faith is that which the gospel calls for, and it is the heart's acting according to what sound light and conviction it has, on Jesus Christ as held out in the promise for obtaining of life and salvation through him; so that, when the soul is lying still under its conviction, and knows it cannot have life but by resting on Christ, and hears that there is a sufficiency in him for making up of all its wants, then the work of the Spirit prevails with the soul, to cast itself over on him, for obtaining of life, and of every other thing needful. It brings the soul to embrace and lay hold on him, not only as one able to save sinners, but to save itself in particular. And this is the native work of faith, that unites the soul to Christ,

and puts it over the bound-road, or march of all delusion.¹ It is like a sinking man's leaping to catch hold of a rock or rope; it is the bringing of a lost sinner from the serious apprehension of his own naughtiness and undone estate, to cast himself over on Jesus Christ, for the obtaining of life through him.

True Faith In Its Different Actings And Degrees Considered

2. When we speak of faith, we would premit this: that even this true and saving faith, which is not only in kind true (that is, such as has a real being), but is saving, may be considered in its different acts or actings for its different needs or necessities. Though the covenant is one, yet the acts of faith are many, we having to do with pardon of sin, with sanctification in its parts, vivification, and mortification, with peace, etc, faith differently acts on Christ and the promise for obtaining of these. Now, the faith that we would insist on, is the faith that rests on Christ for pardon of sin, on which all the rest of the acts of faith depend. It is that faith, whereby a sinner receives Christ, and casts himself over on him; that faith, whereby union with Christ is made up.

3. We would premit, that there is a great difference between faith, and the effects of it, as peace, joy, assurance of God's love, and these other spiritual privileges that follow believing. It is one thing actually to believe, another thing to have the peace and joy that follows upon, and flows from believing; the one being as the putting out of the hand to receive the meat, and the other as feeding on it. It is the first of these we mean, and intend to speak of, even that faith whereby we grip Jesus Christ himself, and get a right to all these privileges, in and through him.

4. We premit, that even this saving faith has its degrees, as all other faith has; some have more weak faith, some stronger. Some have that full assurance spoken of [in] *Heb. 10*, or a plerophory, not only as to the object, that it is sufficient, but as to the apprehending and obtaining of life through that object; so that they are able to say, *Neither height, nor depth, nor anything else, shall be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus* [*Rom. 8:39*]. We say then, that saving faith has its degrees, though the degree is not that which we speak of; but it is the kind of this faith, whether weaker or more strong, whereby a lost sinner rolls itself over on Christ; the faith, which puts the sinner off the ground it stood on, over on him; the faith, which brings the soul from the covenant of works, to a new holding of life by Christ and his righteousness.

1. Ed. *Puts it over* — pulls it through or over. *March* — probably as in *Marches*, as in a border. *Jamieson*. Similarly, while not in *OED* or *Jamieson*, *Bound-road* here probably means boundary as in a boundary road. The idea seems to be: 'Faith unites the soul to Christ, and pulls it from the realm or borders of all delusion.' The 1723 edition renders it: puts it over the 'boundary or March of all Delusion.'

Saving Faith; What It Is Not

We shall then speak a little: 1. To what we conceive this act of saving faith is not, for precaveating [*preventing*] of mistake. 2. What way the Scripture expresses it. When then we say that such a thing is not saving faith, you would know that thing is not it that you must [*trust*] to; and when we say such a thing is saving faith, you would labor to act and exercise faith according to it.

1. For what saving faith is not.

(1) It is not the knowing that Christ is God and man; that he was born, was crucified, dead and buried, and rose again. Ask some, 'What is true saving faith?' They will say, 'it is a true knowledge.' Ask them again, 'How long it is since they believed?' They will say, 'Since ever they knew good by ill.' You would know that apprehensive or literal and speculative knowledge is needful, but it will not be taken for saving faith.

(2) It is not a touch of warmth or liberty in the affections in a natural way, which may be in unregenerate men, yea, possibly in pagans, as in a Felix, who, in the meantime, have not so much as temporary faith; because it rises not from the Word, but from dispensations of providence, or from temporary things; and if it rise from the promises of the Word, if there be no more, it is but temporary faith.

(3) It is not convictions, which many take for faith, and take it for granted, if they be convinced of sin, they believe, and will say, whom should they believe on but Christ? And yet they never follow the conviction, to put in practice what they are convinced of.

(4) It is not simply a resolution to believe, as others take saving faith to be, who, being convinced that their own righteousness will not do their turn, resolve to believe on Christ for righteousness, but they will take a convenient time to do it; and many maintain their peace with this though it is no true peace. But a bare resolution to believe is not faith; you [*commonly*] say, 'There are many good wishers in hell.' I remember the words of a dying man in this place, who thought he believed before; and being asked, what difference he conceived to be between the faith he had before, and the faith he now had attained to? he answered, 'Before, I thought or resolved to believe, but never practiced it; now I practice believing.' There is such a subtlety and deceit in the heart, that if it resolves to believe, and if it observably thwarts not with faith, it will sit down on that, as if all were done; therefore the word is, *Today if ye will hear his voice*, that is, today if you will believe, *harden not your heart*. This resolving to believe, is like a man sinking in the water, and having a rope cast out to him, he resolves to grip it, but does it not; so many think they have the promise beside them, and resolve to make use of it, but do not presently make use of it, and the ship sinks down, and they perish, while the promise abides and swims above.

(5) It is not prayer. There are many, they think they believe, when they some way repent, pray, and put their hand to other duties; and they know

no more for believing but something of that kind. It is true indeed, prayer may help to believe, yet it is not always with faith. It is not everyone that saith, *Lord, Lord*, that believes; many will seek to enter, that shall not be able. Folks very often have these two miserable mistakes about prayer, either they put it in the room of Christ, or in the room and place of faith, not considering that they are different things; for faith exercises itself on Christ as mediator, and prayer takes him up as God, the true object of divine worship; though, if it is not founded on Christ as mediator, it has no access. The acting of saving faith is properly on Christ held forth in the Word, and prayer is a putting up of suits according to the Word. There are many that know no more what use to make of Christ, than if he had never been incarnate, nor had come under that relation of a mediator, and make their prayers serve to make up all; whereas faith not only respects Christ as God, but his merits as mediator, and his offices.

(6) Nor is faith only a believing this Word of God to be true, though we could wish many were come that length; it would make a man tremble to hear the blasphemous words that some will have, when they are asked concerning their believing the truth of the Bible; but though you were [come] that length, it were not enough — the devils believe and tremble. The faith that we call you to, is more than historical; it is to resting on Christ, to cordial receiving of the message which he sends to you. As suppose a King should send an embassage [*ambassador*] to a person, to woo her to be his wife; it is one thing to know that there is such a King, another thing to believe that he is real in his offer, and that the woman by consenting to marry him, may be, and will be happy, and (which is yet more) actually to receive the message, and to consent to go and marry him. It is here, as when Abraham's servant is sent to Rebekah (*Gen. 24*), she and her friends believe all the report that the servant made of his master and of his son, that it was true; and then it is given to her option, if she will go with the man, and she consents to go, and actually goes. This is it we press you to, to go with us, and close the bargain, and to accept of him, and of life through him. By the same similitude you may know what saving faith is, and what is the difference between it and *temporary faith*. When the great, rich, and brave offer comes to be made to Rebekah, by a man with many camels, gold and bracelets; when she believes that it is true, and that it is made to her, she is fain [*glad*], and it may be over-fain, if not somewhat vain also; that is like temporary faith. But when it comes to the articles of the contract, it is said to sinners, you must subject to Christ, and follow his will, and not your own; this, this casts the bargain. Thus many, when they hear there is a possibility of life to be had in Christ, and much more when they hear it is to be had on good, easy, and free terms, it will make them smile. But when it comes to that (*Ps. 45:10*) *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, forsake thy father's house*, or the fashions of your father's house; it halts there, and they

suspend and demur to close the bargain. But *saving faith* goes further on, and with Rebekah, finally closes the bargain.

Saving Faith, What It Is

2. The next thing is, 'What is saving faith?' Or, 'What is it to believe in Christ?' And would to God you were ready to believe, and as ready to receive the invitation, as to ask the question, and that in asking the question you were in earnest. For, by the way, many have asked the question, *What shall we do to be saved?* Where, if they had been in earnest, they might have been soon resolved. The answer is at hand: *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* But to them that desire further clearness or confirmation in this concerning business, we shall speak a little; yet you must know, that it is such a thing as is impossible to be made plain to a proud humored or unhumiliated sinner. It is the poor humiliated soul that will take it up; and to such a soul, half a word will help to take it up.

True Marks Of Saving Faith; Come To Christ

The plainest way to set it out, as we conceive, is to name some Scripture expressions, and similitudes, that hold it forth. (1) The first is in *Matt. 11:28*, *Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden*, and *John 6:35*, *He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.* Readily these expressions hold out these three: [1] An evil which men cleave to. [2] A good that is offered to them. [3] A passing from the evil to the good; and so *Come to me*, implies: [1] A hazard that folks are in, by being at a distance from Christ. [2] That there is access to Jesus Christ for remedying that evil, and removing of that hazard. [3] A passing from the one to the other; a passing from our own righteousness to Christ's righteousness; a passing from our natural condition to Jesus Christ; a real passing from death in ourselves to life in him. Most part think faith to be a conceit, a humor, or a guessing, that they think they may have, and never know how. But it is a real thing, a coming from our own righteousness (as I said) to his, from a covenant of works, to rest on Christ and his righteousness, held forth in the covenant of grace. This is somewhat explained [in] *Rom. 7*, where two husbands are spoken of. A woman cannot marry another man till her first husband is dead; so till a sinner is dead to the law, he cannot marry Christ. There must be a divorcing from the law and covenant of works ere you can close with Christ.

Receive Christ

(2) The second expression is [in] *John 1:12*, where faith is held forth as a receiving of Christ, *to as many as received him, he gave them power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name.* And it is well expressed in the *Catechism*, to be a receiving of Christ as he is offered in the

gospel.¹ This supposes that Christ is offered to us, and that we are naturally without him. The gospel comes and says, ‘why will you die, O house of Israel? Come and receive a Savior.’ And the act of faith is a gripping to that offer, a receiving and embracing of it, a being well content to take a free discharge through his blood.

Apprehend Christ

(3) A third expression is [in] *Phil. 3:12*, where faith is set out as an *apprehending* of Christ, and [in] *Heb. 6:18*, it is called a *laying hold* on the hope set before us, and [in] *Isa. 56:3*, a *taking hold* of the covenant; all which suppose folks to have a choice, as it were, laid to them, and Christ to be held out as a city of refuge, and a shelter from that which we are in hazard of. Christ is held out in the gospel as the city of refuge; and the exercise of faith is to run from the hazard to him, as a child, that is chased by an unknown and uncouth body, flees unto the mother’s arms, or as the man-slayer fled from the avenger of blood to the city of refuge. And faith, having run to him, casts itself on him, or thrusts itself (as it were) into him.

Cast Yourself On Christ

(4) A fourth expression is *rolling* or *casting* of ourselves over upon the Lord, as [in] *Ps. 55:22*, *Cast thy burden on the Lord*; and *Ps. 37:5*, *Commit thy way to the Lord*. It is on the margin, *Roll thyself on the Lord*, or *rest*, as it is [in] *v. 7*, and ‘ease thyself on the Lord.’ The gospel lays Christ, as it were, at folks’ feet, and faith rolls them over on him. It is even the soul’s finding itself, through the work of the Spirit, unable to stand under the burden, rolling itself on Christ, as a crazy and weak body casts itself on a down bed for ease. This is a very emphatic, significant, and active expression of faith; setting out a man quitting his own legs or feet, as unable to stand on them, and laying himself over on Christ. This is it that we call you to, even to quit your own feet, and to roll yourselves over on Christ.

Submit To Christ

(5) A fifth expression is *Rom. 10:2*, where it is called a *submitting to the righteousness of God*; which is held out in the gospel thus, as if a king were proclaiming a pardon to rebels, and saying to them, ‘for as many heinous crimes as you have committed, and are guilty of, if you will take with them [*acknowledge them*], and betake yourselves to my grace and mercy, sincerely resolving to be henceforth faithful and dutiful subjects to me, I will freely pardon you.’ Which gracious offer they most gladly accept of, and submit themselves to it. *Submitting* is an acquiescing in the terms of the gospel, as it is proposed; it is even as if you should say, ‘We hold the bargain, and are well content and satisfied with it.’ In a word,

1. Ed. *Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 31*.

faith carves not to God the way to salvation, but sweetly submits to the way he has carved out.

Hide Yourself In Christ

(6) A sixth expression is, *hiding of ourselves in God*, or in Christ; so the word, ‘trust in God’, signifies to hide ourselves in him as in a place of refuge, according to *Prov. 18:10*, *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it, and are preserved*, or hid; or they flee to it, as doves do to their windows. And this is it the apostle says (*Phil. 3:9*), *That I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness*, etc. So that, if you ask, ‘What is faith?’ It is a man betaking himself to Christ, that when he shall be called for, it may be answered, ‘Lord, I am in Christ, not having mine own righteousness’, etc. It is not to be lippening [*trusting*] to the man’s good hopes, to his good prayers, or to his good meaning, but to Christ’s satisfaction, and God’s promise. By faith, when rightly exercised, the sinner holds and hides himself in Christ, till (to speak so) a bit of the man cannot be seen; and this is well set out by the Lord, when he says (*Isa. 23:26*), *Come, my people, enter into your chambers, shut the doors about you, hide yourselves for a little while*, etc. Come in under the Mediator’s wings, lock in yourselves by faith there, and so make all sure.

Yield To Christ

(7) A seventh expression is [in] *2 Chron. 30:8*, where, when Hezekiah is writing to the degenerate tribes to come home again, he bids them, *Yield themselves to the Lord*. In the original it is, *Give the hand to the Lord*, even as two men who have been at odds and variance, or have broken the ties that were between them, come to renew the friendship; they chop [*strike; shake*] hands. Now, God is brought in, stretching out his hands to you (*Isa. 65:2*); therefore come and close with him, yield to him, give him the hand, or chop hands with him, and make the bargain and engagement sicker [*secure*] for the time to come. All these similitudes borrowed from men, are partly to make the nature of faith obvious and clear, partly to strengthen and confirm believers’ faith.

Open To Christ

(8) An eighth expression is that of *opening to Christ* (*Song. 5:2*). *Open to me, my dove*, etc. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open the door to me*, etc. (*Rev. 3:20*). It is said, *The Lord opened the heart of Lydia* (*Acts 16:14*). When the Word comes, sinners’ hearts are locked on God; Christ comes by his Word, and knocks hard to be in, bids open and take in the Savior, and faith discerns his voice and gives him entry. It is the letting of the Word sink, the making of him welcome. It is not only the crediting of the Word as true, but the receiving of him whom the Word offers, for the end for which he is offered; and this is, when the work of the Spirit, with the Word, wakens

up a stichilling [*rustling*], or flitering [*contending*] (to say so) within,¹ and makes the heart to open to take in Christ; as one worded it well and significantly, 'My heart cleeked [*clutched eagerly*] as a linseed boll to Christ.' And wherever Christ has a design of grace on the soul, and comes with power, he continues knocking, rapping, and calling hard and loud, till doors and gates be cast open to him.

Marry Christ

(9) A ninth expression or similitude, under which faith is held forth, is that which is ordinary of a *marriage*, or of *covenanting* or consenting, whether in marriage or otherwise, but more especially in marriage, when Christ takes on him the place of a wooer. Ministers are his ambassadors; the Word is their instructions wherein he bids them go tell sinners that all things are ready, and to pray them to come to the marriage, or to marry and match with him; and faith is a coming away to this husband, a receiving of the word of invitation, a consenting to the marriage. It is not so much a local, as a qualitative change or mutation; we change fashions, we subscribe the contract on the terms it is laid out to us. In the bargain of grace, something is offered by God, and that is Christ and his fullness. And there is something done on our side, and that is accepting of him by faith. And this is not so much a saying with the tongue, as it is a believing with the heart; as it is [in] *Rom. 10:10*, *With the heart man believes unto righteousness*. It is the heart's present subscribing the marriage contract, and going away with Christ, to live and cohabit with him; though confession will be readily with the mouth also, as he calls for it.

Buy!

(10) A tenth expression, or similitude, is that of *buying*. *Ho, everyone* (cries the prophet, *Isa. 55:1*), *that thirsts, come to the waters; and he that hath no money, come, buy*, etc. *Buy of me eyesalve*, etc. (*Rev. 3:18*). It says this much, that God in the gospel sets forth to sinners, as in a market, rich and rare wares, and good cheap, or at very low and easy rates; and that believing is like buying up of the wares. Life eternal is held out on condition of believing on Christ, and the poor sinner thinks that a good bargain, for it takes no money from him. [In] *Rev. 22:17*, this is called *willing*. *Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely*; the soul has a good will to the thing.

Cleave To Christ

It is held forth by several other expressions in the Scripture; it is called a *cleaving to the Lord*, or *sticking to him* (*John 23:8*), and it is called (*Acts 11:23*), *hearing*, *hearkening*, and (*Isa. 55:2-3*), *inclining of the ear*, an attentive concerned and holily greedy listening to, and taking hold of this offer. It is a

1. Ed. Or: 'with the Word, raises good and strong inclinations within.'^E

cleaving to the Lord, as woodbine or ivy cleaves to an oak, because its life depends on it. And (*Deut. 30; John 24*) it is called a *choosing of the Lord*, and that upon deliberation, as knowing that we have need of him, that he is a Savior suited completely to all the necessities of our souls, and that we are warranted to believe on him.

Commit Yourself To Christ

It is the native act and exercise of faith, to choose Christ among all the wooers that are courting the soul. So likewise it is set out under trusting and committing (*Ps. 37:5*). *Commit thy way to the Lord, trust in him*. Paul says (*2 Tim. 1:12*), *I know he is able to keep that which I have committed to him*. It is to give Christ the credit of your salvation. It is one thing to give a man the credit that he is true, and another thing to concredit him with our greatest concerns; we will credit many, whom we will not thus concredit ourselves to, nor commit our concerns to. The former (when these are applied to God) is historical faith; but this latter is saving faith, when we dare trust and [*trust*] ourselves to him, and to his Word. And we think this expression holds forth as much of the nature of saving faith, as any of the former, if we could take it up, when we dare concredit ourselves to him, because he has said the word. Thus also, to act and exercise faith on him, for temporal, or for spiritual things, it is to expect the event from God, but so, as we expect and look for it on this ground, that Christ has purchased it, and we have accepted him on his offer, which gives us a right to these things needful for us, and purchased by him. It is said when the invitation comes (*Matt. 22:5*), that *some made light of it*; but faith, on the contrary, is a laying weight on it, and a concrediting of ourselves to God on that ground. It is called (*Rom. 6*) *A delivering up of ourselves to the word*, and to him in it; it is even to put a blank¹ in Christ's hand, to be filled up as he pleases.

You see then what you are called to. It is to open to Christ, to come to him, to marry him, to roll yourselves on him, to commit yourselves to him, to give him credit, etc. And is there any of these unreasonable or prejudicial to you? And if they be very reasonable and advantageous (as indeed they are), we would exhort you to come to him, to receive him, to apprehend him, to flee to him, to take hold of him, to marry him, etc. Believe on him, and by believing, be united to him, and get a right to him, and to all his purchase; give him the credit of saving your souls. This we call for from you; and if you do it not, the complaint in the text will stand against you, *Who hath believed our report?*

1. Ed. *Blank* — A blank form to be filled in at the pleasure of the person to whom it is given.

SERMON 5 ON ISAIAH 53:1

Isaiah 53:1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

It is a great matter once to get the gospel brought among a people, and such messengers, as may make the savory report of Jesus Christ unto them; yet this is not all. There is a greater work behind, and that is to get Christ believed on, and to get the report concerning him received by the people to whom it is made; this being the greatest and gravest work of the prophets, and of the ministers of the gospel, and the most eminent, not so much to get a word to say, as to get the Word believed. And this is Isaiah's complaint, that though he himself brought the report concerning Christ, and foresaw many more would bring it, yet that the exercise of faith in these who should hear, it would be very rare.

We spoke of the great thing called for from a people, to whom this gospel comes, and the report of Christ is made; and that is, to believe on him, to receive and rest on him, of whom the report is made: except this be, though there were never so many preachers, and encouragements to preach, though you should flock to the ordinances every day, the ground of complaint will still remain, if there is not saving faith in Jesus Christ, which is the substance of the gospel.

After confirmation of this point, we showed what faith is, from the several names the Scripture gives it; and wherein the exercise of saving faith is held out, all which imply these three: 1. A great hazard and danger that the hearers of the gospel are in. Whether they are sensible of it in such a measure at least, or not, we speak not now; yet they are so really, [as] so much *fleeing, coming, laying hold, apprehending*, etc. insinuates. 2. A fullness and sufficiency in Christ Jesus, held forth to them as the object of their faith, as one that can deliver out of that danger, and can right whatever is wrong. 3. An act, wherein mainly the exercise of faith is held forth, and this is the act of the soul, under that danger and distress, betaking itself to Christ's fullness for help. It is a fleeing from the curse of the law to him, as to the city of refuge; so every name that faith gets, sets out a man acting and moving some way for Christ's remedying the evil, and removing the hazard he is in.

Having spoken a little to this, that faith is the main duty that is called for, we may now follow the exhortation to press you to it; it being to no purpose to speak of Christ, and of faith in him, except he be received. This is

the end of the Word written and taught (*John 20:31*), even to believe in the name of the Son of God, and by believing to receive life in and through him.

And therefore, secondly, seeing this is the main duty called for by the gospel, that by faith you should receive it, and Christ offered in it, we earnestly exhort you to it. It is not so much to this or that particular duty, though these are implied; it is not so much to attendance on ordinances, nor to submission to discipline and censures, though these also are duties that we exhort you to; but it is to obedience to the great command of faith, even to believe on him whom the Father has sent and sealed. It is to receive this gospel, to submit to the righteousness of faith, to open to him that is knocking at the door, to yield to him, and to give him the hand, that by-gone quarrels may be removed, and taken out of the way. Except this be, we profess to you in his name, that you bring not forth the fruit that this gospel calls for from you, and that no less will be acceptable to God, nor taken off your hand by him.

Only Means For Attaining Promise

Branch Three. And to add here the third branch of the *Doctrine*,¹ we say, that no less will do your turn, as a necessary means for attaining the promise, and that which is promised.

Benefits Of A Received Gospel, And What They Are

1. Look to all the promises, whether of pardon of sin, or of peace with God, of joy in the Holy Ghost, of holiness and conformity to God; there is no access to these, or to any of them, but by faith. This is the very proper condition of the covenant of grace, and the door whereby we step into it. And if you think pardon of sin, peace with God, and holiness to be necessary, then this great gospel duty of believing is no less necessary; for the Lord says (*John 3:36*), *He that believeth not is condemned already.*

2. Look to the performance of any duty, or mortification of any lust or idol, and faith is necessary to that (*1 John 3:5*). *It is by faith we obtain victory over the world.* It was by faith, *Heb. 11*, that all the worthies, spoken of there, wrought righteousness, etc.

3. When any duty is done, of whatsoever nature it is, there is no acceptance of it without faith; it is not our praying, or coming to the church, that will make duty to be accepted, but it is faith. *The word profited them not*, says the Apostle (*Heb. 4:2*), *because it was not mixed with faith.* And that faith is necessarily requisite for making the duty acceptable, we may clearly see where it is expressly said (*Heb. 11:6*), *that without faith it is impossible to please God.* And how is it that Abel offers a more excellent sacrifice than Cain? It was nothing surely in Cain's sacrifice itself that made it to be casten

1. Ed. This is Branch Three under Doctrine II as outlined in previous sermons. See page 86 and page 102.

[*cast off*], nor anything in Abel's that made it to be received or acceptable, but faith in the Messiah to come that was found to be in the one, and was missing in the other. Is there not reason then to press this duty on you, and to exhort you not to think this a common and easy thing, though the most part think it to be so? If we look to the benefits of it, to the difficulty of it, and to the rarity of it in the world, there is no duty [that] had need more to be pressed than this, even that Christ Jesus should get the burden of your immortal souls cast on him by his saving faith. I shall therefore, in the further prosecution of this, *first*, show what mainly you would eschew and avoid, as that whereat folk more ordinarily stumble; *secondly*, what it is we would press to, and on what grounds.

Mistakes About The Exercise Of Faith

For the *first*, I know the deceits and mistakes in men about the exercise of faith are so many, that they are more than can well or easily be reckoned up; yet we shall in some generals, spoken of before, hint at a few of them. For so long as you continue in the same snares, they must be still pointed out to you, and endeavors still used to undeceive and extract you out of them.

Beware Of Resting On Doctrinal (Historical) Faith

1. Therefore, beware of resting on a doctrinal faith, which before I called historical. We know it is hard to convince some that they [*lack*] faith, yet we would have you to consider, that it is not every kind of faith, but saving faith, that will do your turn; it is the want of that, which the prophet complains of. And therefore to open this a little, you would consider that there may be really such a faith, as is an assent to the truth of the Word, in a natural man, yea in a reprobate; but that faith will never unite to Christ, nor be waited [*attended*] with the pardon of sin.

Real Faith In The Truth Of The Word Not Saving

(1) I do not say that everyone that is in the visible Church has this doctrinal faith, to believe a heaven and a hell, that the Scripture is the Word of God, and that all that believe in Christ shall get pardon of sin, and life. The carriage (alas!) of many testifies that they have not this much. Whatever fleeting notions they may have of these things, or whatever esteem they may seem to put on the gospel, and whatever profession they may make, that they believe the truth of it, yet in their deeds they deny it. For if there were a fixedness in the doctrinal faith of the gospel in men, they durst not for their souls live as they do.

(2) Neither yet do we say that all they that have this doctrinal faith of the gospel, or somewhat of it, do believe every passage in it alike, but often as they please them, they believe them. Hence, many believe what the Word speaks of mercy, and of pardon of sin, and will not question

that; but what it speaks of holiness, and of the severity of God's reckoning with men for sin, they do not so credit that part of the Word. It is true, where the faith of the one is, the faith of the other will some way be; but because the one agrees better with their corruption than the other, therefore the one is not so received as the other; and it is very frequent with such, to be found diminishing from one place of the Word of God, and adding to another.

(3) Nor do we say that all men do believe that truth of the Word in a like and equal degree. There is in some more knowledge, in some less, in some more convictions, in some fewer; and though we preach to you all, yet there are some that believe not this to be God's ordinance, albeit there are many who will not be saved that take this word to be the Word of God, and believe what is the meaning of it, because the Word itself says it is so. And the reason of this is:

[1] Because there is nothing that is not saving, but a natural man may have it. Now, this doctrinal faith is not saving, and so a natural man may have it, yea, the devils believe and tremble. And James does not dispute with these to whom he writes, on this account, that they believe not this, but tells them that historical faith was not enough. And we think a man in nature may have a great persuasion of the truth of the Word of God, and that which it says will come to pass, and yet still continue but a natural man.

[2] And the second reason is because the Scripture speaks so often of many sorts of faith that are not saving: as *Ex. 14:31, The people believed the Lord*; and, *Ps. 106:12, Then they believed his word, and sang his praise*; and, *John 2:23, Many believed on Christ, to whom he did not commit himself*. There was faith in them which his signs and miracles extorted from them, which was not saving. And [in] *Matt. 13*, two or three such acts of faith that are not saving are spoken in the parable of the sower, however sound they might be in their own kind. And [in] *1 Cor. 13:3*, we have such a faith spoken of, as a man dare not deny the truth of the Word, though he should bring his body to be burnt by his vouching of the same.

The Faith Of Devils

[3] A third reason is because as much credit may be given to the Word, as is given to any other history that is creditably believed; and it is on this ground that we believe there were such men as Caesar, Pompey, Wallace, etc. And it being certain that there may be impressions on the consciences of hearers that this is God's Word, backed with some common work of the Spirit, and that it is generally received to be the Word of God in the part of the world we live in, what wonder is it that folk believe thus, and drink in this historical or doctrinal faith of the Word, so as they may even dare to suffer to death for it; and yet, in the meantime, may [*lack*] saving faith; the devils being as sure as any natural man is, that God is true, and that his

Word will be performed; and therefore they say to Christ, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* The pangs of a natural conscience in men will assure them of a judgment coming, though they tremble to think on it.

Use. And therefore, ere we proceed further, take a word of *Use* from this, and it may let you see the great and very general mistake of the most part of the hearers of the gospel, in resting on this doctrinal faith. If you tell them that they have no faith, they will not by any means take with [*acknowledge*] that. They believe there is a Savior, and that he is God and man, and that such as believe on him shall be saved, and on this they rest. It is such as these, who think they have believed all their days, since ever they had any knowledge; because the Word was always, or very long since, received in the place where they lived, for the Word of God; and they believe it to be so also, and know no difference between believing the Word, and believing on Christ held out in it. Though alas! many of you believe not this much; for if you were among the Jews, you might be soon brought to question the truth of the gospel. But though you had the real faith of the truth of the Word, take not that for saving faith; for as there is a real sorrow, that is not the saving grace of repentance unto life, so there is a sort of real faith, that has a real object, and a real being in the judgment, which yet is not a real closing with Christ, and so not saving faith. As suppose a man, pursued by his enemy, should see a strong castle door standing open, or one in hazard at sea should see dry land, if he should stand still while the enemy were pursuing him, or abide still in the sinking vessel, the sight of the castle door open, or of the dry land, would not save him; so it is not the believing that there is a Savior come into the world to save sinners, that will save, except there be a resting on him as he is held out in the Word of the gospel.

Historical faith is only (as it were) a looking on the Savior; but saving faith grips to him, and rests on him. Historical faith looks on Christ, but acts not on him, closes not with him; and therefore such as have it only, and no more, sink and perish without getting good of him. We would think it a great matter to get many of you as far on in believing as the devil is, who believes and trembles; the little trembling that is, shows that there is but little of the historical faith. Yet, as I have often said, this is not all. You may have this, and yet, if you halt there, you will certainly perish, if you were never so confident to be saved.

The Apostle does well distinguish these (*Heb. 11:6*). *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Where these two are presupposed: (1) believing that God is, or has a being; and (2) believing that his promise is sure and sicker [*firm*]; that he is faithful that has promised, and will make his Word good. (3) And then on both these follows a coming to him, as a rewarder of diligent seekers of him. The first two take in historical faith. For to believe that God is, is natural;

and to believe that God is faithful in his promise, may be in natural men. But to come to him, to get the hazard that the soul is in, removed through Jesus Christ, is a thing few do attain.

This then is the *first* thing we would be aware of, not aware to believe the truth of the Word, but to be aware of resting on it as saving faith. It is not enough to look on Christ, and to grant that it is he, but the man must never be satisfied till he get himself rolled on Christ, and the weight of his salvation and peace laid on him in His own way.

Mistakes About Justifying Faith

2. The *second* thing you would beware of, is some common and quickly transient work, on the affections, that may accompany historical faith; whether the affection of grief, or the affection of joy be stirred thereby, both are unsafe to be rested on, when we can't prove our resting on Christ, or where there is no relevant ground to prove it by. Though you should tremble as Felix did, and be under alarming convictions of conscience and fears of your hazard, or though you should be affected with joy, as the temporary believer may be, and sometimes is, what will that profit you? It is a great mistake to take some small work on the affections, which at the best is but an effect of historical faith, for a saving work of the Spirit. Or (2) If it is not an effect of historical faith, it is an effect of a challenge of conscience, and smiting of the heart, as in Saul, who could say to David [1 Sam. 24:17], *Thou art more righteous than I, my son David*. Or (3) It is some common work of the Spirit, such as was in Simon Magus, of whom it is said, *He believed*, and who could say, *Pray for me* [Acts 8:13, 24]. For folks to conclude on this ground, that they are brought out of nature into a state of grace, is to build upon a sandy foundation.

The Apostle speaks of worldly sorrow, as well as of godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10); and as there may be a worldly sorrow, so there may be carnal joy, a piece of fainness [*gladness*], to speak so, in prayer, or at hearing of a preaching, or at a communion, which is not saving faith. Some hear the Word with joy (Matt. 13:20), who yet *endure not*; and John Baptist's hearers rejoiced in his light for a season; even as a sick man, who hearing (as we hinted before) that a physician, who is skillful and able to cure him, is come to town, he grows fain in the contemplation of a cure of his disease; but here is the stick, when the physician tells the man that he must be so and so abstemious [*abstinent*], and keep himself under such a strict diet, he dow [*can*] not abide that, and so all his joy vanishes.

There is something like this in temporary faith, where some remote expectation of salvation will cause a carnal joy and fainness. But when it comes to this, that a man is called to quit his lusts, or his estate, or in the world to undergo trouble and persecution for the gospel, *by and by he is offended*. He thinks (to say so), 'a fowl in his hand is worth two flying;' and therefore,

when the storm blows in his teeth, he turns his back, and runs away. Especially we will find this to be with men in sickness. They will have mints [*intentions*] at seriousness, and sometimes flashes of sorrow under convictions and challenges, and sometimes flashes of joy, that will vanish when they come to health again. When we speak of some common work on the affections, we would take in liberty, and some warmth or spirit in prayer, which, no question, even unrenewed men may find more at one time than another; as when they are in some great hazard or strait, they will be more than ordinarily serious in that duty, and yet that may be but an effect of nature. This proves a great stumbling and neck break to many, that they think that are well enough, if now and then they get utterance in prayer, as sometimes they will get words beyond what they expected; and when, upon reflecting, they find that they have been in earnest, though it has been but with moral seriousness, that blows [*puffs*] them up. So they put prayer in the place of saving faith, and when they pray with warmth, they row [*trust*] they believe, when in the meantime they never knew what it was in good earnest to lay themselves over on Christ Jesus. Therefore, when we invite you to believe, this is another thing we would bid you beware of, that you put not a flash of sense in the room of faith.

A Covenant Of Works Not To Be Made A Covenant Of Grace

3. There is yet a more subtle, though no less dangerous mistake, that you would beware of, and that is when faith is confounded with obedience, and is looked on in justification as a piece of new obedience, with love, repentance, and other duties of holiness. So some think they believe, because they have some natural awe of God in their walk, and some fear of sin, and do perform some duties of religion, and walk honestly, as they think, according to the rule. Which is to confound the covenants of works and of grace, and to make the covenant of works a covenant of grace, or to run the covenant of grace into a covenant of works — only with this difference: that though their works are not perfect, but defective, yet wherein they are defective, they think there is worth in their faith to make up that want, and to supply that defect. And so, by faith they think they will obtain the acceptance of their works, and of their persons on account of their works. They look upon their works as pleasing to God, but because they are not perfect they will believe, or exercise faith, to make up their defects; to which the way of grace is quite contrary, which makes the tree first good, and then the fruit. This way that many take, is not to draw the evidences of believing from works of holiness, which is warrantable; but the founding of faith, or their hope of heaven, on works. And the use they make of their faith, is to ward off challenges for the imperfection of their works, and to make faith procure acceptance (as I just now said) to their works, and acceptance to their person for their works' sake.

A False Hope And Assurance, What They Are

4. Beware of that which you ordinarily call certain assurance, or sure knowledge of your salvation, and that all the promises are yours, whereby you think yourselves in no hazard; a hope and assurance of heaven that you can give no ground for, nor proof of; only you think you are sure of pardon of sin, and coming to heaven, and that you are obliged to maintain that groundless hope. But that is not saving faith, for it is a hope of heaven that can give you no right to Christ; there must first be a fleeing to him, and closing with him, before you can have any true and well grounded hope of heaven. But your hope and confidence is never to question the matter; you are like Laodicea, who thought herself rich, and to stand in need of nothing, when she was beggarly poor; or like these men, who, when God was threatening them with judgment, yet would needs presume to think that they leaned on the Lord.

I think, among all the persons that God had indignation against, it is in a special manner against these who have this sort of hope, and to whom God discovers the groundlessness of it, and yet they will still stoutly maintain, and stand fast by their hope. It is to these he speaks who despise and tush at God's threatening, and say (*Deut. 26:16*), *We shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our own hearts, and add drunkenness to thirst.* The Lord there pronounces a curse, and to the curse adds an oath, that he will not spare such persons, but will separate them for evil, and cause all the curses of the law to overtake them. Judge you now, what a condition this is for persons to be in, to be believing that all the promises are theirs, and yet, instead of that, to be (in the meantime) liable to all the curses threatened in the Word of God; it is this that we call *presumption*, and *hope of the hypocrite that will perish* (*Job 8:13*). The confidence of such shall be rejected and swept away as a spider's web, and shall be rooted out of their tabernacles, and bring them to the king of terrors. They think they believe always; when they are not troubled nor disquieted, they never [*lack*] faith, but have a great deal of it: which yet is but a guessing which cannot support and uphold them when they come to a strait. When they are more secure, they believe very well, and they think when they are more wakened and disquieted, they believe less, and their fancied faith ebbs quite on them. When they hear of any exercise of mind or trouble of conscience in others, they wonder that they will not believe, and all this work is to maintain their deep security and strong delusion.

This then is the *fourth* thing you would beware of, for it is not the faith that will turn away the complaint, *Who hath believed our report?* and yet how many are there of this sort, who say they shall have peace, and please themselves with this their good hope, say the Word what it will. O! be persuaded, that this is nothing else but woeful unbelief and presumption; and we preach to you terror and the curse of God, though you cry peace

to yourselves. The Lord complains of such persons (*Jer. 5:12*) saying, *they believed the Lord*; he sent his prophets to denounce judgments in the days of Josiah when there was a fair profession of religion and reformation, yet they would believe and hope that no evil should overtake them.

Marks Of True Faith Laid Down

[*Secondly*] That which we aim at in this part of the *Use*, is to make way for what follows, even to give you a clean ground for exercising of faith on Jesus Christ, when all these stumblings and mistakes are rolled out of the way. We therefore exhort you to lay your hand to your heart, and narrowly to try, if you have called or accounted any of these to be saving faith; for there are hundreds, nay thousands, that perish under these pretexes, deceiving themselves, and deluding others, with a faith they were born and brought up with, and they have no more but their groundless hope to prove their faith by, and that they will stick by it, be said to them what will. But be not deceived, for God will discover you. You think a strong presumption is faith, and that you can by such a faith, drink in the promises; but God will make you vomit them up, and you shall be declared to be void of faith in the great day. Therefore be more jealous over your faith, and seek to have your grips of Christ sickered [*secured*], which is done, when from the belief of your hazard and self emptiness, and of Christ's fullness, you go to him, and close with him, to make up all you [*lack*] in him; and this faith is especially qualified by the accounts on which we go to him, and rest on him. Even as a conscientious duty is that which flows from a command, as obedience to it, so one of the main things that qualifies this faith, is a receiving Christ as Christ, or as he is held out in the gospel. Which is therefore well put in the description given of faith in the *Catechism*;¹ and it is called *a believing on him whom the Father hath sent*, which is not to believe on Christ simply, but as he is held out in the Word of the gospel.

Presumption may look on Christ and his fullness, and few or none will readily dare to give him a direct and down-right refusal, or to reject him professedly and avowedly, when they hear of such happiness that is to be had in him. But that which we say qualifies faith, is to desire, receive and embrace him, according as he is held out in the gospel, *for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* (2 Cor. 1:30), when he is lippeded [*trusted*] to with an eye to the promise, and when that, which makes us rest on him, is the Word of God. For though Christ is the material object of faith, yet the Word is the formal object whereby we get a right to him; and there is no gripping or getting hold of Christ, but in, and according to his Word.

Antinomians Mistake True Faith

And therefore the generality of people (who, on the matter, take the

1. Ed. *Westminster Shorter Catechism* Q&A 86.

Antinomian way) think they have no more to do, but to apply Christ, and to count him their own at the very first; but through their not exercising faith on the Word of promise, they miss him. This is, as I have said, a main qualification of saving faith, even to rest on Christ as he is held out in the Word, and by the Word to take hold of him, and rest upon him. Saving faith does not simply rest on Christ, because he is merciful and has all fullness in him, but it rests on him and his fullness, as received in the Word, and offered by God in his Word. Faith takes God's faithfulness in his Word, and lays hold on him by that. Christ is the thing that makes happy; but God's faithful promise is the right by which we get a title to that thing. We would never love nor like of that faith, that knows not the use of the Word; that betakes itself to Christ, or the thing in the Word, but meddles not nor has any dealing with the Word that holds them out; when as it is only this Word that gives us warrant to expect that his fullness shall be made forthcoming for our up-making, and for the supply of all our needs. Many desire and expect good of God, but get it not, because their expectation is not founded on his Word, and God's faithfulness in his Word is not closed withal.

In a word, I would have you to think, that faith is neither an easy, nor an insuperably difficult thing, but that it is easy to go wrong, and difficult to go right; and that, without God's special and powerful guiding, you cannot believe, nor exercise faith, nor walk in the way of believing in him, and dependence on him; [so]^E that you may be helped to make a right use of Christ, and to build upon him, that you may not slip nor stumble, and fall on the stumbling stone laid in Zion, on which so many fall every day, and break themselves to pieces.

SERMON 6 ON ISAIAH 53:1

Isaiah 53:1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

If it were not recorded in the infallible Scriptures of truth, we would hardly believe that there could be so much powerful and sweet preaching of the most excellent instruments that ever were employed, and yet that there should be so little fruit following on it. Who would believe that Isaiah, so excellent, so sweet, and so evangelic a prophet, should have preached so many pleasant, plain, and powerful sermons to a people from the Lord, and yet that he should have so many sad complaints as he has (*Isa. 6, 28, 58*)? And that he should be put to bring in the Lord saying, *All the day long*

have I stretched out my hands to a rebellious people (*Isa. 65:2*), and that here he should have it to say, *Who hath believed our report?* It is scarce one man here or there that has savingly believed on Christ. And this is the third thing in the words, that now we would speak to; and it is a very sad, though a very clear truth.

The Complaint: The Gospel Generally Not Believed

III. *Doctrines*. The doctrine is this,¹ that there may be much powerful preaching of the gospel, and yet unbelief generally among the hearers of it. Or, take it with dependence on the former two, namely: 1. That the great work of the ministry is to propose and make Christ known to a people. 2. That the great duty of a people, that have Christ proposed to them, is the believe on him. 3. Then this follows on the back of these, that a people may have Christ proposed to them, brought to their heart and mouth, and though it is but believing that is called for from them, yet that cannot be obtained from most of them. This gospel duty of believing is often slighted by the hearers of the gospel. This is clearly held forth here: *Who hath believed our report?* 'We have called for faith, but it is a rare thing, among the multitude of hearers, to get one that believes savingly.'

To make out, and prove this a little further, we would consider this complaint, with these aggravations of it, which will make it the more clear, and so the more to be wondered at.

Complained Of God's People

1. These of whom the complaint is made; it is not heathens, but God's own people, as the Lord complains (*Ps. 8:10-11*), *My people would not hearken to my voice and Israel would have none of me*. Our Lord Jesus complains of Jerusalem [in] *Matt. 23:37*, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not!* That the Lord's own professing people should not believe, nor receive the report that is made of him, heightens the complaint, and aggravates their guilt exceedingly.

The Complaint Frequent

2. It is not a complaint as to one sermon, or as to one time; but it is a complaint frequently repeated, as to many fruitless sermons, and as to many times, yea generations. Isaiah preached long, in many Kings' reigns; and yet all along in his prophecy he complains of it: as (*Isa. 6:11*), *How long, Lord, shall their eyes be blind, and their ears heavy?* etc; and (*Isa. 28:9*), *Whom shall I teach doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast; precept must be on precept, and line upon line, here a little, and there a little;* and (*Isa. 65:2*), *All day long I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious people;* and here again, *Who hath believed our report?* Much and long, or many

1. Ed. See the outline given in Sermon I on page 86.

years' preaching, much plain and powerful preaching, and yet little or no fruit; *they are snared and taken, and fall backward*, for all that. And this was not in Isaiah's days only, but in Christ's days (*John 12: 37-38*), and in Paul's days (*Rom. 10:16*), where the same very words in the text are repeated. Nay, it runs down from the first spreading of the gospel, even to these latter days wherein we live; many hear, but few receive the report.

Many Complained Of

3. Consider how many they are that complain. It is not one or two, or a few, but all the preachers of the gospel; it is not, 'Lord, who hath believed *my* report;' but, 'who hath believed *our* report?' It is complained of by Isaiah here, and in several other places named before. It is complained of by Micah (*Mic. 7:1*). *Woe is me, for I am as they who have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage, there is no cluster to eat, the good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men*, etc. It is complained of by Hosea (*Hos. 11:7*), *though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him*, that is, none would give him the glory of his grace in believing on him. Ah sad word! As is that also in *Ps. 81:11*, the Lord calls, *Hear, O my people, and I will testify to thee; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it: but my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me*. And what prophet is there almost (if I need say almost) but has one way or other this complaint, that though the Lord stretched out his hands all day long, yet it was to a rebellious and gainsaying people.

Look forward, and see what our Lord says of John Baptist, and of himself, *Whereto shall I liken this generation? it is like children sitting in the market-places, saying one to another, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not lamented* [*Matt. 11:16-17*]. That is, there is much preaching of men endowed with several gifts, but none of them does the people much good. John preached with much holy austerity, like one mourning; the Son of Man most sweetly, like one piping; yet neither the one nor the other prevailed. There are some Boanerges, sons of thunder, alarming and thundering preachers; some Barnabasses, sons of consolation, sweetly comforting preachers; yet all gain but little on the hearers. Our Lord says (*Matt. 23:37*), *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you!* This is the ordinary complaint: *Ye would not*.

The Preachers Who Meet With This Unbelief

4. A fourth aggravation is, if we consider who they are that meet with this unbelief and unfruitfulness in them they preach to. If it were poor cold-rife [*cold; unfeeling*] preachers, such as we (alas!) in a great measure are, or such as the Scribes and the Pharisees were, or if it were they who had learning only, and not piety, it were not so great matter to see them meet with unbelief and unfruitfulness in their hearers. But it is even these whom the

Lord sent and sharpened, as arrows out of his quiver, as this prophet was; it is even his preaching that is fruitless in a great measure. And was there ever a more sweet, plain, powerful, and delectable preacher than Isaiah was? That even the very reading of his preachings may affect the readers. Yet is there any that complains more, or so much as he does, in the chapters before cited? It is likely you will think, that if Isaiah were preaching now, he would be as a stone, that would not be moved thereby, and yet his preaching got the same return and entertainment that ours gets now; and Hosea called his hearers to the Most High, yet none at all would exalt him. It was their work to stretch out their hands all the day long, but they hardened their necks, and refused to return (*Jer. 8; Zech. 7*).

New Testament Preachers Complained As Well

5. But fifthly, consider all these are servants and preachers under the Old Testament, and you may be disposed to think, that under the gospel, when the veil is laid by, and when Christ himself, their Lord and Master, and his apostles come to preach the gospel, it should be otherwise. Yet John the Baptist, who was Christ's harbinger, who was a burning and a shining light, a stayed and fixed man, not a reed shaken with the wind (as many of us much are), a prophet, yea, more than a prophet; yet, when he preached, many of his hearers rejected the counsel of God against themselves (*Luke 7:30*). John comes preaching austerely, and they say he has a devil; and if there was any rejoicing in his light, it was but for a season. And Paul that chosen vessel, how often was he persecuted? And he has the same complaint, in the same words that Isaiah has here of his hearers, especially the Jews (*Acts 13:46; 28:28*), and was constrained to tell them that he and his fellow preachers behoved to quit them, and betake themselves to the Gentiles. And how he complains of the Corinthians and Galatians and of their being bewitched, and suddenly seduced, and drawn away from the truth and simplicity of the gospel, by some self-seeking low [*false*]^E ministers, coming with a counterfeit glancing¹ among them.

Christ Himself Met With Unbelief

We shall close this with the consideration of our Lord Jesus, who was a nonesuch preacher, of whom it is said (*Matt. 7:29*), that *He spake with power, and not as the scribes*, and (*Luke 4:22*), when he is opening that sweet text (*Isa. 61: 1-3*), it is said, *They all wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth*; and the officers that came to take him, say that *never man spake as he spake* [*John 7:46*]; and yet this same is his complaint (*Matt. 23:37*), *How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not!* And it is said (*John 1:11*), *He came to his own, and is own received him not*. Chorazin, Bethsaida

1. Ed. *Glancing* — To allude or refer to obliquely or in passing, usually by way of censure or satire (*OED*); i.e. they were, in an oblique manner, falsely criticizing Paul.

and Capernaum were lifted up to heaven by the Lord's preaching to them in person; and yet woe after woe is denounced against them, because they believed not, for all his preaching and miracles. And it is a wonder, if we look through the history of the gospel, how many a sweet preaching he had, and with what weight and power he spoke, and sometimes with tears, and withal backed his word with miracles, that made his hearers acknowledge the finger of God; and yet how few were brought to believe on him? So that he was put to take up this very complaint of Isaiah here (*John 12:38*). Is it not a wonder, when he and his apostles have preached so much, and so long, that the Church is so little a flock, and that believers are so few in number, even after his ascension? Need we any further proof, that the gospel, where it comes, gets but little welcome? The carriage of many among ourselves is a sad proof of it; for we are afraid that many of you do not believe to this day, though there has been amongst you, much, long or many years, powerful preaching of the gospel, but are still living without faith, and perishing.

If this is not enough to clear the *Doctrine*: 1. See how Christ speaks of it in the parable of the sower of the seed (*Matt. 13*), where there are three sorts of ground that never bring forth good fruit; and there he speaks not only of the time of his own personal ministry, but of all times.

2. Look to the ordinary and daily effect, or rather consequence, of this preached gospel, and it will prove it. Do not many perish? Do not many crowd thick in the broad way that leads to destruction? Do not but very few fruits of faith appear? Is there not little, lamentably little, real change in the way and walk of most to be seen? To clear it yet further, go through the several ranks of persons, that in God's account are unbelievers, and lay them by. O! There will be exceeding few sound believers in Christ. (1) Then lay by the grossly profane, that are never so much as civilized. (2) The ignorant, stupid, and senseless, that never have mind they have souls, are never feared for wrath, nor in the least exercised to make their peace with God. (3) The earthly minded, that mind no other thing save the world. (4) These of a civil outward carriage, that have some good works, and as they think, good days too, and yet come not near Christ to close with him. (5) The hypocrites, and that of all sorts; both the presuming hypocrites, that will thank God they are better than their neighbors, and yet [*trusf*] not to Christ, and free grace through him, but seek to establish their own righteousness, gross as it is; and the legal hypocrites, that never denied their own righteousness, nor submitted to the righteousness of Christ. Lay aside all these, I say, and we leave it to your own consciences to judge, how few will be found to have saving faith. And therefore I am persuaded, if there is any truth of God delivered to you, that this is a truth, that though the gospel is preached to many, yet there are but few hearers of it, that do actually believe in Jesus Christ, to the saving of their souls.

Use One. The first use of it is, to beseech you to let this sink deep into your minds, as the truth of God, for these reasons:

1. Because it is a most useful truth; and if it were believed, it would make folks very watchful over themselves, and to tremble for fear lest they be found among the multitude that believe not; and put them to secure and sicker [*make firm*] their interest in God, and not to rest on a fashion and form of religion, without observing what fruit follows on the gospel. Among the many evils that undo not a few, we think this is not the least, that this truth is never thoroughly fixed in them. They think there are many heathens and Turks without [*outside*] the Church, and many gross swearers, drunkards, and other such within it, that will perish; but none others, or at least, that they are but very few, who among a professing people perish. Neither can they be induced to think it is such a hard matter, to get one, or a very few that are believers in a countryside. So that, if Isaiah were now alive to cry, *Who believes our report?* each of them would be ready to answer, 'I believe.'

2. Because, for as certain and useful a truth as this is, yet generally it is not believed; folks cannot think that so few believe, and that believing is so difficult and rare a thing. I would ask you this question, 'Was it ever a difficulty to any of you to believe?' If not, what is it that makes believing so rare? What should move the prophet thus to complain, *Who hath believed our report?*

I shall shortly give you some evidences that many of you do not really believe this truth.

Evidence Many Do Not Believe This Truth That Few Believe The Gospel

(1) The first is that so few of you tremble at the Word of God. The historical faith that the devils have, makes them tremble, but you have not that much. This is given as a property of a suitable hearer of the gospel, to whom the Lord will look (*Isa. 66:1-2*), that he is one who trembles at the Word. But the most part of you that hear this gospel, are like these pillars on which this house stands, who are never so much as once moved at the word. You either take not faith to be an absolutely necessary thing, and that you cannot but perish without it, or you think that the faith you were born with will do your turn. You do not believe that you are naturally under the power of the devil, and led captive by him at his will, and that without holiness, and a spiritual gracious frame and stamp on your heart and way, you shall never see God. What wonder then, that you come not to rest on Christ, when the very letter of the gospel is not credited.

(2) A second evidence is that there is so little preparation made to prevent your eternal hazard. It is said of Noah (*Heb. 11:7*), that *Noah, being warned of God, prepared an ark*; and this is attributed to his faith. It is not possible that you would live so negligently and carelessly, if you believed that the curse of God were pursuing you, and that you will be brought to reckon for that which you have done in the body, and that you will meet with God

as an enemy. If this were believed, though your hearts were harder than they are, it would make you tremble and put you to other sort of thoughts and seriousness.

(3) A third evidence is that there is no fruit of faith among many of you; for where it is, it will not be got altogether smothered, but will [*appear*] and show itself one way or other. And if you will still assert your faith, I would say to you, as James does to these to whom he writes, *show me your faith by your works*. If you shall say, ‘God knows;’ I answer, that you shall find that to be a truth, that he knows, and he will make you know that he does so. But alas! That poor shift will not avail you, when it comes to the push. O try your faith then by your works, see what mortification of lusts, what repentance from dead works, what growth in knowledge, what shining of holiness in your conversation, is attained to. Many of you, as to your very knowledge, are as if you lived among heathens, many of whom have been as free of vice, and more profitable to others, than many of you are, and cared as little for the world as many of you do.

How comes it to pass then that you have lived as if you could have faith, and yet have no fruit? You must either say, that faith is not necessary, or that you may have faith without fruit; for we are sure your fruit is not the fruit of faith. To live honestly as you call it — what is that? There are many heathens who have gone beyond you in that. We will not say that moral honesty is nothing, but surely it is not all. All the fruits of mere moral honesty, are but sour fruits, that will set your teeth on edge. Neither is it your hearing of the Word only, but your believing and doing of it, that will profit you. It is very sad that most plain obvious duties are not at all followed, as the studying of knowledge, the exercising of repentance (one of the very first duties, which is never separated from faith), the humbling of the soul before God, the loathing of yourselves for all you have done, the love of God, etc. For there may be challenges for gross evils in heathens; and fear is not repentance, but godly sorrow, that causes repentance not to be repented of.

(4) A fourth evidence is the [*lack*] of that work of God’s Spirit that accompanies faith. Faith is a special work of the Spirit, and the gracious gift of God; it is wrought by the exceeding mighty power of God, whereby he raised Christ from the dead, and by that same power he works in them that believe. Now, knew you ever what this work meant? Found you it ever to be a difficult work to believe? Knew you ever what it was to have the Spirit of God constraining your heart to believe? I speak not of any extraordinary thing; but certainly, faith is not natural, nor comes from pure nature; and wherever it is, it manifests itself by works, and evidences the power of the Spirit in the working thereof.

There are some sad evidences of, and bitter fruits that spring from this root, to wit, folks being strangers to the experimental knowledge of the work of faith; as:

[1] When men know no more difficulty to get Christ, and to rest on Christ, than to believe a story of Wallace or of Julius Caesar.

[2] When folks say that they believed all their days, and believed always since ever they knew good by ill; and though their faith is no true saving faith, but a guessing, yet they will not quit it; yea, it is impossible for men to get them convinced that they [*lack*] faith.

[3] When men never knew what it is to be without faith; it is one of the great works of the Spirit (*John 16:8*), to convince of the want of faith; folks will be easily convinced, that breach of the Sabbath, that stealing, that bearing false witness, etc, are sins, where the special work of the Spirit is not; but how many of you have been convinced of the want of faith? We are constrained to say this sad word, when we look on this text, that it is lamentably fulfilled in your eyes, and in this our congregation. Think not that we wrong such of you who have believed our report; Ah! it is few, even very few of you, that receive and believe this gospel.

Application To Hearers In Glasgow

Use Two. The second use is for conviction. If it is ordinary of the great part of the hearers of the gospel not to believe, let it sink in you hearts, that it is no extraordinary thing that has befallen you. Are you not such hearers, as many of these were who heard Isaiah and Jesus Christ? And if so, will not this follow, that there are many, yea, even the thick and throng of the hearers of the gospel, that believe not, and who, if Christ were gathering sinners by this preached gospel, would not be gathered? If where the gospel comes, many do not believe, then here in this city, where the gospel is preached to a great multitude of professing members of the visible Church, there are readily many that do not believe. Or, let me ask of you a reason why you do except yourselves; either this truth holds not so universally, or many of you must fall under it. The truth which Isaiah preached, has been preached to you, and yet you remain unbelieving, and despisers of the invitation to the marriage of the King's Son, as the Jews did. We are not now speaking of Jews, Turks, nor heathens, nor of the churches is general, nor of other congregations, but of you in Glasgow, that have this gospel preached amongst you; and we say of you, that there are few that believe our report. Think it not our word; the application flows natively from the text, not from necessity of the thing, but from the ordinary course of men's corruption. Are not the same evidences of the want of faith, which we spoke of, among you? How many are there [who] in their life [are] profane? How many rest on civility and formality? Is there not as little repentance now, as was in Isaiah's time? As little denying of our own righteousness, and making use of Christ's; though the Word is taught by line upon line, here a little, and there a little? It may be, though you think that the doctrine is true in the general, you will not, you cannot digest the application, that among so many of you visible professors of faith, there are

but few real believers; therefore we shall follow the conviction a little further, by giving you some considerations, to make it out, that we have but too just ground to make application of the doctrine to you, especially considering the abounding of corruption that is amongst you, that you may be put to fear the wrath that attends sin, and to flee to Christ, for refuge, in time.

1. Consider of whom it is that the prophet is speaking, and of what time. Is it not the times and days of the gospel? Had not the Spirit (in dictating this text of Scripture) an eye on Scotland, and on Glasgow? And do not our Lord Jesus Christ and Paul, apply it in their days? And why then may not we also in ours? And when the Spirit speaks expressly of the last times, that they shall be perilous, and of the falling away of many, should it not give us the hotter alarm?

2. Do not all things agree to us, as to them? Is not this gospel the same? Is our preaching any better than theirs? Nay, had they not much more powerful preaching? And if that preaching, which was much more powerful, had not efficacy, as to many, to work faith in them, what may we expect to do by our preaching? Are not your hearts as deceitful? Are not your corruptions as strong? Are you not as bent to backsliding, as they were? What sort of folk were they, that were unfruitful hearers? Were they not members of the visible Church as you are, circumcised under the Old Testament, as you are baptized under the New? Was it not those who had Christ and his apostles preaching to them? Yea, they were not among the more ignorant sort, who did not believe, but Scribes and Pharisees, and these not of the [most] profane sort only, but such as came to church, and attended on ordinances, as you do; yea, were such as had gifts, and cast out devils, and preached in Christ's name, as you may see [in] *Luke 13:6*.

Now, when there are so many, and of such ranks, who get no good of the Word, and of such, a great many that will seek to enter, and shall not be able, to whom Christ will say, 'depart, I know you not, you workers of iniquity;' what can be the reason that many of you do so confidently assert your faith, when there are scarcely any characters of unbelief, but you have them? Or, what can be your advantage in keeping yourselves carnally secure, when the strong man in the meantime is in the house? And to shut your eyes, and make your necks stiff, and to resolve, as it were, not only to lie still, but to die in your unbelief? I persuade myself that many of you, ere long, will be made to wonder that ever you thought yourselves believers, and will be galled when you think upon it, that whatever was said to you, you would needs maintain your presumptuous faith. When we bid you suffer the conviction to sink, let none put it from themselves to others, but let everyone take it home to himself; although we would not have any of you casting loose what is indeed made fast and well secured, nor overturning a slender and weak building, though it were, to speak so, but of two stone height, if it is founded on a right foundation, on the rock. But

we speak to you that cannot be brought to suspect yourselves, when you have just reason to do so.

Surely, this challenge and charge belongs to some, yea to many, and we would ask what ground have you to shift it? How can you prove your faith more than others that have none at all? That you hope you have faith, will not do your turn; that is no solid proof. You cannot come to Christ, except made suitably sensible of your distance; and of that you have never been convinced as yet. Do you think to roll yourselves on Christ sleeping, and you knew not how? Certainly, when the pins of your tabernacle come to be a-loosing, you shall find that your fancied faith shall not be able to keep out a challenge. You could never endure to think yourselves to be Christ's enemy, or that you [*lacked*] faith; but when death comes, conscience will awaken, and the challenge will needs [*necessarily*] be in upon you, whether you will or not. Many of you think that you get wronged, when your faith is questioned or reproved, as if it were an odd and rare thing to be graceless, or to be living as members of the visible Church, and yet [*lack*] faith; and it irritates you to be expostulated with in private for your lying in unbelief. But suffer this word now to take hold of you, I beseech you. And if you could once be brought to suspect yourselves, and to think thus with yourselves: 'What if I be one of those many that believe not? I fear I am in hazard to be mistaken about my faith' — and from that, put to follow on to see how you will be able to ward off the challenge, and to prove your believing to be sound, we would think you were far on. O if you had the faith of this truth, that among the many hearers of the gospel, there are but few that believe, and were brought thereby to examine and try yourselves! There is no truth that Christ insists more on than this, that *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way to heaven, and that but few find it* [*Matt. 7:14*]; and that there are few that believe, and few that are saved. If you did once in earnest look on yourselves as in hazard, and were brought to reflect on matters between God and you, it might be the Lord would follow the conviction. We desire him to do it, and to him be praise.

SERMON 7 ON ISAIAH 53:1

Isaiah 53:1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

It is a sad matter, and much to be lamented, when the carrying of such good news, as is the report of Jesus Christ in the gospel, becomes unprofitable to them that hear it, and thereby burdensome to them that carry it.