
*COLLECTED SERMONS
OF JAMES DURHAM*

THE SERMONS OF JAMES DURHAM

Collected Sermons of James Durham: Sixty-one Sermons (2017)

Collected Sermons of James Durham: Seventy-two Sermons on Isaiah 53 (2017)

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OF JAMES DURHAM

Christ Crucified: or, The Marrow of the Gospel

IN

SEVENTY-TWO SERMONS ON THE
FIFTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF ISAIAH

Edited by
Chris Coldwell

*The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the
pure are pleasant words. Proverbs 15:26.*

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Proverbs 25:11.

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Abbreviations

<i>Collections and Observations</i>	Walter Steuart of Pardovan, <i>Collections and Observations Methodiz'd: Concerning the worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland</i> (Edinburgh: Anderson, 1709).
DNB	<i>The Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. Leslie Stephen. 63 volumes (New York and London: 1885–1900).
DSL	Dictionary of the Scots Language. http://www.dsl.ac.uk/ .
Jamieson	John Jamieson, John Longmuir, and David Donaldson. <i>An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language: To Which Is Prefixed, a Dissertation on the Origin of the Scottish Language. New Ed., Carefully Rev. and Collated, with the Entire Suppl. Incorporated</i> (Paisley: A. Gardner, 1879–87).
McClintock and Strong	<i>Cyclopaedia of Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical literature</i> , ed. John McClintock and James Strong (New York: Harper, 1867–1881).
Muller, <i>Dictionary</i>	Richard A. Muller, <i>Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology</i> (Baker, 1996).
NPNF2	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series</i> , ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1890–1900).
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , series Latina, ed. J. P. Migne. 217 volumes (Petit-Montrouge: Apud J.-P. Migne, 1844–1855). Citations are from the original Migne printing; the Garnier reprint may vary.
Rutherford's <i>Letters</i>	<i>Letters of Samuel Rutherford</i> , edited by Andrew A. Bonar (Edinburgh & London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1891).
<i>Trial & Triumph</i>	Samuel Rutherford, <i>The Trial and Triumph of Faith</i> (1645; Edinburgh: Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1845).
<i>Synopsis Criticorum</i>	Matthew Poole, <i>Synopsis Criticorum aliorumque Sacrae Scripturae interpretum</i> , 5 vols. (1669–76; Frankfurt: Wustius, 1678–79).
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . 121 volumes (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau and H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1883–2009).
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism, in <i>The Confession of Faith; the Larger and Shorter Catechisms</i> (Johnstone and Hunter: 1855).

EDITOR'S PREFACE

SCOTTISH PRESBYTERIANISM in the Seventeenth Century had many bright and shining lights. Of these, James Durham (1622–1658), who shone brilliantly but briefly, ranks alongside the greatest of his generation, for his theological depth, faithful preaching, and particularly for his moderate spirit at a time when such was in scarce supply.¹ Except for a short stint as chaplain to King Charles II, he ministered diligently in Glasgow, preaching mostly in the Inner-Kirk of Glasgow Cathedral. It was thought that he poured so much of himself into this work, that it brought about his early death at the age of thirty-six, after an all-too-brief ministry of ten years.² Yet his sermons and expositions left an impression that lasted for centuries, and are still worthwhile reading today.

Of the publications of James Durham, George Christie writes: “The writings of ‘Judicious Durham’ claim a place in Scottish Bibliography simply owing to their great popularity. His books were constantly read for almost two centuries. Twenty-six printing-presses in eight towns of Scotland, England, and Holland were occupied with them; in each decade between his death and the beginning of the nineteenth century at least one of his books was printed. . . . Not one of them, however, was published during his lifetime . . . it was through the loving care of his widow and her brother-in-law,

1. During much of Durham's ministry, the Church of Scotland was divided by the Protester-Resolutioner controversy. For information covering this period, see the introductions in *Consultations of the Ministers of Edinburgh, 1652–1657*, ed. William Stephen (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1921); *Johnston of Warriston's Diary*, vol. 2, ed. David Hay Fleming (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1919); vol. 3, ed. D. Ogilvie (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1940); and see J. Ogilvie, “A bibliography of the Resolutioner-Protester controversy, 1650–1659,” *Transactions of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* (1930) 14.57–86. For a recovered history from various records long overlooked, see Kyle D. Holfelder, *Factionalism in the Kirk during the Cromwellian Invasion and Occupation of Scotland, 1650 to 1660: The Protester-Resolutioner Controversy*, Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Edinburgh (1998). For more on Durham's life and works, see the introduction in *Collected Sermons of James Durham: Sixty-one Sermons*.

2. Durham was ordained on December 2, 1647 to the Blackfriars church. He died June 25, 1658. A *Life* of the author affixed to several editions of his works is included in this volume.

Mr. John Carstairs of Glasgow, that his Sermons and Expositions were edited and published.”³

The published works of James Durham are:

1. *A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation* (1658).
2. *A Treatise Concerning Scandal* (1659).
3. *Clavis Cantici: An Exposition of the Song of Solomon* (1668).
4. *A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (1675).
5. *The Blessedness of the Death of those that Die in the Lord* (1681).
6. *Christ Crucified: or, The Marrow of the Gos̄pel* (1683).
7. *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (1685).
8. *Heaven Upon Earth* (1685).
9. *The Great Gain of Contenting Godliness* (1685).
10. *The Great Corruption of Subtile Self* (1686).
11. *An Exposition of the Book of Job* (1759).

Durham’s works were not only well received in Scotland, but many were also highly appreciated in England. His commentary on the Ten Commandments was prefaced by letters to the reader by both John Owen and William Jenkyn. In his *Commenting & Commentaries*, C. H. Spurgeon writes of *Christ Crucified; or, the Marrow of the Gos̄pel*: “This is marrow indeed. We need say no more: Durham is a prince among spiritual expositors.”

Unfortunately, except for his exposition of the Song of Solomon,⁴ no new edition of his works appeared in the nineteenth century. Most were only available in rare, fragile, and costly editions. And beyond this, the old orthography and antiquated style made the works less accessible as well. However, with new editions of his works coming forth, the works of Mr. Durham are being rediscovered and appreciated once again.⁵

According to George Christie,⁶ there are eight known editions of Durham’s *Marrow of the Gos̄pel*. Naphtali Press previously published these sermons in 2001 (repr. 2007) making use of the 1726 “fifth edition, carefully corrected,” which followed closely the third edition of 1702. The heavily anglicized fourth edition (London, 1723) was used as a check when a question arose about the text. If a comparison of these two texts did not resolve a question, the second edition of 1686 was consulted.⁷ However, it is now

3. George Christie, B.D., “A Bibliography of James Durham: 1622-1658,” *Papers of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* (1918), 35.

4. Banner of Truth published a reprint of this volume in the Geneva series of commentaries.

5. *Treatise on Scandal* (1990); *Leŕtures on Job* (1995); *Ten Commandments* (2002); *Revelation* (Old Paths Publications, 2000); *Collected Sermons of James Durham: Sixty-one Sermons* (2017).

6. *Ibid.*, 43. See the listing of editions on page [46].

7. Although the 1723 London folio printing is by far the most elaborate of the editions, it was not used for the base text, as it was too much of a re-writing than an editing of the text,

clear all the early editions made errors, neither was the fifth so careful as claimed. The 2001 edition introduced errors as well. Consequently, the text for this new edition has been checked anew against the 1683 first edition, extensively corrected, and revised to be more uniform to a companion volume containing Durham's other sixty-one sermons. If the revision work uncovered corruptions or variations, the text has also been compared as necessary again with the 1686 and other early editions. Carstares' dedication and letter to the reader have been significantly revised and improved.

Generally, the text has been revised in so far as possible without marring the author's work, to reflect contemporary spelling, punctuation and usage, including adding paragraph breaks, and adding, modifying, or correcting the numbering of points in an attempt to clarify the sermon outlines. Also, where Durham is clearly following an outline across several sermons, a numbering scheme has been imposed to make this clearer and easier to follow. Within and across sermons this scheme is: I, (ii), 3, (4), [5], {6}. To reduce the need for an even more complex numbering scheme, often the words, first, second, etc, were added (or retained), and the labeling of points (DOCTRINE ONE, USE ONE, etc.), was expanded and made more consistent across the text. Archaic forms or spellings of modern terms and obvious typographical errors have all been replaced without notice. Often, long parenthetical asides or those that confuse the flow of the main thought, are placed in footnotes, as are alternate readings for particularly difficult clauses and sentences. Insignificant rewording or changes in word order are not noted. Editorial insertions are in [square brackets] and if word order has been significantly changed or text altered to smooth out the meaning, the text will appear between {braces}. Archaic and Scottish words or phrases are defined in italics in square brackets and/or in footnotes. In cases where a term is used multiple times within a few pages, not all instances are so defined. The following words have been generally replaced throughout the text without notice: anent (*about*); allenarly (*only/solely/alone*); dow/dow not

"Englishing" most of Durham's Scots. However, much of the detailed index unique to that printing was used (with some addition and modification) for the side-headings and table of contents. The editor again notes with thanks Dr. David C. Lachman's aid in checking questionable text for the 2001 edition against a copy of the 1686 second edition. That printing, except for correcting the errata, closely followed the text of the first edition. However, perhaps given the 1683's reputation as a faulty edition, no subsequent edition after the 1686 appears to have gone back to the first edition to check for errors it may have introduced. Therefore, the base text file was re-collated against a text file of the first edition and dozens of places were flagged to recheck in the 1686 edition. As appropriate, errors in various editions have been noted in footnotes and in the index, and some text of the 1683 edition has been restored where its omission appears to be an error. I thank Donald John Maclean for checking these textual variants anew against a copy of the 1686 second edition. My thanks also to Ruben Zartman for help with some of the more egregious examples of Durham's "circular, comparing, and qualifying style," and topsy-turvy "syntactical rearrangement."]

(*can/cannot*); *fain* (*glad/gladly/gladness*); *kyth/kythes* (*appear/appears*); *lippen/lippening* (*trust/trusting*); *mids/midses* (*means*); *otherways* (*otherwise*); *suppone* (*suppose*); *throughly* (*thoroughly*); *trow* (*trust*); *use to be/uses to* (*commonly is/ordinarily are/usually have*); *wot* (*know*); *want* (*lack*); and some uses of *aggrege* (*aggravate*).

If the editor has made use of the text of the 1723 London edition to make insertions or changes in the text, this is noted in the text or footnotes with a superscripted E (^E). Variations between editions consulted are noted with a superscript date (e.g. ¹⁶⁸⁶). Significant errors or differences in editions such as missing text, have been noted in footnotes and in an index of errata. Occasionally, errors which persisted in all editions are noted with *sic* and corrected in square brackets. Minor corrections due to changes in editing, obvious errors, repeated text, etc. are changed without notice.

While the original use of italics has been pared down considerably, some use has been retained for emphasis, Latin, text of the sermon, or where there is a complex mix of citation and paraphrasing. In general Scripture citations are set in quotation marks; otherwise, single or a mixture of single and double marks are used to distinguish from paraphrases, phrases “as if he had said,” and other quotations.⁸ Many of the Scripture references in the original text merely contained the chapter. In such instances, where specific verses are quoted or alluded to, these have been supplied without notice. Where there is no reference at all in the original, the full reference has been inserted in square brackets. References using “at the close,” “penult,” or “ult.,” have been replaced by the appropriate verse number. Many extraneous uses of “he says” have been omitted.

As to the original text, these sermons are not from a manuscript left by James Durham himself, for he had left no “notes of his own.” But the text of the sermons, as John Carstairs writes, are from notes “as they were taken hastily with a current pen from his mouth, by one of his ordinary hearers, no scholar, who could not therefore so thoroughly and distinctly take up several of the purposes handled by the preacher.” As he goes on to write in his letter to the reader, Mr. Carstairs spent a considerable amount of time smoothing out the manuscript notes for publication. No doubt he was qualified for this work, as he ministered with Durham in the Inner-Kirk in Glasgow, and knew his manner as well as the material. Though not as full or as perfected as might have been if the preacher himself had lived to provide his own edited text, it is hoped the reader will find this new edition of these sermons plenty full and overflowing with precious instruction from this most gospel-filled chapter of the Old Testament.

Chris Coldwell

May 15, 2017

8. Durham often paraphrases Scripture or envelopes parts of Scripture into an emphasized application to his audience.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED: OR,
THE MARROW OF THE GOSPEL
72 Sermons on Isaiah 53

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? Galatians 3:1. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness. 1 Corinthians 1:23. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Corinthians 5:21. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 1 Peter 2:24.

Sacerdos noster a nobis accepit, quod pro nobis offerret; accepit a nobis carnem; in ipsa carne victima pro nobis factus est, holocaustum factus est, sacrificium factus est.
Augustine in Psalm 129/130.

Christ Crucified: or, The Marrow of the Gospel in Seventy-Two Sermons on the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah.

EDITIONS

1. Edinburgh: Heir of Andrew Anderson, 1683. †Wing D2799. Variant.
2. Edinburgh: Heir of Andrew Anderson, 1686. Wing D2800.
3. Edinburgh: Heir & Successors of Andrew Anderson, 1702. N27974.
4. London: For Aaron Ward and John Oswald, 1723. T165415.
5. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1726. T116789
6. Glasgow: Archibald M'Lean & Joseph Galbraith, 1761. T165413.
7. Glasgow: John Brice, 1769. T116788.
8. Glasgow: [Printed by Alex Adam, for John Johnston], 1792.* T165414
9. Dallas, Texas: Naphtali Press, 2001.
10. Dallas, Texas: Naphtali Press, 2007. Second printing.
11. Dallas, Texas: Naphtali Press, 2012. Print on Demand edition.
12. In *Collected Sermons of James Durham* (2017).

†Wing D2799. The editor's copy as well as the EEBO example paginate [43], 256, 297–536, 543–550, 545–560, 571–576, 1 (errata). There may be variants but none were located for this collation. This was not a particularly careful edition. The publisher notes in the errata at the end of the book: “A Great many Errata hath crept into the Impression of this choice Book, mostly through the absence of the Publisher from the Press, and partly otherwise; not to load the Printer with them all, whereof there are not a few literal ones.” Then follows a list of general faults ending with the notice, “That the 25. Sermon in number contains in it two distinct Sermons;” which accounts for sermons 27–72 being numbered 26–71. Much of this was corrected in the second edition, though it introduced its own errors or changes. Most of the persistent errors seem to date to the third edition of 1702. As far as the lineage of the editions, #4 and #5 followed the third edition, and #6 and #7 followed the fifth (#5). The 1792 edition (#8) appears to have followed the London fourth edition, as it does not have the errors shared by #3 and #5 and has the ‘Englished’ text.

*George Christie owned copies of the first seven and did not provide the printer's name on the eighth, provided here. Rev. George Christie, “A Bibliography of James Durham: 1622–1658,” in *Papers of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* (1918), 42.

Note: There is a manuscript of these 72 sermons. Only 7 of the first 15 sermons have dates. but they show that Durham began to preach this series once a week beginning March 15, 1656, with a break of several weeks between sermon 11 and 12. It is not clear if he continued this pattern; there is an unclear reference in Sermon 24. If he continued weekly uninterrupted, the series may have completed in August 1657. James Durham MSS, Glasgow University Library (Special Collections), Gen. 230. Durham took ill early in 1658 and died that June. Cf. Baillie, *Letters & Journals* (1842), 3,368.

DEDICATION

Unto all afflicted and cross-bearing serious Christians; and more particularly to the Right Honourable and Truly Noble Lord,
WILLIAM Earl of CRAWFORD

IT IS ONE OF the greatest practical debates and contests between God and His own people privileged with a special interest in Him, which they are naturally inclined longest to keep up and are loatheſt to let fall, *viz.* whether He shall guide and govern them, and shape out their lot to them as He Himself in His own infinite wisdom shall think fit, {while they sojourn here in the world}, having a blank submission put by them into His hand, to be filled up with what kind and quality, with what measure and quantity and with what continuance and duration of troubles, trials and afflictions Himself pleaseth? Or whether He should, as to some things at least, consult their will and pleasure, and as it were take their advice and allow them a liberty to prescribe to Him how He should guide and dispose of them? And indeed to be here denied to their own will and absolutely submitted to the will of God, is one of the highest and most difficultly practicable points of self-denial (to which notwithstanding all the disciples and followers of Christ are expressly called, and wherein He has great delight and complacency, as savoring strong of entire trust and confidence in Him). Yet if we CONSIDER these few things, it will be found that there is all the reason in the world why they should come in His will and sweetly submit themselves to it in all things, how cross soever to their own inclination, without any the least sinful reluctance or contradiction, which is our privilege and the restoration of our degenerated nature to its divine and primitive integrity.

1. If it be considered that He has most sovereign, absolute and uncontrollable dominion over you, as the potter has over the clay, for 'you are the clay, and He is the Potter.' Nay, He has more absolute dominion over you than the potter has over the clay, for the potter makes not the clay, both the clay and the potter being made by Him; but "he hath made you, and not you

yourselves; ye are all the work of his hands” (Ps. 100:3; Isa. 64:8). He has made you living creatures, rational creatures and new creatures. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17), which is the very flower of the creation. And “ye are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). If therefore it is unsuitable and incongruous for the clay “to say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou?” or for “a man’s work to say to him, that he hath no hands” (Isa. 45:9), it is surely much more for you to say to your great potter and fashioner, “What makest Thou of us? why dealest Thou so and so with us?” “Woe to him that striveth with his Maker; let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth: Hath not the potter power over the clay? and are you not in the hand of the Lord, as the clay is in the hand of the potter” (Rom. 9:21; Jer. 18:6)? He might have made you “vessels to dishonour, vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction,” without being justly chargeable with any injury done to you. And when He has in the sovereignty of His most wonderful free grace, made you “vessels to honor, and vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory;” will you dare to quarrel with Him for disposing in His own way of your external condition in this world, and of these moveables and accessories that are wholly extrinsic and not at all essential to your salvation and true happiness?¹ It were certainly much more becoming you to say, “It is the Lord, who can do us no wrong, and who has undeservedly done us much good; let Him do to us what seems good in His sight.”²

2. If it be considered that He is of infinite wisdom and knows much better what is good for you than you do yourselves, who often mistake what is good for you through your corruption, ignorance, partiality or prejudice; but He by the most absolute perfection of His blessed nature is infinitely removed from all possibility of mistaking what is good in itself or good for you. And if you will adventure your estate and livelihood in the world on able and faithful lawyers, when you yourselves are much unacquainted with and ignorant of law, and are disposed to think that the suit that is commenced against you will ruin you, while they think otherwise; and if you will commit your health and life to skillful and painful physicians or surgeons, and receive from the one many unpleasant and loathsome potions and pills, and suffer from the other such painful incisions and injections, such searchings, lancements and pansings [*wound dressings*], such scarifications,

1. (For let all the pleasures, riches and honors of the world, even all the delights of the sons of men in their very extract, spirits and quintessence, and when in a manner distilled in a lembick till they be made to evaporate the purest perfumes of their utmost perfections, be heaped on the Christian, as they make him no better Christian, nor make any addition at all to his true happiness, so when he is deplumed and stripped naked of them all, every bird as it were of these earthly comforts taking back again from him its own feather, he is made never a whit the worse Christian, nor his happiness in the least impaired).

2. [Cf. 1 Samuel 3:18; Job 34:10; and possibly 2 Esdras 1:9.]

cauterizings and amputations (from all which you have so great an aversion, if not abhorrence); will you not much rather and much more confidently commit the conduct and care of yourselves and of all that concerns you to Him, of whose understanding there is no search, as to what is good for His own people, and whose faithfulness in His dealing with them, “reacheth to the very clouds, and never faileth” (Ps. 36:5; Ps. 89:33)? The [most] skilful of these may mistake, none of them being infallible; and the most faithful of them may possibly at some times and in some things be found unfaithfully neglectful, none of them being perfect. But it is simply impossible for Him either to mistake or to be unfaithful; for otherwise He should deny Himself and so cease to be God, whereof once to admit the thought is the highest blasphemy. Let therefore your confident trusting of men in their respective professions and callings make you blush at and be ashamed of your distrustings and jealousies of God, and of your quarrellings with Him, even when you know not for the time what He is doing with you, and when what is done would have been none of your own choice, but does very much thwart and cross your natural inclination. Is it not enough that He is infinitely wise in Himself, and for you? May you not therefore safely trust in Him, and with unsolicitous confidence commit the conduct of yourselves and of all your concerns to Him, as knowing that He cannot Himself be misled nor misgovern you? May you not in faith {follow Him}, without distrustful and perplexing fear, as faithful Abraham followed Him, “not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8), and cast all your care on Him, who “careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7), and has made it your great care to be “careful for nothing” (Phil. 4:6), and thus even sing care away.

3. If it be considered that you have in your own experience found (as the rest of the people of God have in theirs), that in all His bypast dealings with you, even these that for the time were most afflicting, His will and your true welfare have been inseparably joined together, and that but very seldom and rarely your own will and welfare have trysted [*met*] together; so that you have been constrained, when at yourselves and in cold blood, to bless Him that you got not your will in such and such things (however for the time you were displeased with the want of it), and have been made to think that if ever you had any good days or hours along your pilgrimage, your most crossed and afflicted ones, wherein God took most of His will and gave you least of your own, have been your best days and hours. Dare you say upon serious and just reflections that it has been otherwise? Or that you have not reason, as to all bygone cross-providences, even the most apparently crushing of them, since the day that you were first brought under the bond of His covenant to this day, to set up as it were your stone and to call it Ebenezer, *the stone of help*, saying, “Hitherto the Lord hath helped us” (1 Sam. 7:12)? May you not and should you not then humbly and confidently trust Him, that you shall through grace have reason as

to present and future ones, how sadly and surprisingly soever they are or may be circumstantiated, to say, "Jehovah-jireh," the Lord will *see* or *provide* (Gen. 22:14)? O but it is a sweet, pleasant, spiritually wholesome and refreshing air that breathes in that walk between *Ebenezer* and *Jehovah-jireh*, wherein a few turns taken by the most afflicted Christians in their serious, composed, spiritual and lively contemplation, would through God's blessing very much contribute quickly to reconcile them to all their respective crosses, how cross soever, and to the keeping of them in better, firmer and more constant spiritual health!

4. If it be considered that by your pettish, fretful, malcontented and un-submissive contentings, strivings and strugglings with Him, you will not help yourselves, you may well make your own burden the more uneasy and your chain the heavier. "Should it not be according to your mind" (Job 34:33)? "Shall the earth be forsaken for you? or shall the rock be removed out of his place" (Job 18:4)? "Will ye disannul his judgment? will ye condemn him, that ye may be righteous" (Job 40:8)? "Will ye strive against him, who giveth not account of any of his matters" (Job 33:13)? Will you tax His wisdom, as if He did not understand what is convenient for you? "Will ye teach God knowledge" (Job 21:22)? Is it fit that He should come down to your will, rather than you should come up to His? Shall God change and break all His wisely laid measures and methods of governing His people, and take new ones to gratify your peevish humors? He will not be diverted from His purpose. "When he is in one way, who can turn him? what his soul desireth, that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for" you (Job 23:13–14). He is more just to Himself (to speak so) and more merciful to you, than to degrade as it were His infinite wisdom so far as to suffer Himself to be swayed against the dictates of it by such short-sighted and forward tutors as you. The great Physician of souls is more compassionate and wise than to permit His distempered and sometimes even in a manner distracted patients to prescribe their own course of physic; but He will needs do what He thought fit and resolved to do, "whether ye choose or whether ye refuse" (Job 34:33). Only He would (to say so) have your consent unto and your approbation of what He does for the greater peace and tranquility of your minds: "Surely" therefore "it is meet," meekly and submissively, "to be said to God," whenever and however He chastises, "I have borne chastisement, I will not offend anymore; that which I know not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job 34:31–32). It is the surest and shortest way to get our will insofar as may be for our well[-being], to allow Him to take His own will and way with us; for He has a special complacency in this, and therein gives wonderful vent to the bowels of His tender compassion toward His chastised and humbly submissive children.

"Surely" (He says) "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the

yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:18–20). Thus when you come submissively to His hand, He comes as it were sweetly to yours. And as you gain nothing by your striving with Him, so you lose nothing, but gain much, by your soft stooping and silent submitting to Him. If you "humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, he shall lift you up" (Jas. 4:10). "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6).

5. If it be considered that you stand in need of all the troubles and afflictions that you meet with, whenever "ye are in heaviness through" one or more or "manifold temptations," it is always and only, "if need be" (1 Pet. 1:6). And if you be well seen in the state and posture of your soul-affairs, what graces of the Spirit are to be quickened and drawn forth into more lively and vigorous exercise, what of these precious spices in your gardens are to be blown upon, not only by the more gentle and soft south-winds of consolations, but also by the more sharp and nipping north-winds of afflictions, and to be beaten as it were in the mortar thereof, that they may send forth their pleasant and fragrant smell? What religious duties are either much neglected or but very lifelessly, coldly, formally, lazily, superficially and heartlessly performed, and to what a higher pitch and peg of spirituality in the manner of performing them they are to be screwed up?³ What lusts and corruptions are to be further mortified and subdued? How little your hypocrisy, your self-love and self-seeking, your pride, passion, impatience, unpliableness and unsubmittedness to the will of God, your carnalness, earthly-mindedness, your immoderate and inordinate love to the things of the world, your murmuring and fretting at, your dissatisfaction and discontent with your present lot; how little these and many other corruptions are crucified and brought at under [*brought under*]^E?

If I say, you be well seen and versed in the knowledge of your spiritual condition, you will upon serious and thorough reflections find that you stand in need of every affliction you meet with, as to all the circumstances thereof. Or if you do not insofar you are unacquainted with and strangers to yourselves, and to the state and posture of your spiritual affairs; nay, you will easily find that all, even your heaviest crosses and afflictions, have enough ado to work you up to what you should be at; and though sometimes you may be disposed to think that you could hardly bear any more, yet you will upon due search find that you could have wanted [*lacked*]

3. [*Screw-up*: To stretch tight by turning a screw; esp. to increase the tension or pitch (of a musical string) by winding up the screws or keys (OED).]

nothing of what you have met with, without a greater prejudice than the cross has brought along with it. We are naturally froward and peevish, bent to fretfulness and discontent, inclining rather to restless endeavoring to have our lot brought up to our spirits, than to be at suitable pains to have our spirits brought down to our lot, and therefore have much need to be tamed and calmed by the cross; this rugged and uneasy temper of spirit being the greater hinderer, yea opposite of that stayed and sweet contentment of heart with and in every state, which is the very life of a Christian's life, "consisting" (as the Lord says) "not in the abundance of the things which we possess" (Luke 12:15), but in our satisfaction with them, whether abundant or not. To the attaining unto which blessed temper, the shortest cut, and most compendious way, is in the *first* place to be well-pleased and satisfied with God Himself, and with a solidly secured interest in Him; and to endeavor in the *next* place to be well-pleasing in His sight, to be gracious in His eyes, to stand well in His thoughts, even to "do always these things that please him" (John 8:29). To which desirable frame of soul, if we were once through grace brought (whereunto our bearing of the yoke and putting our shoulders under the cross is not a little through God's blessing contributive), O how good-natured then and easy to please would we be found to be, and how ready to construe well of all that He does to us!—seldom out of humor, to speak so. Now, if we stand in need of all the afflictions we are trysted [*met*] with in all their most sad and sorrowful circumstances (as certainly we do, because God, who cannot lie or mistake, has said it), why should we not submit ourselves to His will in measuring them out to us? Or what just reason can there be to be dissatisfied with or to complain of God's giving to or ordering that for us, whereof we stand in need, and which we cannot want, without being considerably prejudiced and worsted by the want?

6. If it be considered that in all your chastisements and afflictions God is graciously driving the blessed design of your spiritual good and profit, making them "all to work together" for that desirable end, causing them "turn to your salvation, through the help of the prayers" of others of His people, "and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 1:19); giving you assurance by His faithful word of promise, that thereby "your iniquity shall be purged," and "that this shall be all the fruit" (O strange and admirable condescension of grace! all the fruit!) "to take away sin" (Isa. 27:9). And that He will not chastise you "as parents according to the flesh do their children," to wit, "for their own pleasure";⁴ but that He will

4. —who, however they may have a general design of good to their children in their chastising of them, yet through a remainder of corruption in the best of them, they are often subjected to such hurries and transports of passion, when it comes to the act of chastisement, that they much forget to consult the good and advantage of the chastised child, and too much gratify their own pleasure and humor—

chastise “for your profit, that ye may be made partakers of his holiness” (Heb. 12:10). Now if this be His design in chastising, and if this be the promised fruit of your chastisements and afflictions, why should you not therein submit to His pleasure, which has your own profit inseparably joined within it, if you yourselves do not sinfully lay obstructions in the way thereof, as otherwise, so particularly by your being displeased with this His pleasure, which yet His grace in His own people suffers not to be invincible nor final? I do not say that our chastisements and afflictions do of themselves produce this profit and bring forth this fruit; for alas! we may from doleful experience have ere now arrived at a sad persuasion, that we are proof against all applications, excepting that of sovereign, efficacious and all-difficulty-conquering free grace, and that nothing will do at us save that alone. Whatever means be made use of, this only must be the efficient producer of our profit: It is a piece of God’s royal and incommunicable prerogative, which He has not given out of His own hand to any dispensation, whether of ordinances, never so lively and powerful in themselves or of providences, never so cross, loudly alarming and clearly speaking, abstractly from His own blessing, effectually “to teach to profit” (Isa. 48:17). And therefore He does (as well He may) claim it to Himself alone, as His peculiar privilege, while He says, “I am the Lord thy God that teacheth thee to profit.” Since then this is His design in all the chastisements inflicted on His own people, and since He only by His grace can make it infrustrably take effect, let Him have our hearty allowance and approbation to carry it on vigorously and successfully; and let us pray more frequently and fervently that by His effectually teaching our profiting may be made more and more to appear under our chastisements; and withal in the multitude of our sad thoughts about them, let “his comforts delight” our souls [Ps. 94:19], and this comfort in particular, that in them all He graciously designs and projects *our profit*, even the making of us more and more to *partake of his holiness*.

7. If it be considered that all your [*our*]¹⁶⁸³ trials and troubles are but of time-continuance and will period [*end*] with it; they are but “for a season” (1 Pet. 1:6). Yea, but “for a moment” (2 Cor. 4:17). “He will not contend forever,” knowing well if He should do so, “the spirits would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made” (Isa. 57:16). Though they should follow close on you, and accompany you to your very dying day, yet then they will leave you and take their last goodnight and everlasting farewell of you; “sorrow and sighing will” then forever “fly away,” and “all tears” on whatever account “shall be wiped from your eyes” (Rev. 7:17; Rev. 21:4). It is a great alleviation and mitigation of the most grievous affliction, and of the bitterest and most extreme sorrow, to think that not only it will have a term-day and date of expiration, but it will quickly in a very short time, even in a moment, be over and at an end (as a holy martyr said to his fellow-sufferer in

the fire with him, “It is but winking, and our pain and sorrow is all over”⁵ and that there shall be an eternal tack [*lease*]^E of freedom from it, and that everlasting solace, satisfaction and joy without the least mixture of sorrow and sadness, shall succeed to it and come in the room thereof. It is but for the little space of threescore years and ten or fourscore (Ps. 90:10)—which length most people never come—that His people are subjected to trouble; and what is that very short moment and little point of time, being compared with a vast and incomprehensibly long eternity? In respect of which, “a thousand years are but as one day or as a watch in the night, when it is past” (Ps. 90:4). And no doubt the little while’s trouble, sadness and sorrow of sojourning and militant saints, is in the depth of divine wisdom so ordered that it may the more commend and endear that blessed calm and tranquility, that fullness of purest joys, and these most perfect pleasures at His right hand, that triumphant saints shall forevermore enjoy.

8. If it be considered that all along the little moment that your trials and afflictions abide with you, they are, even the saddest and most severe of them, moderate, and through His grace portable and light. “In measure he debateth with you, and stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind” (Isa. 27:8). And whatever difficulty you sometimes find under sore pressures to get it solidly and practically believed, yet God “is faithful who hath promised, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye

5. [A saying is repeated with variations in a number of mid to late 17th century English writers, which runs, “It is but winking” (i.e. a brief closing of the eyes) “as the martyr said, and thou shalt be in heaven presently.” While it may have earlier origins, the saying appears as early as in two fast sermons preached before houses of parliament by Edmund Calamy (cf. *The Noble-mans Patterne* {1643}; *England’s Antidote* {1645; repr. 1652}). The 19th century editor of Brooks’ *Precious Remedies* ties this to the Persian martyrs Ananias and Puscice (d. 344), the first saying to the latter as he was put to the sword, *Pauliſper O senex, oculos claude, nam ſtatim lumen Dei videbis*. “Shut thine eyes a little, old man, and immediately thou shalt see the light of God!” (cf. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, NPNF2, vol. 2, book 2 chapter II; Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies* {8th ed. 1676; *Works*, vol. 1, p. 74, n.). John Trapp picked this up from Calamy or elsewhere and adduces the saying with variation several times in his commentaries (1647), almost verbatim of that in *Nobleman’s Pattern* at Matthew 26:42 and Romans 14:8, but with some conflation at Psalm 66:12 (adding “at the stake”), and at Ecclesiastes 4:10, tying it to the martyrdoms at the stake of Elizabeth Cowper and Simon Miller, though perhaps intended only as subsequent commentary and not as part of Miller’s words, which as given in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* lacks Ananias’ exhortation (cf. the editions of 1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583, *The Unabridged Aēts and Monuments Online*, <https://www.johnfoxe.org> [Accessed: 10/26/2016]). At 1 Peter 1:3 Trapp gives commentary that might have served to further conflate the accounts (“And many of the holy martyrs went as willingly to die as ever they did to dine; they called it their wedding day. They knew it was but winking only, and they should be in heaven immediately; hence their invincible courage at the hour of death”). William Gurnall was likely following Trapp’s conflations in *The Christian in Complete Armour*, part 3 ({1662}, 34), when he wrote, “It is but winking (said a holy martyr to his fellow-sufferer in the fire with him) and our pain and sorrow is all over.” Gurnall appears to be Carstares’ source given the rendering.]

are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). "He is a God of judgment" (Isa. 30:18) and discretion, {who} suits His peoples' burdens to their backs, and wisely proportions their straits to their strength. "He puts not new wine into old bottles" (Matt. 9:17); neither "doth he break the bruised reed" (Isa. 42:3). And even "when he hides his face, and is wroth with his children, and smites them for their iniquity" (Isa. 57:17-18), it is only fatherly wrath. And however dreadful that may be, and difficult to be borne, yet there is nothing vindictive in it. It is a Father's anger, but contempered⁶ with a Father's love, where also love predominates in the contemperature. And indeed the most extreme and the very heaviest of all our afflictions are moderate, and even light, being compared,

(1) With what your sins deserve, exceedingly far "beneath the desert whereof ye are punished" (Ezra 4:13). Even so far, that we may without all compliment most truly say, "That it is because his compassions fail not, that ye are not consumed" (Lam. 3:22); that you are kept out of hell and free from everlasting burnings to which your many, various and grievously aggravated provocations have made you most justly liable. So that you have reason to think any affliction short of everlasting destruction from the presence of God, to be a highly valued piece of moderation, and to say, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin" (Lam. 3:39)? "We will bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him" (Mic. 7:9).

(2) With what others of the people of God have readily met with; for we "have not resisted to the blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4). We have it may be all this while been but "running with the footmen," when they have been put to "contend with horses" (Jer. 12:5).

(3) With what ourselves have sometimes dreaded and been put to deprecate, when horrid guilt has stared us in the face, and when God apprehended to be very angry, even threatening to "smite us with the wound of an enemy, and with the chastisement of a cruel one," to "run upon us as a giant, to break all our bones; and again to shew himself marvelous upon us, by taking us by the neck, and shaking us in pieces" (Jer. 30:14; Job 16:14, 12; 10:16).

(4) With what our blessed Lord Jesus suffered for His people, who all the while He sojourned here on earth, was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:4), and might most justly have said, beyond all men [Lam. 3:1; 1:12], "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." "Is there any sorrow like unto mine in the day when the Lord hath afflicted me?"

(5) And being compared with that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which they work for you" (2 Cor. 4:17). Seeing then that the

6. [*Contemper*: To blend elements of different character.]

sharpest and sorest of your afflictions are in these and many other respects, very moderate, gentle, easy and light, is there not reason why you should in them, without grudging, sweetly submit yourselves to His will, heart-somely saying, 'It might have been much worse, this falls infinitely short of what we have deserved, blessed be God that it is only thus, and no worse?'

9. If it be considered that often, when in any more than ordinary spiritual and lively frame of soul, you have in prayer desired the Lord that He would take any way and make use of any means He pleased (wherein your sin might not be) to make you more serious in the exercise of godliness, more effectually to mortify your corruptions, and to further your conformity to His image in holiness, and that you should through His grace be content, putting as it were a blank in His hand to be filled up as Himself in His own infinite wisdom should think fit, declaring that you were satisfied {to be His disciples} on the terms proposed by Jesus Christ, and to take up not only *a cross* or *the cross* in general, but *your cross* in particular (Matt. 16:24), the cross that should be shaped out for you, however circumstantiated. And when under some very sad affliction, He on the matter bespeaks thus, 'I am now about to grant you your own desire, though it may be in such a way and by such a means as either would have been none of your own choosing, had it been left to your choice or possibly such as you did not think of. Will you be displeased with Me or mistake My hearing of your prayers, fulfilling of your petitions, and granting you according to your own heart's desire, because I do it in My own way and by means of My own choosing, wherein you left and allowed Me a latitude, and not in your way and by your means, which you then renounced, as not thinking yourselves competent judges thereof?'

Alas! here we are often found at best to border upon a practical ruing, retracting and lifting up again of the blank submission which we professed to lay down before Him, and to say by our fretting, repining, dissatisfaction, immoderate heaviness and despondency of spirit, that we were somewhat rash and not so well advised when we subscribed and gave in such a submission and surrender of ourselves to Him; that we did not think He would have taken such advantage of us or would have put us thus sore to it; and that if we had thought He would have done so, we would have been better advised before we had thus submitted to Him, and with our own consent put ourselves in His reverence; and that if it had been *anything but this*, we could have borne it (whereas He says, *nothing but this*); whereby we do not only not a little reflect upon Him, as dealing unkindly, and doing what we would not have expected at His hand, but also make a sad and humbling discovery of much unsoundness in ourselves, as to our offering up of such general desires and as to our making of such absolute submissions to Him. Let us therefore—in order to the justifying of Him as both righteous and kind, and to the vindicating of ourselves at least

from allowing of any unsoundness, dissimulation or unfair and merely complimentary dealing with God in our submitting ourselves to Him in the general, without any *Buts* or *Ifs*, any *restrictions* or *exceptions*—hold at the submission given, sharply expostulating with and severely chiding ourselves for this discovered practical contradiction and contravention, and we shall find that He has done nothing unworthy of Himself, nor in the least prejudicial to us, but what is according to our own most deliberate desires, and greatly to our advantage.

It were a very wide mistake, if {any should conclude} from what is discoursed in this consideration that we intend either to commend or allow Christians praying directly and expressly for crosses and afflictions, let be for such and such afflictions in particular. For beside that we neither find it commanded in the Scriptures, nor allowedly (if at all) preceded or practiced by the saints recorded there, and that it seems to be a sinful limiting of the sovereign God to a particular means, we may easily know from sad experience with what difficulty, repining and fainting we often bear these crosses and afflictions that we are most clearly called to take on, and that are unavoidably laid upon us, and how lamentably little for the most part we profit by them. What hope or assurance could we then have that we should either carry Christianly under or make suitable improvement of such crosses as we should unwarrantably seek and pray for to ourselves? It is true we find some of the saints, and these stars of the first magnitude, as Moses, Job, Elias, David and Jonas in their distempered malcontent or fainting fits, passionately, preposterously and precipitously praying or rather wishing for death (for which they were not for the time in so good case), but that was not for death under the notion of affliction, but rather to prevent future and further afflictions or to have a period put to presently incumbent ones. If it should have been said, Why may not saints pray for afflictions, since they seem to be promised in the covenant of grace (as Ps. 89:30–32; Hos. 2:6–7, 14), and since God has graciously promised to bless all the afflictions of His people, and to make them turn to their spiritual good, profit and advantage (as Rom. 8:28; Heb. 12:10 and elsewhere)?—

To the first part of the objection it may be briefly answered that these and other such are not properly and formally promises of the covenant of grace, but rather covenant threatenings (for the covenant of grace has its own threatenings suited to the nature thereof, as well as the covenant of works has its), though dipped (to say so) in covenant grace and mercy. And to the other part of it as briefly, that God has promised to bless and to cause to profit by such afflictions and chastisements as Himself thinks fit to inflict and lay on, but not these which we seek and pray for to ourselves. Neither does that scripture (Ps. 119:75), “I know . . . that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me,” say anything towards strengthening the objection or invalidating the answers given to it. For the Psalmist only there humbly and

thankfully acknowledges God's faithfulness in fulfilling His threatening in afflicting him when he went astray, and in performing His promise in blessing his affliction to him for preventing his after-straying, and making him learn better to keep His commandments; in both which He is faithful.

All that is either expressed or meant in this consideration is that the saints often pray [to] God that He would take His own way and use His own means to bring about these great ends mentioned; wherein there is indeed at least a tacit insinuation that if He in His wisdom see it meet to make use of the rod and affliction in order thereto, that they will not allow themselves to decline the same, nor to mistake Him in it; but that rather they shall through grace be satisfied with and bless Him for fulfilling their petitions, and granting them according to their own hearts' desires, though it be by such means. Which is not praying for afflictions, but a resolved and declared submission to infinite Wisdom's love-choice of His own means to effectuate and bring to pass the prayed for ends.

10. If it be considered that it now neither grieves nor troubles any of all the glorified, triumphing and palm-bearing company before the throne of God and of the Lamb, that they were exercised with so many and so great trials and tribulations while they were here below—It troubles not John the Baptist that he was imprisoned, basely murdered and beheaded there in a hole, without having access to give any public testimony before his death, and at the desire of a wanton dancing damsel, through the instigation of her adulterous and incestuous mother. Nor Stephen (commonly called the proto-martyr) that he was stoned to death as a blasphemer for giving testimony to the most precious and comfortable truth of Christ's being the Messiah. Nor Paul, that he was thrice beaten with rods and received five times forty stripes save one; that he was in so many perils by sea and land, in the city, in the country and in the wilderness, by the heathen, by his own countrymen and by false brethren; that he was stoned and suffered all these other things whereof he gives us a historical abridgement in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11). Nor does it trouble any of all these worthies, "of whom the world was not worthy," that they were cruelly mocked, imprisoned, scourged, tortured or tympanized [*stretched*] and racked, stoned, tormented, sawn asunder, killed with the sword, tempted, driven to dens and caves of the earth and put to wander up and down in sheepskins and goatskins, whose martyrology the apostle briefly compends in Hebrews 11. Nor does it trouble any other of all the martyrs, saints and servants of Jesus, who have in the several ages of the church suffered so many and so great things while they were here in the world; nay, all these their sufferings go to make up a considerable part of their song of praise in heaven (where the history of these wars of and for the Lord will be very pleasant to them to read, however sore and bloody they were on earth). And not only so, but these of them who have suffered most, wonder much

that they have suffered so little, and that they are come to so excellent and glorious a kingdom, through so little tribulation in the way to it. Believe it; there will be as much matter of thanksgiving and praise to God found treasured up under the plies and foldings (to say so) of the most cross and afflicting providences that ever the people of God met with here in the world, as under these that for the time were more smiling and satisfying. Let us then, valuing all things we meet with according to the aspect they have on our spiritual and eternal state (which is surely the most just and safest valuation of them), heartily allow Him to take His own will and way in afflicting us.

11. If it be considered that as this submission to the will of God in cross and afflicting providences, is chronicled in the sacred records to the perpetual commendation of several of the saints; namely: Of Aaron, of whom it is said when God had slain his two sons in a strange and stupendous manner, even by fire from heaven, for their presumptuous offering of strange fire before Him, that he “held his peace” (Lev. 10:3). Of old Eli, when he received a sad message concerning himself and his house by the hand of young Samuel, who said, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good” (1 Sam. 3:18). Of Job, after by four several messengers (each of them coming immediately upon the back of the other, so that he scarcely got leave to breathe between or the former to finish his lamentable narration) the terribly alarming tidings were brought him concerning the plundering of his oxen and asses by the Sabeans, and the killing of his servants with the sword, concerning the consuming of his sheep and servants by the fire of God falling from heaven upon them, concerning the carrying away of his camels and the killing of his servants by the Caldeans, and concerning the smothering to death of all his sons and daughters while feasting together by the falling of the house upon them; who said, “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord”; in all this not sinning, nor charging God foolishly (Job 1:21–22). Of David, who in a crowd of crosses said to God, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it” (Ps. 39:9; 2 Sam. 15:25–26), and who when forced to flee from Jerusalem by his unnatural and rebellious son Absalom, and sending back the ark thither, with admirable composure and sweet stooping of soul said, “If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: But if he say thus, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do with me as seemeth good to him.” Of Hezekiah, when that heavy message was brought to him by the prophet Isaiah concerning the Babylonish captivity, wherein his royal posterity were to have their deep share, who said, “Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken”; who said moreover, “Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?” (2 Kings 20:19), if the threatened doom and sentence shall be for a while suspended and not presently executed.

And of these Christians, who after they had with much weeping earnestly entreated the Apostle Paul, deservedly very near to them, not to go up to Jerusalem, where the prophet Agabus had foretold he should be apprehended and put in bonds, and perceived that he was inflexibly resolved at any rate of hazard to go thither, ceased and submissively said, "The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:14). As I say, it is thus chronicled to their commendation, so it is a piece of most beautiful and amiable conformity to the practice of our blessed Lord Jesus, of whom we ought to "be followers as dear children" (Eph. 5:1) in all these things, wherein He is proposed as a pattern for our imitation, who in a great and grievous agony of trouble, and when most terribly assaulted by a strong combination of cross and afflicting providences, and after conditional deprecating of that bitterest cup and blackest hour, pleasantly, sweetly and submissively subjoined and said to His Father, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done; Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Luke 22:42; Matt. 26:42).

12. And finally, if it be considered that when the whole contexture and web of providences, and more especially about the catholic, visible, militant church, and every individual member thereof, shall be wrought out and in its full length and breadth (as it were) spread forth in the midst of all the redeemed, perfected, glorified and triumphant company of saints, standing round about and with admiration beholding it, there will not be found (to say so) one misplaced thread, nor one wrong-set color in it all, but everything will be found to have fallen in in the fittest place, and in the most beautiful season and order thereof. O so rare, so remarkable, so renowned and so ravishing a piece, as it will by them all unanimously and with one voice be judged and declared to be, even worthy of the most exquisite art and infinite skill of the great Worker thereof! The severest critics and most difficultly satisfiable of them all, while here below, about more public and more particular cross providences, will then fully and to the height be satisfied, and will all without any the least hesitation or jarring, readily and cheerfully bear Him this concordant testimony, that "he hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37), everything in particular, and all things in general, though when He was doing them they often presumptuously took upon them rashly to censure, and to offer their impertinent and crabbed animadversions on, and their amendations [emendations] and alterations of several of them; and will most cordially bless Him that He wrought on in His own way about His church and each of themselves, without consulting them or following their way, which would have quite marred the beauty and darkened the luster and splendor of that most close and curious divine contexture.

Every one of these considerations has much reason in it to persuade to this entire and absolute submission to God's will and pleasure in what is cross to you, afflicted and sorrowful Christians; but O how much weight and strength of sound spiritual reason is there in them all united together (beside the many

other excellent considerations, dispersed up and down these choice Sermons, stuffed full with strong cordials, fitted both to recover and preserve you from fainting under your many several afflictions), powerfully to persuade and prevail with you, even the most averse, untoward, wayward and cross-grained (to say so) of you all, without further debate, demur or delay in these things that are most afflicting to you, and do most thwart your inclination to come in His will, and pleasantly, without any the least allowed reluctance or gainsaying, to submit to Him! How might you thus possess your souls in patience, and how quiet, calm, sedate and composed might you be, more especially in troublesome times, amidst these things wherewith others are kept in a continual hurry, almost to the hazard of being distracted by them?

Let them all, my noble Lord,⁷ prevail with your Lordship in particular reverently to adore, silently to stoop unto, and sweetly to acquiesce in the Lord's sovereign, holy and wise ordering your many and various complicated trials; and more especially His late removing your excellent Lady, the desire of your eyes, the Christian and comfortable companion of your youth, by His stroke. As indeed all the ties of nearest and dearest relations, between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc., are capable of dissolution, and will all ere long by death be actually dissolved; there being but one tie and knot of marriage-union between precious Jesus Christ and the believer, that by divine ordination is eternally incapable of any dissolution, even by death itself; which though it dissolve the strait union that is between the soul and the body, yet does not at all loose the straiter bond of union that is between Him and both of them, but it remains still inviolable; and by virtue thereof the believer's vile dead body shall be raised again at the last day conformable to His own glorious body, and be reunited to the perfected soul, which two old intimates will then meet in far better case than when they were parted and pulled asunder. For He is a Husband that cannot grow old, sick or weak, neither can He die; He is a Husband whose bride and spouse is never a widow, neither has He any relicts. The drawing on of which matchless match and marvelous marriage is one great design of these sweet Sermons, wherein pregnant reasons are aduced by this friend of the Bridegroom to persuade sinners to embrace the offer thereof made to them in the gospel; and to make them who by His own gracious and powerful insinuations on their hearts have entertained His

7. [William Lindsey, 18th Earl of Crawford (d.1698). "A zealous and even fanatical presbyterian, he had resolved in 1685 for conscience sake to leave the country, but could not obtain the requisite permission. Through the extravagance of his father he also found himself in very straitened circumstances, but resisting the worldly temptations to support the ruling faction, he escaped persecution by living in great retirement. On the accession of King William he was, on account of his influence with the presbyterians, received into special favor, and named President of the Convention Parliament. On 15 April 1690 he was appointed a commissioner of the treasury, and on 9 May one of the commissioners for settling the government of the church." *DNB*.]

proposal, toward making up and final closing of the match, to bless themselves in their choice, and to bless Him that ever He was pleased to stoop so very low as to become a suitor to them, with a peremptory resolution to admit of no refusal, but infrustrably to carry their hearts' consent to take Him for their *Lord, Head and Husband*, to be to them a *Savior, a Physician and Treasure*, even their *All in all*, their *All above all*; which day of espousals, as it was *the day of the gladness of his heart*, so it will never be any grief of heart to them. Let all mutinous thoughts about His dealings with you be silenced with, *It's the Lord*. Let not too much dwelling on the thoughts of your affliction, to the filling of your heart still with sorrow, incapacitate you for, nor divert you from humbly asking the Lord what He aims at by all these dispensations, what He would have you to learn out of them, what He reproveth and contends for, what He would have you amending your hands in, and what He would have you more weaned, self-denied and mortified in, and what He would have you a further length and a greater proficient in. He has told you 'the truth, that these things are expedient for you' [John 16:7]; study to find them to be so in your experience. Surely He has by them written in great, legible and capital characters, yea, even as with a sunbeam, vanity, emptiness, uncertainty, mutability, unsatisfactoriness and disappointment upon the forehead of all creature-comforts, and with a loud voice called your Lordship, yet more seriously than ever, to seek after solid soul-satisfaction in His own blessed and all-sufficient Self, where it is most certainly to be found, without all peradventure or possibility of misgiving.

Make haste, my Lord, yet to come by a more close confining of all your desires and expectations of happiness and satisfaction to your soul, to God only, contracting and gathering them in from the vast and wearisome circumference of earthly comforts, and centering them all in Himself as their point; study through grace in a sweet soliloquy to bespeak your soul thus, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him" (Ps. 62:5). O blessed confinement of desires and expectations of happiness and satisfaction to the soul! where it is as impossible to meet with disappointment as it is impossible not to meet with it from every airth⁸ whence it is looked for. Alas! it is the scattering of our expectations and desires of happiness among other objects besides Him, that breeds us all the disquiet, anxiety and vexation. Whereas if we kept ourselves through grace under a more close and constant confinement to Him, when this and that and the other creature-comfort, whether person or thing, were taken from us, there would be no deduction made from, nor any diminution made of our true happiness, none of these, how dear and desirable soever, being essentially constitutive of it, nor so much as trenching thereupon; and He in whom only all our happiness lies, being "the same yesterday, today, and forever," "without any variableness or shadow of turning" [Heb. 13:8; James

8. [*Airth*: compass point, quarter (Jamieson).]

1:17]. There are some whom He loves so well that He cannot (to so speak) find in His heart to see them thus to parcel out their affections, and to dote upon any painted imaginary happiness in creature-comforts; and therefore on design He does either very much blast them as to the expected satisfaction from them or quite remove them, that by making such a vacuity He may make way for Himself to fill it, and happily to necessitate the person humbly, prayerfully and believably to put Him to the filling of it. And it is a great vacuity that He who fills “heaven and earth” [Jer. 23:24] cannot fill; a little of whose gracious presence and manifested special love can go very far to fill up the room that is made void, by the removal of the choicest and most desirable of all earthly comforts and enjoyments.

Happy they who when they lose a near and dear relation or friend or any idol they are fond of, are helped of God to make Jesus Christ, as it were, succeed to the same as its Heir, by taking that loss as a summons to transfer and settle their whole love on Him, the object incomparably most worthy of it, as being “altogether lovely,” or *all desires* (Song. 5:16)! There is no earthly comfort, person or thing, but has somewhat in it that is not desirable, and that it would be the better to want lack; but there is nothing in Him that is not truly desirable, nor anything out of Him that is worthy to be desired.

I am, my noble Lord, the most easily prevailed with and encouraged to address the dedication of these Sermons to your Lordship, more particularly when I remember *the unfeigned faith that first dwelt in your grandmother*, as another Lois; and in your mother, as another Eunice; and more lately in your own choice Lady, who as another *beloved Persis, labored much in the Lord* [Cf. 2 Timothy 1:5; Romans 16:12].⁹ And though she had but a very short Christian race (in which she was much encouraged by coming into your noble father’s family, and her beholding how hard your blest mother did run and press toward the mark, even when in the last stage, and turning in a manner the last stoop of her Christian course), yet it was a very swift one, wherein she did quite outrun many that were in Christ long before her (all three Ladies of honor, almost, if I need to say almost, without parallels in their times in the serious and diligent exercise of godliness, and patterns worthy to be imitated by others), and I trust in your Lordship’s self also, yea, and in several others of your elder and younger noble relations (for grace has such a draught of souls amongst you, as it used not often to have in societies of so noble extract, for “not many noble are called” [1 Cor. 1:26]), which, as it deservedly draws respect to such of you as are thus privileged from the observers of it, so it lays a mighty strong obligation upon you to be much for God and in service to your generation, according to His will. Further, when I observe your Lordship’s Christian and exemplary carriage under such a conjunction and combination of so very cross and almost crushing

9. [The Earl’s first wife was Mary Johnstone, daughter of James, Earl of Annandale. He then married Henrietta Seton, daughter of Charles, Earl of Dunfermline. *DNB*, *ibid.*]

calamitous providences, choosing rather contentedly and satisfiedly to be (if it so please the Lord, and O! that it may not) the last of that ancient and honorable family, than to be found endeavoring to keep it from sinking by any sinful and unwarrantable course, particularly by defrauding just creditors (though the debt was not of your Lordship's own contracting) under whatever specious pretexts and advantages of law; whereof many make no bones, who if they may keep up their superfluities, care not to ruin their friends engaging in suretyship for the debt, and to live on the subsistence of others. Moreover, when with great satisfaction I notice how much your Lordship makes it your business to follow your noble ancestors insofar as they were *followers of Christ*, which many great men, even in the Christian world, alas, do not much mind, not considering that it is true nobility where God is the chief and top of the kin, and where religion is at the bottom, and what renowned Rauleigh says, *Hinc dictus nobilis quasi prae aliis virtute notabilis*, and what another says, *Qui ab illustrium majorum splendida virtute degenerarunt nobilia portenta sunt*.¹⁰ And finally, when I consider that in your Lordship's retirement and abstraction from wonted converse and dealing in business, you will have access at leisure to read them, whereby you may through God's blessing be sweetly diverted from pensive and not so profitable poring [*looking*] on your affliction, and be much instructed, convinced, reprov'd, directed, edified, strengthened and comforted. Read them then, my Lord, carefully (as I take it for granted you will); ponder and digest them well, and I am hopeful that they shall through grace prove contributive to the bringing upon you a considerable growth of holiness, and to the making of *your ways and doings* more than ever such, that others of His people observing the same shall be comforted and made to think and say, *Verily God hath not done in vain all that he hath done to yonder nobleman*.

That these substantial and marrowy gospel sermons may come along to you all, nay to all the readers of them, and to your Lordship more particularly, with showers of gospel blessings, is the earnest desire of,

Dearly beloved afflicted Christians, and my very noble Lord in particular, your companion in tribulation, desirous also to be in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and your servant in the gospel for His sake,

J. C. [John Carstairs]
November 15, 1682

10. [Here, the one called noble is notable (as it were) in virtue beyond others. "But after such time as the deserved honour of the father was given in reward to his posterity, St. Jerome judged of the succession in this manner: *Nihil aliud video in nobilitate appetendum, nisi quod nobiles quadam necessitate constringantur, ne ab antiquorum probitate degenerent*; 'I see no other thing to be affected in nobility, than that nobelmen are by a kind of necessity bound not to degenerate from the virtue of their ancestors.'" Sir Walter Raleigh, "History of the World," *Works*, vol. 7 (1829), 350.]

TO THE READER

Unto the Readers, and more particularly unto the Inhabitants of the
City of Glasgow, of all Ranks

THOUGH THE WHOLE field of the sacred and infallibly inspired Scriptures is very pleasant and beautiful (a spiritual cool and cleansing, a fructifying, fresh, refreshful and wholesome air, breathing continually there), yet if we may compare some parts thereof with others, those wherein *the treasure, precious Jesus Christ*, lies most obvious and open, are certainly most pleasant and beautiful. And amongst these, such as hold forth His sufferings and Himself as crucified most evidently before men's eyes, have a peculiar and passing pleasantness and beauty in them. If so, then surely this fifty-third chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah cannot but be looked at as a transcendently pleasant, beautiful, sweet-smelling and fragrant piece of divine Scripture-field, wherein the evangelic prophet discourses of the sufferings of Christ, as particularly and fully, as plainly and pathetically, even to the very life, as if he himself had been a spectator and eyewitness of them.

However, this sweetest chapter from beginning to end, as also the three last verses of the foregoing, are by the greatly learned Grotius most miserably perverted while he industriously diverts it from the Messiah, and by stretching and curtailng thereof at his pleasure,¹ wholly applies it to the prophet Jeremiah in the first place only, not denying that it has accommodation to Christ, of whom too he takes but little or no notice in all his annotations thereon. The impertinencies and wrestings of which application are convincingly held forth by famous Doctor Owen (who looks on this portion of Scripture as the sum of what is spoken in the Old Testament concerning the satisfactory death of Jesus Christ), that mell [*hammer*] of Socinians in his *Vindiciae Evangelicae* against Bidle and the *Racovian Catechism*,²

1. As the cruel tyrant Mezentius did the men he laid on his bed, to make them of equal length with it. [Mezentius (Rm. myth.) was cruel, but this describes Procrustes (Gr. myth).]

2. [John Owen (1616–1683), *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (Oxford, 1655). *Works*, ed. Goold, v.12.]

who was a burning and shining light in the reformed churches, though now, alas! to their great loss, lately extinguished. And indeed the dealing of that very learned man [Grotius] professing himself to be a Christian, with this most clear and to all true Christians most comfortable scripture, is the more strange and even stupendous, considering:

1. That several passages in it are in the New Testament expressly applied to Christ (Matt. 8:17; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37; Acts 8:28 etc; 1 Pet. 2:22, 24), but not one so much as alluded to in reference to Jeremiah.

2. That the ancient of Jewish doctors and the Chaldee Paraphrast (as Dr. Owen in the foresaid learned and savory book gives an account) do apply it to Him.

3. That a late doctor of great note and honor among the Jews, Arabinel affirms, that in truth he sees not how one verse of the whole (several of which he touches on) can be expounded of Jeremiah, and wonders greatly that any wise man can be so foolish as to commend, let be to be the author of such an exposition (as one Rabbi Gaon had been), which {he says is} so utterly alien and not in the least drawn from the Scripture.³

4. That several Jews do profess that their Rabbins could easily have extricated themselves from all other places of the prophets (a vain and groundless boast) if Isaiah in this place had but held his peace, as Hulsius (very lately, if not present Hebrew-Professor at Breda) declares some of them did to himself.⁴

5. That a Rabbi by his own confession was converted from a Jew to a Christian by the reading of this fifty-third of Isaiah, as the excellent Mr. Boyle,⁵ in his delicate discourses on the style of the Holy Scriptures informs us; yea, that divers Jews have been convinced and converted to the Christian faith by the evidence of this prophecy, as learned and laborious Mr. Poole affirms in his lately published English Annotations on this Scripture.⁶

6. That the Socinians themselves have not dared to attempt the accommodation of the things here spoken of to any other certain and particular

3. [Isaac ben Judah Abravanel/Abarbanel (1437–1508); Saadia Gaon (882–942). Abarbanel wrote his commentary on Isaiah in 1498, and several editions of his commentaries were published in the 17th century. Cf. *Commentarius celeberrimi Rabbi Ishak Abarbanel, super Iesaiam, Ieremiam, Iehazkelem, et prophetas XII. minores; ante annos quidem circiter centenos olim excusus; nunc vero & elegantiori charactere, & longè correctius recusus...* (1642), fol. 72 recto. See his comments on Gaon in English as given in A. Neubauer and S. R. Driver, *The Fifty-third chapter of Isaiah according to the Jewish interpreters* (1876), 164. Yepheth Ben Ali opined Gaon had lost his senses. Driver, 19. Cf. Matthew Poole, *Synopsis Criticorum*, vol. 3, col. 470, line 70.]

4. [Antonius Hulsius (1615–1685). “Aggrediamur nunc carnificinam rabbinorum, nobilissimum dico vaticinium, Isai. 53. ubi de Messia pro peccatis populi sui perpressionibus, de quo aliqui Judæi mihi confessi sunt, rabbinos suos ex propheticis scripturis facilè se extricare posuisse, modò Esajas tacuisset?” *Theologiæ Judaicæ pars prima, de Messia* (1653), 318.]

5. [Robert Boyle (1627–1691), *Some considerations touching the style of the H. Scriptures.* (1661).]

6. [See Poole on Isaiah 52:13.]

SEVENTY-TWO SERMONS ON THE
FIFTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF ISAIAH

SERMON I ON ISAIAH 53:1

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

WE HOPE IT SHALL¹ not be needful to insist in opening the scope of this chapter or in clearing to you of whom the prophet means and is speaking. It was once questioned by the eunuch when he was reading this chapter (Acts 8:32), "Of whom doth the prophet speak this? Of himself or of some other man?" And it is so clearly answered by Philip, who from these words began and preached to him of Jesus Christ, that there needs be no doubt of it now. To Christians these two may put it out of question, that Jesus Christ and the substance of the gospel is compended and summed up here.

Philip and the Eunuch.

1. If we compare the letter of this chapter with what is in the four evangelists, we will see it so fully and often so literally made out of Christ, that if any will but read this chapter and compare it with them, they will find the evangelists to be commentators on it and setting it out more fully.

Harmony of the four evangelists with this chapter.

2. That there is no Scripture in the Old Testament so often and so convincingly applied to Christ as this is, there being scarce one verse, at least not many, but are by the evangelists or apostles made use of for holding out Christ.

If we look then to the sum of the words of this chapter, they take in the sum and substance of the gospel; for they take in these two:

Sum of this chapter.

1. The right description and manifestation of Jesus Christ.

2. And the unfolding and opening up of the covenant of redemption. Where these two are, there the sum of the gospel is; but these two are here; therefore the sum of the gospel is here.

Covenant of Redemption unfolded.

First, Jesus Christ is described. 1. In His person and natures; as God, being eternal; as man, being under suffering. 2. In all His offices; as a priest, offering up Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy justice; as a prophet, venting His knowledge to the justifying of many thereby; and as a king, dividing the spoil with the strong. 3. In His humiliation, in the cause of it, in the end of it, in the subject of it, in the nature and rise of all: God's good pleasure. 4. And in His exaltation and outgate [*deliverance*] promised Him on the back of all His sufferings and humiliation.

1. [This sermon was likely preached on March 15, 1656. See note, p. {46}.]

Secondly, the covenant of redemption is here described and set out. 1. In the particular parties of it: God and the Mediator. 2. As to the matter about which it was, the seed that was given to Christ and all whose iniquities met on Him. 3. As to the mutual engagements on both sides, the Son undertaking to make His soul an offering for sin and the Father promising that the efficacy of His satisfaction shall be imputed and applied for the justification of sinners; and the terms on which or the way how this imputation and application is brought about, to wit, *By his knowledge*. All are clearly held out here.

This is only a touch of the excellency of this Scripture and of the materials (to say so) in it as comprehending the substance and marrow of the gospel. We shall not be particular in dividing the chapter, considering that these things we have hinted at are interwoven in it.

The first verse is a short introduction to lead us into what follows. The prophet has in the former chapter been speaking of Christ as God's servant that should be extolled and made very high; and before he proceeds more particularly to unfold this mystery of the gospel, he cries out by way of regret, *Who hath believed our report?* 'Alas!' (would he say) 'For as good news as we have to carry, few will take them off our hand, such is man's unconcern, yea, malice and obstinacy, that they reject them.' *And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* To point at the necessity of the power of God to accompany preaching and even the most lively ordinances to make them effectual. How few are they that the power of God captivates to the obedience of this truth?

Verse 1: A short introduction to Isaiah 53.

Connection of this chapter with the former.

For the first part of this verse, *Who hath believed our report?* to open it a little, take these four or five considerations, ere we come to the DOCTRINES.

1. Consider first the matter of this report in reference to its scope. It is not every report, but a report of Christ and of the covenant of redemption and of grace. In the original it is, 'Who hath believed *our hearing*,' actively; that is, 'that which we have proposed to be heard.' And the word is turned *tidings* in Daniel 11:44, and *rumor* in Jeremiah 51:46. It is the tidings and rumor of a suffering Mediator interposing Himself between God and sinners; and it may be *hearing* is mentioned to point out the confidence which the prophet had in reporting this news. He first heard them from God, and in that was passive; and then actively he proposed them to the people to be heard by them.

2. Consider that the prophet speaks of this report not as in his own person only, but as in the person of all that ever preached or shall preach this gospel; therefore this report is not particular to Isaiah, but it is our report, the report of the prophets before and of these after him, and of the apostles and ministers of the gospel.

3. Consider that Isaiah speaks of this report not only in respect of what he met with in his own time, but as foreseeing what would be the carriage

The reception

of people in reference to it in after-times. Therefore this same place is alleged in John 12:38 and Romans 10:16 to give a reason of the Jews' unbelief because Isaiah foretold it long before.

of the report then and now the same.

4. Consider that when he complains of the lack of faith to the report and tidings of the gospel, it is not of the lack of historical faith as if the people would not give Christ a hearing at all, but is of the lack of saving faith. Therefore it is said in John 12:37–38, “Though he had done many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him”; and this prophetic Scripture is subjoined as the reason of it, “That the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled, who said, Lord, who hath believed our report,” applying the *believing* spoken of here to that saving faith whereby folk believe and rest upon Jesus Christ.

Gospel rejected because of lack of saving faith.

5. Consider that though there is no express party named to whom the prophet complains, yet no doubt it is to God. Therefore when this Scripture is cited in John 12:38 and Romans 10:16, it is said, “Lord, who hath believed our report?” So it is the prophet's complaint of the little fruit [he] himself had, and that the ministers of the gospel should have in preaching of the gospel, regretting and complaining of it to God as a sore matter that it should come to so many and so few should get good of it, so few should be brought to believe and to be saved by it.

Ministers' complaint of men's obstinacy.

Though these words are few, yet they have four great things in them to which we shall reduce them for speaking more clearly to them. I. That the great subject of preaching and preachers' great errand is to report concerning Jesus Christ, to bring tidings concerning Him.² II. That the great duty of hearers (implied) is to believe this report, and by virtue of it to be brought to rest and rely on Jesus Christ. III. That unbelief is the great, though ordinary sin of the generality of the hearers of the gospel. *Who hath believed?* That is, it is few that have believed; it is a rare thing to see a believer of this report. IV. That the great complaint, weight and grief of an honest minister of the gospel is this, that his message is not taken off his hand, that Christ is not received, believed in and rested on. This is the great challenge ministers have against the generality of people and the ground of their complaint to God, that whatever they report concerning Christ, He is not welcomed, His kingdom thrives not.

Four great things in this verse.

Christ the great subject of preaching.

I. That we may speak to the first, considering the words with respect to the scope, we shall draw five or six DOCTRINES from them.³

DOCTRINE ONE. The first whereof is more general, *that the discovery of Christ Jesus and the making Him known is the greatest news, the gladdest tidings and the most excellent report that ever came or can come to a people*. There is no such thing can be told them, no such tidings can they hear; this is the report that the prophet speaks of by way of eminency, a report above and beyond all other reports; these are news worthy to

Gospel excellency.

2. [Outline: I. Sermons 1–2. II. Sermons 3–5. III. Sermons 6–8. IV. Sermons 9–12.]

3. [Three doctrines are covered here; the rest are bundled into observations in sermon 2.]

be carried by angels. "Behold," says one of them (Luke 2:10), "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And what are these tidings so prefaced to with a behold? "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." These are the good tidings that Jesus Christ is come and that He is the Savior by office. We shall not insist on this; only (1) we will find a little view of this subject in the following words, which hold forth clearly Christ, God and man in one person, so completely qualified and excellently furnished for His offices. (2) It is also clear if we look to the excellent effects that come by His being so furnished; as His satisfying of justice, His setting free of captives, His triumphing over principalities and powers, His destroying the works of the devil, etc. There cannot be more excellent works or effects spoken of. (3) It is clear if we look to Him from whom this report comes and in whose breast this news bred (if we may speak so), they are the result of the counsel of the Godhead; and therefore, as the report here is made in the Lord's name, so He is complained to when it is not taken off the prophet's hand. (4) And it is clear if we look to the mysteriousness of this news; angels could never have conceived them, had not this report come. These things tell that they are great, glorious and good news, glad tidings (as it is in the end of the former chapter). "That which hath not been told them, shall they see; and that which they have not heard, shall they consider."

USE ONE. The first USE is to draw our hearts to be in love with the gospel and to raise our estimation of it. People's ears are itching after novelties and you are much worn out of conceit with this news; but is there in any news such an advantage as in these? When God sends news to men, it must be great news. And such indeed it is.

USE TWO. Therefore be afraid to entertain loathing of the plain substantial truths of the gospel; if you had never heard them before, there would be likely some Athenian itching to hear and speak of them; but they should not be the less thought of that they are often heard and spoken of.

USE THREE. Therefore think more of the gospel, seeing it contains the substance of this good news and glad tidings; and think more of gospel ordinances whereby these good tidings are so often published and made plain to you.

DOCTRINE TWO. More particularly observe, *that Jesus Christ and what concerns Him (the glad and good news of a Savior and the reporting of them), is the very proper work of a minister and the great subject of a minister's preaching.* His proper work is to make Him known. Or take it thus: Christ is the native subject on which all preaching should run. This is the report the prophet speaks of here and in effect it was so to John and the other apostles, and should be so to all ministers: Christ Jesus and what concerns Him in His person, natures and offices; to know and make Him known

Minister's work
is to preach
Christ and what
concerns Him.

{to be God and Man; to make Him known}⁴ in His offices to be priest, prophet and king; to be a priest in His suffering and satisfying justice; to be a prophet in revealing the will of God; to be a king for subduing folks' lusts and corruptions; and to know and make Him known in the way by which sinners, both preachers and hearers, may come to have Him to themselves, as follows in this chapter.

This, this is the subject of all preaching, and all preaching should be leveled at this mark. Paul is peremptory in this (1 Cor. 2:2). "I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified"; as if He had said, 'I will meddle with no other thing, but betake myself to this.' Not only will He forbear to meddle with civil employments, but He will lay aside His learning, eloquence and human wisdom, and make the preaching of Christ crucified his great work and study.

Christ the subject matter of all preaching.

The reason of this is because Christ stands in a fourfold relation to preaching. (1) {He is the Text, to say so, of preaching.}³ All preaching is to explain Him (Acts 10:43), "To him give all the prophets witness." And so do the four evangelists and the apostolic epistles, which are as so many preachings of Him; and that preaching which stands not in relation to Him, is beside the text and mark.

Christ stands in a fourfold relation to preaching.

(2) He is held out as the foundation and groundwork of preaching, so that preaching without Him lacks a foundation and is the building, as it were, of a castle in the air (1 Cor. 3:10); "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon: but let every man take heed how he buildeth; for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"—importing that all preaching should be squared to and made to agree with this groundstone.

(3) He stands as the great end of preaching, not only that hearers may have Him known in their judgments, but may have Him high in their hearts and affections (2 Cor. 4:5). "We preach not ourselves," that is not only do we not preach ourselves as the subject, but we preach not ourselves as the end of our preaching; our scope is not to be great or much thought of, but our end in preaching is to make Christ great.

(4) He stands in relation to preaching as He is the power and life of preaching, without whom no preaching can be effectual, no soul can be captivated and brought in to Him. Hence he says (1 Cor. 1:23), "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block," they cannot abide to hear Him; "and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are saved, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God."

USE ONE. For ministers, which we forbear insisting on, only: (1) Were Christ the subject and substance of our report, were we more in holding Him out, it is likely it might go better with us. (2) There is need of wariness that the report we make suits well the foundation. (3) And the neglect

4. [The text between braces was omitted in the 2001/2007 editions.]

of this may be the cause of much powerless preaching because Christ is not so preached as the subject matter and end of preaching; many truths are (alas) spoken without respect to this end or but with little respect to it.

USES particular for you that are hearers, are these:

Of all truths
welcome most
those which
concern Christ.

(1) If this is the great subject of ministers' preaching and that which you should hear most gladly, and if this be most profitable for you, we may be particular in some few directions to you, which will be as so many branches of the USE. And first, of all truths that people would welcome and study, they would welcome and study these most that concern Christ and the covenant of grace as foundation truths, and seek to have them backed by the Spirit. We are afraid there is a fault among Christians that most plain and substantial truths are not so heeded, but some things that may further folk in their light, or tickle their affections or answer a case are almost only sought after. Which things (it is true) are good; but if the plain and substantial truths of the gospel were more studied and made use of, they have in them that which would answer all cases. It is a sore matter when folks are more taken up with notions and speculations than with these soul saving truths: as that Christ was born, that He was a true man, that He was and is king, priest and prophet of His church, etc., and that other things are heard with more greediness. But if these are the great subject of ministers' preaching, it should be your great study to know Christ in His person, natures, offices and covenant; what He is to you and what is your duty to Him, and how you should walk in Him and with Him. This was Paul's aim. "I count," he says, "all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3:8-10), etc. 'It is my design,' as if he had said, 'not only to make Him known, but to know Him myself. There is little faith in Christ and distinctness in making use of His offices, and folks take but little pains to know these things. Therefore on the one side, let me exhort you to make this more the subject of your inquiry; and on the other side, take it for your reproof that there is such a readiness to snuff when plain truths are insisted on or when they are not followed to some uncouth or strange way; which says we are exceedingly unthankful to God for giving us the best things to speak, hear and think of.

(2) Think much of the preaching of Christ and to have ministers to preach of Him. He is the best news and God has sent ministers on this errand to make it known to you. Had He sent them to tell you all the secret things to come that are in God's purpose and all the hid works of nature, it had not been comparable to this news. What would you have been? O what would Sabbath days and weekdays, your lying and rising up, your living and dying been if this news had not been? You should have had a sinful and sad life and a most comfortless and terrible death. Therefore think this gospel a thing of more worth than you do, and count their feet beautiful

on the mountains that bring this news and glad tidings (as it is in Isaiah 52:7). That good report of making peace between God and sinners should be much thought of and prized and counted a greater favor than we commonly count it.

(3) By this you may know who thrives and profits best under the gospel, even these that learned most of Christ, which consists not in telling words, but [1] in actual improving of Him (as it is in Ephesians 4:20, "You have not so learned Christ"), but so as to improve what is in Him. [2] In an experimental finding of these effects in us that are spoken of to come by Christ, which is that which the apostle means (Phil. 3:10), "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, that I may be conformable to his death."

I am afraid that of the many that hear this gospel, there are but few that know Christ this way. But if He is the great thing that should be preached by us and that you should learn: [1] What is the reason that so many should be ignorant of Him, that the most part look rather like Turks and Pagans than like Christians? God help us, what shall we say of the condition of the most part of people when the preaching [of] the gospel has not gained this much ground on us, as to make us know Christ in His person, natures, offices, our need of Him and the use we should make of Him?

Ignorance of Christ.

But [2] If we will try how He is improved, it is to be feared there are far fewer that know Him in this respect. Do not many men live as if they had never heard tell of Him? Though they hear that pardon of sin is to be gotten through Him and that virtue to subdue sin must flow from Him; yet they live as if no such thing were in Him. If your conscience were posed, besides the evidences that are in your practice, this would be found to be a sad truth.

And [3] If we will yet try further what experience folk have of Christ, what virtue they find flowing from His resurrection, what fellowship there is in His sufferings, what conformity to His death, what benefit redounds to them from His offices of king, priest and prophet, to the slaying of sin and quickening to holy duties, what benefit of fruit from His death; alas! no more with most than if He had never died! What profit or real influence, as to any spiritual change, do any to count upon find? And think you all these things to be but words? They know Him not that feel not something of the efficacy of His death and resurrection in themselves.

Lack of experience a reason why the gospel is not received.

DOCTRINE THREE. Observe, *that the report concerning Christ is the main subject and errand that has been, and is, and will be common to all the ministers of the gospel to the end of the world.* It is *our report.* It was the report of all the prophets (Acts 10:43). "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him, should have remission of sins." They all agree and have a joint testimony in these:

Christ the subject common to all ministers of the gospel.

5. [Or: "do any considerable number find in themselves."E]

(1) In one subject: Christ and the same things concerning Him; as that the pardon of sin is to be gotten in Him and through faith in Him and no other way, etc.

(2) In one commission: they have all one commission, though they are not all equal. All are not apostles, yet all are ambassadors; there is the same authority for us to report and you to receive the gospel as if Isaiah or Paul were preaching; the authority depending on the commission and not on the persons of men who carry it.

(3) In one common end which they all have and in one common object they are sent to.

(4) In this: that they all hold of one common Master, being gifts of one and the same Mediator (Eph. 4:8), "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men, to some Apostles," etc.

Ministers' insufficiency not a reason to reject the gospel.

USE ONE. The first use is to teach you not to think the less of the testimony or matter testified because of these that testify to you. If Isaiah or Paul were testifying to you, you would get no other tidings, though their lives and way would be of another sort and stamp than ours are. Alas! for the most part we are warranted as well as they to make Christ known to you. Therefore take heed of rejecting the testimony of this Christ that we bear witness unto. It is the same Christ that the law and the prophets bear witness to; "there is not another name given under heaven, whereby a sinner can be saved." It is through Him that whosoever believes on Him may receive the remission of sins. In this you have not only us, but the prophets and apostles to deal with; yea, Jesus Christ and God Himself; and the rejecting of us will be found to be the rejecting of them. It is the same testimony on the matter that it was in Isaiah's time; and therefore tremble and fear, all you that slight the gospel; you have not us for your party, but all the prophets and Isaiah among the rest, and our Lord Jesus Christ who has said, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."

Harmony of the prophets a reason against atheists and hypocrites.

There will be many aggravations of the guilt of an unbeliever, and this will be a main one, even the testimony of all the prophets that concur to this truth which they have rejected. Take heed to this all you atheists that know not what it is to take with sin,⁶ and all you hypocrites that coin and counterfeit a religion of your own, and all you legal persons that lean to your own righteousness. What will you say when it shall be found that you have rejected all these testimonies? You must either say you counted them false witnesses, which you will not dare to say, or that you accounted them true and yet would not receive their testimony. And the best of these will be found sad enough; for if you counted them true, why did you not believe them? This will be a very pungent dilemma.

6. [*To Tak wit*; take with: 1. To allow, to admit.... 2. To own, to acknowledge for one's own.... (Jamieson).]

Use Two. For *comfort* to poor believers. They have good ground to receive and rest upon Jesus Christ; there is never a prophet, apostle or preacher of the gospel, but he has sealed this truth concerning Christ. What needs any sinner fear at Him or be fearful to close [*to come to terms*] with Him? Will you give credit to the testimony of Isaiah and of Peter (Acts 10:43) and of the rest of the prophets and apostles? Then receive their report and set yourselves to be among the number of believers that their testimony may be rested on. We are persuaded there is one of two that will follow on this doctrine; either a strong encouragement to and confirmation of believing and quietly resting on Jesus Christ for pardon of sin, or a great ground of aggravation of and expostulation with you for your guilt who care not whether you receive this report or not. We shall say no more for the time, but God bless this to you.

SERMON 2 ON ISAIAH 53:1

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

THE PROPHET ISAIAH is very solicitous about the fruit of his preaching when he has preached concerning Christ; as indeed it is not enough for ministers to preach and for people to hear, except some fruit follow. And now when he has been much in preaching and looks to others that have been much in that word, he sadly regrets the little fruit it had and would have among them, to whom Christ was and should be spoken of; a thing that in the entry should put us to be serious, lest this complaint of Isaiah stand on record against us, seeing he complains of the hearers of the gospel not only in his own time but in our time also.

We told you there were four things in this first part of the verse. I. The great errand that ministers have to a people; it is to report concerning Christ.¹ And besides what we observed from this head before, looking to the scope, we shall observe further:

(1) *The end that ministers should have before them in preaching Christ and the gospel, is that the hearers of it may be gained to Jesus Christ by hearing, so as they may be brought to believe on Him. It is in a word, to gain them to saving faith in Christ.*

Isaiah's end in preaching and what ministers' end should be.

(2) *It is implied that Jesus Christ is only to be proposed as the object of faith to be rested on by the hearers of the gospel and is the only ground of their*

1. [Durham continues under point "I" in the outline given in Sermon 1 on page 85.]

peace. There is no name that can be mentioned for the salvation of souls but this name only, and there is no other goſpel can be proposed but that which holds Him out to people.

Christ offered. (3) Observe (which is much the same with the former observation and to which we would ſpeak a little more particularly), *that by preaching of the goſpel, Jeſus Chriſt is laid before the hearers of it as the object of their faith and proposed to be believed upon by them, else there would be no ground of this complaint againſt them.* But wherever this goſpel is preached, there Chriſt is laid, as it were, at the foot or door of every ſoul that hears it, to be believed and reſted on. This is the great errand of the goſpel, to propoſe to people Jeſus Chriſt as the object and ground of faith, to lay Him down to be reſted on for that very end. When the apoſtle is ſpeaking of the doctrine of faith, he ſays (Rom. 10:[6–]8), “It is not now, who ſhall aſcend into heaven? nor who ſhall deſcend into the deep? but the word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” What word is that? “The word of faith which we preach.” Now, he ſays, Chriſt by the preaching of the goſpel is brought ſo near folks, that He is brought even to their hearts and to their mouths; ſo near that (to ſpeak ſo) people have no more to do but to ſtoop and take Him up or to roll themſelves over upon Him. Yea, it brings Him into their very heart that they have no more to do but to bring up their heart to conſent to cloſe the bargain and with the mouth to make confeſſion of it. And theſe words are the more conſiderable that they are borrowed from Deuteronomy 30, where Moſes is ſetting death and life before the people and bidding them chooſe. Though he would ſeem to ſpeak of the law, yet if we conſider the ſcope, we will find him to be on the matter ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt held forth to that people under ceremonial ordinances and ſhowing them that there was life to be had in Him that way, and according to God’s intent they had life and death put in their choiſe.

Faith objective and ſubjective, and what it is. I know there are two things neceſſary to the acting and exerciſing of faith. The firſt is objective, when the object or ground is propoſed in the preaching of the goſpel. The ſecond is ſubjective, when there is an inward, ſpiritual and powerful quickening and framing of the heart to lay hold on and make uſe of the object and offer. It is true that all to whom the offer comes are not quickened; but the doctrine ſays that to all to whom the goſpel comes, Chriſt is propoſed to be believed on by them and brought near unto them; ſo that we may ſay as Chriſt ſaid to His hearers, “The kingdom of God is come near unto you.” Both Chriſt and John brought and laid the kingdom of heaven near to the Jews and it is laid as near to you in the preached goſpel [Matt. 3:2; 4:17].

DOCTRINE. This is it then [what] the doctrine ſays: 1. That the goſpel holds out Chriſt as a ſufficient ground of faith to reſt upon. 2. And with a ſufficient warrant to theſe who hear it, to make uſe of Him according to the terms on which He is offered. 3. And it brings Him ſo preſſingly

home as He is laid to the doors and hearts of sinners who hear the gospel, that whoever has the offer, he must necessarily either believe in and receive Christ or reject Him and cast at [*scorn*] the report made of Him in the gospel.

I shall first a little confirm this DOCTRINE and then secondly make use of it. First, I shall confirm it from these grounds:

1. From the plain offers which the Lord makes in His Word and from the warrant He gives His ministers to make the same offers; it is their commission to pray them to be reconciled to whom they are sent, to tell them “that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (as it is in 2 Corinthians 5:19–20), and in Christ’s stead to request them to embrace the offer of reconciliation; to tell them that Christ died for the sinners that will embrace Him and that He will impute His righteousness unto them; and (2 Cor. 6:1, 2) “We beseech you that ye receive not this grace in vain”; which is not meant of saving grace, but of the gracious offer of grace and reconciliation through Him. This is ministers’ work, to pray people not to be idle hearers of this gospel; for He says, “I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation have I succored thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” The force of the argument is this, if you will make this gospel welcome, you may get a hearing; for now is the day of salvation, therefore do not neglect it. So in Psalm 81:10–11 (where God makes the offer of Himself and that very largely), “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” The offer is of Himself as the words following clear; “My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me”; for they that refuse His word, refuse Himself. And hence He says (Isa. 65:1), “I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name”; and to the Jews, “I have stretched out my hands all day long to a rebellious people.”

Of the gospel call and the largeness of the offer.

2. We may clear and confirm it from these similitudes by which the offer of this gospel is, as it were, brought to the doors of people, and there are several similitudes made use of to this purpose. I shall name but four.

(1) It is set down under the expression of wooing, as 2 Corinthians 11:2, “I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” This is ordinary and supposes a marriage and a bridegroom that is by his friends wooing and suiting in marriage; so that (as we show) wherever the call of the gospel comes, it is a bespeaking of souls to Him. “What shall we do for our sister in the day that she shall be spoken for” (Song. 8:8)?

(2) It is set out under the expression of inviting to a feast; and hearers of the gospel are called to come to Christ as strangers or guests are called to come to a wedding feast (Matt. 22:2–4). “All things are ready, come to the wedding,” etc. Thus the gospel calls not to an empty house that lacks meat, but to a banqueting house where Christ is made ready as the cheer, and there lacks no more but feasting on Him. So it is set out under the similitude of eating and drinking (John 6:57). “He that eats me, even he shall live by me.”

(3) It is set out often under the expression or similitude of a market, where all the wares are laid forth on the stand (Isa. 55:1). “Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters;” etc. And lest it should be said or thought that the proclamation is only to the thirsty and such as are so and so qualified; you may look to what follows, “Let him that has no money come; yea, come, buy without money and without price.” And to the offer that is made to those of Laodicea (Rev. 3), who in appearance were a hypocritical and formal people, yet to them the counsel and call comes forth, “Come buy of me eyesalve, gold tried in the fire,” etc. It says the wares are even in their offer or even offered to them.

(4) It is set out under the similitude of a standing and knocking at a door because the gospel brings Christ as knocking and calling hard at sinners’ doors (Rev. 3:20). “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” So by the sleepy bride it is said (Song. 5:2), “It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh”; and in Psalm 24:7–10 it is cried, “Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in”; which is an earnest invitation to make way for Christ Jesus, wanting nothing but an entry into the heart, whereby we may see how near Christ comes in the gospel and is laid to folks’ hands.

3. We may confirm it from the nature of faith and of the obedience that is required to be given to the command of believing. Wherever this gospel comes, it ties and obliges all the hearers to believe on Christ, that is, to receive and welcome Him; and there could be no receiving of Him if He were not making an offer of Himself. Thus it is said (John 1:11–12), “He came unto his own, but his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” He came to both these who received Him and to these who received Him not; but He gave to believers only this privilege of sonship. If we look to all the names of faith, as coming to Christ, eating and drinking of Him, receiving of Him, resting on Him, etc., they all suppose that Christ is near to be caught hold of and within speaking and trying terms² to people that hear the gospel.

4. It may be confirmed from the many sad complaints that the Lord has for not receiving Him and not believing His Word and from the dreadful designations by which He holds out the sin of unbelief; all which will make out this, that God lays Christ at sinners’ door in His Word. Hence our Lord says (John 5:40), “Ye will not come unto me, that ye may get life.” And in Matthew 23:37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and ye would not!” This was it that did aggravate their sin, that He would, and they would not. So in Psalm 81:11, “My people would not hearken to my voice and Israel would none of me”; and in Luke 7:30, it is said

2. [*Trying terms*: Terms of engagement. *Trying*: *Tryst*: v. n. To engage to meet or to meet with. v. n. To enter into mutual engagements (Jamieson).]

the “Scribes and Pharisees rejected the counsel of God against themselves”; and in Acts 13:46 when the Jews rejected Christ, it is said, “they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life”; and therefore the apostles say that they will “leave them, and turn to the Gentiles.”

5. We may confirm it from this, that in respect of the gospel and offer made in it, Christ comes alike near to all that hear it; for if He be near to some, then He is near to all, I mean in regard of an objective nearness; there is the same warrant to speak and make the offer to all, before there be some discovery made for qualifying the doctrine to some. It is true, there is a difference in respect of the power that accompanies the gospel; but as it lays out the offer of Christ and life through Him, it comes alike near to all the hearers of it. The invitation comes to all and in the same terms to them that refuse as well as to them that receive Him; the same gospel is preached to both.

Christ brought
near in gospel
offer to all alike.

6. A sixth confirmation is from the nature of God’s administration of His external covenant, which is sealed in baptism to both; not one covenant to one and another covenant to another, but the same covenant to both on condition of believing. Behold then, in the preaching of this gospel, that Christ comes near you, even to your door in respect of the mediate ordinances; as near as He did to Abraham and David, although God had His extraordinary ways of manifesting Himself to them not common to others. Yea, this day the gospel is more clear objectively to you than it was to Abraham, who rejoiced to see Christ’s day afar off when it was veiled. Yea the gospel is as clearly preached to you as those who are now before the throne of God had it preached to them, as to the matter of it, though we will make no equality as to the manner of it.

USE ONE. Advert to this, when you come to hear the gospel preached and think how you are living in trying terms with God and how near Christ comes unto you, the Word of faith lays Him so near that you have no more to do but to receive the offer of Him, to believe and close with Him and step in upon Him, as it were, to come as living stones to be built upon Him as a sure foundation.

QUESTION. But it will be asked, “How comes this gospel so near? How does it bring in Christ so near to sinners?” ANSWER: In these five steps:

1. As it makes the report of Christ and brings the tidings of such things, as that He is born and that He has suffered and for such an end that we may partake of the benefit of them on such terms; it makes the proclamation narratively and tells what He did, what good may be gotten of Him and how we may come by it.

2. As it brings an offer of these good things on the terms on which they are to be gotten, so it never tells that Christ is come but it says also, ‘Here is life to be gotten in Him by you if you will take the way proposed to come by it.’ Therefore when the proclamation comes forth, “that all things

are ready,” the next word is, “Come to the wedding.” And when in the one word He says, “I stand at the door and knock,” at the next He says, “If any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” And when it is said (Isa. 28:16), “He is a precious cornerstone, a tried foundation stone laid in Zion”; the next word is, “He that believes on him shall not make haste,” or as the apostle has it, “shall not be ashamed or confounded” [1 Pet. 2:6–7]. This makes the gospel glad tidings because it comes always with an offer of Christ and of life in Him.

3. When the offer is made and the precious wares are exposed to sale in this cried [*heralded*] fair of grace, a command comes out, ‘Choose life, come buy the wares, believe, receive the offer,’ as is clear in all the places we named before. It leaves not folk indifferent to receive or not, but charges them, as they would be obedient to a command, to receive Him (1 John 3:23). “This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” This is the great gospel command and ministers have not only the telling of these news and warrant to make the offer, but a commission to command to receive it; and therefore the sitting [*neglecting*,^E *resisting*] and slighting of the offer is a sin opposite to the command.

4. It not only makes the offer and backs the offer with a command to embrace it, but it sweetens the command with many gracious promises knit to it, as Isaiah 55:3, “Hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” And whenever the command of believing comes, it is always with a promise, as Paul deals with the jailor in Acts 16:31. “Believe, and thou shalt be saved.” And in Mark 16:16 the Lord says, “They that believe shall be saved,” to encourage to faith in Him.

Promises &
threatenings
leave men
inexcusable.

5. It presses the offer and commands embracing of it with the promise with a certification; for the offer is not conditional, but alternative (Mark 16:16). “If ye believe not, ye shall be damned.” So in Deuteronomy 30, death and life are proposed and they are bidden choose. If the gospel is not effectual in its commands and promises, it will be effectual in its threatenings. The Word of God will triumph one way or the other and not return to Him void (as is very clear in Isaiah 55:11; 2 Corinthians 2:15–16); it triumphs in some, while they are brought by the promise to give obedience to the command of believing, and to them it becomes the savor of life unto life; and to others it triumphs as to the execution of the threatening on them for their unbelief, and to them it becomes the savor of death unto death. In a word, Christ Jesus comes so near people in this gospel that He must either be chosen and life with Him, or refused, to the destruction and death of the refuser. You have the same Christ, the same word, the same covenant, the same obligation to believe proposed to you that believers from the beginning of the world had; and another you will not get. And what more can the gospel do to bring Christ near to you? When it brings Him

so near that you have Him in your offer and the authority of God and His promises interposed to persuade you to accept of the offer, and threatenings added to certify you that if you accept it not, you shall perish. In which respect, we may say as the prophet Isaiah does (Isa. 5:4), “What could God do more to his vineyard, which he hath not done?” as to the holding out of the object of faith, Jesus Christ, to be rested on by you.

OBJECTIONS. 1. But some will, it may be, object here; “But if there come not life and power with the offer, it will not do the turn; we cannot believe, nor receive the offer.” ANSWER. Whose fault is this that you lack ability? It is not God’s fault. You have a sure ground to believe. His work is a warrant good enough. The promises are free enough; the motives sweet enough. The great fault is a heart of unbelief in you that you will not believe in Christ, nor open to Him when He is brought to your door. I doubt, yea I put it out of doubt, that when all that ever heard the gospel shall stand before the throne, there shall be one found that shall dare to make this excuse that they were not able to receive Christ. The gospel brings Christ so near them that they must either say, yea or nay; it is not so much, “I cannot,” as “I will not believe”; and that will be found a willful and malicious refusal.

The inability of man not a sufficient plea for their unbelief.

2. It may be objected, “But how can this gospel come to all alike, seeing it cannot be that these that will never get good of the gospel, have it as near to them as these that get the saving fruit of it?” ANSWER. Not to speak of God’s purpose or what He intends to make of it, nor of the power and fruit that accompanies it to some and not to all, it is certain the gospel and Christ in its offer comes alike near to all that hear it. It objectively reveals the same glad tidings to all, with the conditional offer of life and with the same command and encouragement and certification in threatenings as well as promises. In these respects, Christ is brought alike near to all, and when God comes to reckon, He will let sinners know in that day that the gospel came to their door and was refused. Yea it comes, and where it comes, [it] will take hold of some to pluck them out of the snare and be [a] ground of faith to them, and to others it will be a ground of challenge and so the savor of death unto death. For though it take not effect as to its promises in all, nor in its threatenings to all; yet as to either death or life, it will take effect in everyone, so as if life is refused, death steps in the room of it.

QUESTION. But it may be asked, “Why will God have Christ in the offer of the gospel brought so near the hearers of it?”

ANSWER. 1. Because it serves to commend the grace and love of God in Christ Jesus. When the invitation is so broad that it is to all, it speaks out the royalty of the feast, upon which ground it is called *grace* (2 Cor. 6:1), the offer is so large and wide.

2. Because it serves for warranting and confirming the elect in the receiving of this offer; for none of the elect could receive Him if He were not even laid to their door. It is this which gives us warrant to receive that

which God offers. It is not because we are elected or beloved of God before time or because He purposed to do us good that we believe; these are not grounds of faith, being God's secret will. But we believe because God calls and makes the offer, invites and promises, knowing that He is faithful and we may trust Him. Hence David says, "I will never forget thy word" [Ps. 119:16] and "In God will I praise his word" [Ps. 56:10]; for the word in its offer speaks alike to all and to none particularly. Indeed, when it comes to the application of promises for consolation, that is to be made according to the qualifications in the persons, but the offer is to all.

3. Because by this means the Lord has the fairer access to found His quarrel and controversy against unbelievers and to make their dittay³ and doom the clearer in the Day of the Lord, when it is found that they never received the offer. "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me; therefore I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels" [Ps. 81:11–12]; and this is an approbation given to justice here, 'it is well-waired [*it is but just*],^E seeing they would not receive Thee that they get worse in Thy room.'

USE TWO. Seeing Christ comes near you in this gospel and this is one of the market days, I entreat you while He is near, receive Him, call upon Him while He is near. Or take it in the plain words of the apostle: open to Him, take Him in, give Him welcome while He bodes Himself on you, to say so. There is not a conscience in any man that hears this gospel but He will have this testimony from Him in it, that He came near them, was in their sight and within their reach and grips, as it were, if they would have put out their hand to receive Him. And seeing it is so, O! receive this gospel, give Him room; while He is content to sup with you, take Him in, make sure your union with Him. This is the end why this report is made and Christ is laid before you, even that you may lay yourselves over on Him.

I would follow this use a little, by way of *exhortation* and *expostulation* jointly, seeing the doctrine will bear both; for when Christ is brought so near, even to the mouth and to the heart, it will be great ground of reproof and expostulation if He shall be rejected. Be exhorted therefore to be in earnest, seeing: (1) It is a matter of such concernment to you. Many nations, kings and kingdoms have not had Christ so near them as you have; neglect not such an opportunity. Do you think that all that is said in the gospel concerning this is for naught? Is it for no use that such a report is made and preaching continued so long among you? And if it is for any use, is it not for this, that you may receive the report and may by doing so get your souls for a prey? To what use will preaching be if this use and end of it is missed? Will your hearing the gospel make your peace with God if Christ is not received?

(2) Consider the advantages you may have by receiving the gospel that others have not. Is it a little thing to be called to God's feast, to be married

3. [*Dittay*: Scottish Law: the grounds of indictment.]

to Christ, to be made friends with God and to enjoy Him forever? The day comes when it will be thought an advantage, and are there motives to persuade to anything, like those that are to induce to that?

(3) Consider what it is that we require of you. It is no strange nor hard thing; it is but believing. And this is nothing else but that the report concerning Christ be received, yea that He be received for your own good. That is it that the gospel calls you to, even to betake yourself to a physician for cure, to betake yourself to a cautioner⁴ for your debt. If you could escape a reckoning and wrath another way, it were something; but when there is no other way but this to obtain pardon of sin and peace or to escape wrath and obtain favor and friendship with God, and when this way (to speak so) is made so easy that it is but to stoop down and to take up Christ at your foot as it were or to roll yourselves on Him, how inexcusable will you unbelievers be when you shall be arraigned before His tribunal?

(4) But, look a little farther to what is coming. If you were to live always here, it were hard enough to live at a feud with God; but have you faith of a judgment after death? If so, how will you hold up your faces in that day that now refuse Christ? Will not horrible confusion be the portion of many then? And will any ground of confusion be like this, the slighting of Christ? When He shall be seen coming to judge slights of Him, what horror will then rise in consciences when He shall appear and be avenged on them that were not obedient to this gospel? as is most clear in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, “When our Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, with his mighty angels from heaven, to take vengeance on all that know not God, and obey not the gospel.”

(5) Consider that death and life are now in your option, in your hand as it were; choose or refuse. I speak not, nor plead here for free-will, but of your willing electing of that which you have offered to you; for one of two will be: either you shall willingly choose life, which is a fruit of grace, or refuse life and choose death, which will be found the native fruit of your corruption. You may have life by receiving Christ, who is laid to your door; and if you refuse Him, death will follow it: as now in hearing this gospel, you carry in choosing or refusing, so will the sentence pass on you at the great day; and so your sentence in a manner is written down with your own hand as it is said (Acts 13:46), “Ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,” not out of humility, but maliciously. Now, when the matter is of such concernment, beware of playing the fool. If you will continue presumptuous and secure, following your idols, what will the Lord say, but, ‘Let it be so, you get no wrong when you get your own choice?’ and He but, as it were, ratifies the sentence which you have passed on yourselves.

(6) I shall add but this one word more and beseech you that you would

4. [Cautioner: Scottish Law: one who becomes a *surety* for another’s debt (OED). Durham uses this term extensively throughout these sermons.]

Free will not to be pleaded for, though moral suasion be used.

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.

II. DOCTRINE. The second thing¹ is 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 Romans 10:16 and John 12:38, we showed that it is saving faith that is here to be understood.

Duty to believe the gospel.

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.

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 exposition 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 prejudices men of Christ and of the benefits of the gospel.

Believing ceases not to be a duty though ability lacking.

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 and you would not seek after, nor call for another. I shall first premit³ two distinctions to clear this and then secondly confirm it.

All hearers have warrant to believe.

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.

Gospel: A covenant form on condition of belief; or as it holds forth a promise.

1. [See the outline in Sermon 1 on page 85.]

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

3. [*Premit*: To promise, to remark before something else; Lat. *praemitt-ere* (Jamieson).]

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 in Hebrews 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 baptized 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.

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 slights 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 recompense 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

Faith as it flows from God’s Word and ordinances, the best dependence.

reason why the gospel is called *grace*. “We beseech you that ye receive not this grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1); “I do not frustrate the grace of God” (Gal. 2:21). For many get the warrant and pass to come and receive Christ, who put it up in their 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.

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.

Believing both
required and
commanded.

We shall first confirm and then make use of this branch of the DOCTRINE.

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 “Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). It is the only command which Paul proposes to the jailer, Believe in the Lord Jesus, etc. (Acts 16:31).

(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 Matthew 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.

(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. Faith, the several kinds and properties of it.

[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. I say there may be 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 in James 2:19), "To believe and tremble." There are many, who if they believe Christ to be God and man and the Word to be Historical faith.

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.

[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.

[3] A third sort of faith is *temporary faith*, spoken of in Matthew 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 [if] 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 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.

[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 [*flash*] 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 insofar 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. Saving faith.

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 regrave [*lament; complaint*] which holds out the sin is, *Who hath believed our report?* {and therefore the great duty must be to believe and by faith to receive the report.}² 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.

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 insofar 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

1. [Doctrine II Branch 2 continued (see pp 85, 101.)]

2. [The text between braces was omitted in the 2001/2007 edition.]

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 a 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 a 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}.³ 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.

2. When we speak of faith, we would permit 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 permit 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

True faith in its different actings and degrees considered.

3. [*Puts it over*: Pulls it through or over. *March*: Border (Jamieson). Similarly, while not in OED or Jamieson, *Bound-road* here probably means 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 other as the 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 permit 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 Hebrews 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.

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 warmness 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 they believe if they be convinced of sin, 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,⁴ 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."⁵ 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 [who] 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 [Luke 13:24–25]. 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 embassy [*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

4. [This place: i.e. Glasgow.]

5. [Cf. Hebrews 3:7–8, 15; 4:7, Psalm 95:7–8.]

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 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 in Psalm 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.

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 unhumbled sinner. It is the poor humbled soul that will take it up; and to such a soul, half a word will help to take it up.

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 Matthew 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

Saving faith:
What it is.

True marks of
saving faith:
Come to Christ.

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 Romans 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.

(2) The second expression is in John 1:12, where faith is held forth as a Receive Christ. 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.⁶ 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.

(3) A third expression is in Philippians 3:12, where faith is set out as an Apprehend Christ. *apprehending* of Christ, and in Hebrews 6:18, it is called a *laying hold* on the hope set before us, and in Isaiah 56:4, 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.

(4) A fourth expression is *rolling* or *casting* of ourselves over upon the Lord, as in Psalm 55:22, “Cast thy burden on the Lord,” and Psalm 37:5, “Commit thy way to the Lord.” It is on the margin, “Roll thyself on the Lord,” or “rest,” as it is in verse 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.

(5) A fifth expression is Romans 10:3, where it is called a Submit to Christ. *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

6. [WSC Q&A 31.]

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, faith carves not to God the way to *{of}*¹⁶⁸³ salvation, but sweetly submits to the way He has carved out.

(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 Proverbs 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 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. 26:20 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.

(7) A seventh expression is in 2 Chronicles 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.

(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,⁷ and makes the heart to open to take in Christ; as one worded it well and significantly, “My heart clecked [*clutched eagerly*] as a linseed boll to Christ.”⁸ 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.

(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 Romans 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 cohabitare with Him; though confession will be readily with the mouth also as He calls for it.

Marry Christ.

(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] Revelation 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.

Buy!

It is held forth by several other expressions in the Scripture; it is called a *cleaving to the Lord* or *sticking to him* (Joshua 23:8; Acts 11:23), and it is called *hearing, hearkening, and inclining of the ear* (Isa. 55:2–3), an attentive concerned and holily greedy listening to and taking hold of this offer. It is a cleaving to the Lord as woodbine or ivy cleaves to an oak because its life depends on it. And it is called a *choosing of the Lord* (Deut. 30:19; Joshua 24:15) 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.

Cleave to Christ.

7. [Or: ‘with the Word, raises good and strong inclinations within.’^E]

8. [It is not clear to whom Durham refers and this statement could not be traced.]

Commit your-
self 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 lippen 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 blank⁹ 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?*

9. [*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 bygone 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.

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.*

Only means to the promise.

Benefits of a received gospel, & 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 3:18), "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. "It is by faith we obtain victory over the world" (1 John 5:4). It was by faith that all the worthies spoken of there in Hebrews 11 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 [*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

1. [This is Branch Three under the doctrine for section II. See page 85 and page 101.]

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.

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 in some generals spoken of before we shall 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.

Mistakes about the exercise of 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.

Beware of resting on doctrinal (historical) faith.

(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.

Real faith in the truth of the Word not saving.

(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 Exodus 14:31, "The people believed the Lord"; and Psalm 106:12, "Then they believed his word, and sang his praise"; and John 2:23-24, "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 Matthew 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 Corinthians 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 avouching of the same.

[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

The faith of devils.

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 {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.

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

Mistakes about
justifying faith.

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 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. 13:20–21), 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 glad 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 cannot abide that and so all his joy evanishes.

There is something like this in temporary faith, where some remote expectation of salvation will cause a carnal joy and gladness. 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, {upon which ground it is that many

hath put him to grief; observe *that the Lord Jehovah had the main and principal hand in all the sufferings of this innocent Mediator*. It was not the Jews nor the scribes and Pharisees, nor Pilate; but it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief; as is clear in Acts 4:27–28. “Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” In all that they did, they were but doing that which was carved out before in the eternal counsel of God; and therefore Peter says in Acts 2:23, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” The Lord’s hand was supreme in the business; and we may gather the supreme and sovereign influence of the Lord’s hand in these three respects in Christ’s sufferings:

God’s overruling hand in the sufferings of the Messiah.

1. In respect of His appointing them; it was concluded in the counsel of God what He should suffer, what should be the price that Jehovah would have and the sacrifice that He would accept of from His hand.

2. In respect of the ordering and overruling of His sufferings, when it came to the execution of His ancient decree; He, who governs all the counsels, thoughts and actions of men, did in a special manner govern and overrule the sufferings of the Mediator. Though wicked men were following their own design and were stirred and acted by the devil, who is said to have put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ; yet God had the ordering of all, who should betray Him, what death He should die, how He should be pierced and yet not a bone of Him broken.

3. In respect of His having had a hand actively in them; and as He was the chief party that pursued Christ, it was He that was exacting the elect’s debt of Him; therefore the Lord looks over Pilate and Herod to Him and says to Pilate [John 19:11], “Thou couldst have no power over me, except it were given thee from above”; and to His Father, ‘Father, take this cup from me’ [Luke 22:42]; and “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He was pursued as standing cautioner in our room; in which respect it is said, “He that spared not his own Son” [Rom. 8:32]; He spared Him not when He cried, but would have Him drink out the cup; and Zechariah 13:7, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, smite the shepherd.” The message comes from Him and He gives the sword a charge and orders it to smite Him. In all which respects it is said, *The Lord bruised him, and he hath put him to grief*. It was this, more than sword or nails or spear or whip, that made Him cry out; another and a higher hand brought His sinless soul to more bitterness than all the sufferings He endured from men.

USE. This leads us in to the vindicating of the sovereign and holy providence of God in that wherein men have a most sinful hand and are most inexcusable. Though Judas that betrayed and Pilate that condemned the innocent Son of God, acted most sinfully; yet the Lord Himself has an active

overruling hand in carrying on His own design; and what Judas and Pilate, with other wicked men did, was so far from being by guess, that they were the executions of His ancient decrees. And He is most pure and spotless in venting and manifesting grace, holiness and justice, when men were venting their corruptions, impiety and injustice most; therefore the holy providence of God mixes no more as to any sinful participation with men's sin in their sinful and wicked actings, than the covenant of redemption mixed itself with the sinfulness of them that crucified Christ. Nay, this is a principal diamond in His crown, that He cannot only govern all the natural second causes that are in the world in their several courses and actings and order them to His own glory, but even devils and wicked men and hypocrites, their most corrupt and abominable actions, and make them infrustrably subservient to the promoting [*advancing*] of His own holy ends and purposes, and yet be free of their sin for which they shall [ac]count to Him. And as it was no excuse to Judas nor to Pilate that they did what before was decreed of God; so it shall be no excuse to any man in a sinful course that God has a hand in everything that comes to pass, who yet is just and holy in all. It may also stay our hearts when the devil and his instruments, as it were, are running mad; that they can do no more than what God permits, nay, some way commissionates them to do. The devil could not so much as touch a tail of one of Job's sheep, without leave asked and given. "O the depth both of the knowledge, and of the wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out!" [Rom. 11:33].

DOCTRINE THREE. As we may see here {the concurrence of the persons of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and holy Ghost,}¹ the concurrence of Jehovah with the Mediator for carrying on the same design, the work of man's redemption (for it pleased them all), so taking the Lord Jehovah essentially as comprehending all the three persons, we may observe that *the Lord is well-willed to and has delight in prosecuting the work of redemption*, though even to the bruising of the second person of the Godhead, considered as He became man and Mediator. Not that He delighted in the sufferings as such of His innocent Son, for He afflicts not willingly the children of men; but considering the end and the effects that were to follow, to wit, the seed that He should beget to eternal life and the captives whom He was to redeem. In that respect it was not only not against His will, but it pleased Him well, or as the word is in the New Testament, it was His good pleasure, alluding as it is likely, to this of the prophet. Hence, when Christ speaks of the work of redemption, He calls it the Father's *will* and *work*; the Father's *will* when He says, "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me" [John 6:38]; the Father's *work* while He says [John 17:4], "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." And here it is called His *pleasure*, for there was nothing without [*outside*] Himself to move Him to it; when He might have

God delights
in prosecuting
the work of
redemption.

1. [The text between braces was omitted in the 2001/2007 edition.]

2. Who makes intercession? It is not enough that Christ as man makes intercession; but it is Christ Mediator, God and man in one person; it being an error of the Papiſts to make the intercession of Christ to be a thing performed by the human nature only, which lessens the consolation of believers and is inconsistent with the union of the two natures and detracts from the weight that His Godhead gives to His intercession.

3. For whom does He intercede? There are here extremes on both hands to be eschewed. (1) Some make His intercession over broad as if He interceded for all the world. This He expressly denies (John 17:9), “I pray not for the world”; and His intercession being grounded on His death and satisfaction, it must be of equal extent therewith and must relate to the covenant of redemption, wherein so many were given Him to be redeemed by His death. (2) Others make His intercession so narrow in making it only for them that actually believe. He also refutes this opinion (John 17:20), by saying, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for all that shall believe on me through their word.” And it is always on this ground that He intercedes, to wit, because “they are given”; so that it is for the elect, converted or unconverted that He intercedes.

And not common to all, nor conditional.

The reason why we mark this is to overturn thereby two corrupt distinctions that are made use of, to bring in a universal intercession as well as an universal redemption. (1) Some make His intercession common to all; but we, according to the Scripture, acknowledge no such intercession to belong to Christ, especially as Mediator. However, He might as man, under the law, have prayed for some that shall not be actually saved, as He commands one man to pray for other men, yet not for all men simply. (2) Others make a conditional intercession for all as they make a conditional redemption of all⁵ and make both absolute for believers only, which is also corrupt. For considering the object of His intercession as

5. [See Durham’s commentary on Revelation, Excurses 15. “In the third place, this opinion [of universal redemption] will not be found consistent with reasons drawn from the Scripture, as 1. It cannot be denied but Christ’s satisfaction and intercession must be of equal extent, seeing they are both parts of His priestly office; and it is His satisfaction that regulates (to say so) His intercession. Now it is clear in Scripture that Christ’s intercession is qualified by God’s decree of election, therefore He prays (John 17), *For these whom God hath given Him*: whereby it is not only implied, that He does not pray for the world which were not given Him, but expressly He does exclude them, *I pray not for the world*, says He (v. 9). Therefore, it must be supposed, that He did no way die for the world, seeing He does not pray for them, because He did not satisfy for them; and He did not satisfy for them, because they were not given unto Him. And we can no more say that there is a conditional satisfying for, and redeeming of, all, than we can say, that there is a conditional praying for all; and we cannot say, that there is a conditional intercession for all, seeing He does so expressly, and absolutely exclude the reprobate world from His prayers; and upon that implied ground, because God did not own them as His, and had not given them to the Mediator to be owned and redeemed by Him; therefore He does solemnly disown them.” On Revelation (2000), p. 399.]

Mediator, to be only the elect as indeed they are, it overturns both this and the former opinion. If He prayed not for all, He died not for all; the one whereof is grounded on the other.

4. For what does He intercede? In general, for all that is conditioned to Him in the covenant, for the behoove of His people. He prays for the fulfilling of all the articles of the covenant, as: that all the elect, who are not regenerate, may be regenerate and made believers, {that many through His knowledge may be justified; that these that are regenerate and believers}⁶ and by faith have betaken themselves to Him, may be justified, pardoned and received in favor, friendship and fellowship with God; that believers may be kept from temptation; that temptations may be prevented and they made to persevere; that Satan may not make their faith to fail them as he designs;⁷ that they and their prayers and service may be accepted; that the suits and supplications that they present and put up in His name, may get a hearing; that they may be armed against the fear of death; that they may be carried on in the gradual advances of sanctification, to the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls; that they may be glorified and be where He is, to behold His glory. In a word, He intercedes for everything needful and for everything promised to them, His intercession being as broad as His purchase.

5. How does He perform this part of His priestly office for His people? (1) It is performed by His entry into the most holy place in our nature and name as having satisfied justice and vanquished death, where He appears before God for us; so that we are to look to Christ's being in heaven, not simply as glorifying Himself or as glorified in Himself for Himself, but as our head and forerunner to answer all that can be said against His elect for whom He suffered and satisfied, as it is in Hebrews 9:23–24. "It was therefore necessary, that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices; for Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." So that our Lord Jesus by His entry into heaven declares (I mean materially) His victory in our name and appears there as a public and not as a private person. His entry into heaven is not to be looked on as the entry of Moses or of Elias, but as the entry of Him who is Head of the elect, whose entry there is a declaration of what He would be at. As by the power of His Godhead, He conveyed Himself in thither; so He has taken possession in our name and according to the covenant declares that these whose room He sustains, may and must be admitted to glory; and we must conceive a special efficacy in His being there, for procuring to them what He has purchased.

6. [The words in braces were omitted in the 2001/2007 editions.]

7. And the Lord gives account of his [*Satan's*] design in Luke 22:32, "Satan hath sought to winnow you, but I have prayed that thy faith fail not."

(2) His intercession is performed through the efficacy of His blood and satisfaction, flowing from the nature of the covenant, which has a moral real cry for making effectual what He by His death has procured; as the apostle says, speaking of Abel's blood and of making application of Christ's blood (Heb. 12:24), "It speaketh better things than the blood of Abel"; for Abel's blood had a demerit in it to cry guilt and could not but have a curse following it, because God had cursed the shedder of blood; but Christ's blood, considered as the price of redemption for the elect, has an invaluable and inconceivable merit and worth in it and must have a cry for the blessings purchased to them by it.

(3) He performs this His intercession by His constant care and by His continual willingness and actual willing that what He has purchased for His elect people may be applied to them, that such and such persons may be brought to believe, that upon their believing they may be pardoned, delivered from snares and temptations, kept in favor with God, may be accepted in their performances, etc. For He had that prayer in John 17:20, 24, and He continues to have that same sympathy. His way on earth was always sinless, but now is glorious and majestic, suited to His glorified state. He continues to intercede according as He intended, and His actual willingness is a main part of His intercession, which is not in renewing of acts (to speak so), but in His continuing desire and willingness that what good He has purchased may be conferred according to the covenant. For Christ in heaven is still a true man and has a will as He had on earth, continuing to seek that they may be glorified with Him for whom He satisfied. And this actual willing, desiring and affecting that such a thing should be, is called His intercession, because it cannot but be so esteemed as to have the effect to follow according to the covenant, as He says (John 11:41-42), "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always." This as to His actual willing, cannot but be in heaven; however, we are sure that He is there and in our name and that His death and blood-shed has an efficacy to bring about what He has purchased, and that His will and affection are the same and have an efficacy with them and the effect certainly following, so as nothing can go wrong there, more than a *{the}*¹⁶⁸³ man that has a just cause in a court of judicature and an able advocate with much moyen [*influence; standing*] to agent and plead it before a just judge, can be wronged or lose His cause.

6. The grounds of His intercession are: (1) The excellency of His person, who though He be man, yet He is God also, equal with the Father, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power (as it is in Hebrews 1:2), which cannot but add weight to His intercession as well as to His satisfaction, the person that intercedes being God.

(2) The second is His satisfaction, which is the ground of His intercession;

for upon His satisfaction He makes intercession, even as if a cautioner would say, 'I have paid such a man's debt and therefore he ought to be absolved.' Therefore these two are joined (1 John 2:1-2), "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." So they are joined in Romans 8:34. "It is Christ that died, who is at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us."

(3) The covenant of redemption is the great ground on which His intercession is founded; such and such persons are given to Christ and such privileges and benefits offered to be conferred upon them, on condition the Mediator would undertake and satisfy for them; and He having undertaken and paid the price, there is good ground for His interceding for the making application of the purchase. Therefore He says (John 17:6), "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me," etc. This gives Him right to plead and intercede for them; seeing He has endured soul-travail for them, He ought to see His seed and to have many justified and freed from the curse and condemnation that they were obnoxious to as the fruit of that sore soul-travail.

Of Christ's oneness with the Father in His intercession; mistakes explained.

In and from the consideration of these, we may gather what is the nature of Christ's intercession and how we may make use of it and how particularly we should beware of a carnal mistake in many about His intercession as if He were praying in heaven as a distinct party from God. It is true, He is a distinct person of the glorious Trinity, but not a distinct party in interceding as some ignorantly conceive of Him; and therefore think Him easier to have access to than the Father and therefore will pray Him to pray the Father for them, as if when they prayed to Him they were not praying to the Father, or as if there were not one object of worship. This flows from ignorance of the nature of Christ's intercession and is unbecoming a Christian; for supposing a man to rest by faith on Christ, the Father is content and well pleased to pardon him as well as the Son is because He is engaged in the covenant of redemption so to do; and if he be not a believer, neither the Father nor the Son will respect him. Our making use of Christ's intercession consists rather in the founding of our hope of speeding [*succeeding*] with God on it as on His satisfaction than in putting up words of prayer to Him to intercede for us, as if He were to pray in heaven as He did on earth or as one man intercedes for another. The point is sublimely spiritual and someway tickle [*thorny; difficult*],⁸ and I indeed fear to enter on more uses, at least for the time. Only remember that He is an intercessor; and learn to make right use of Him as an intercessor. And the Lord Himself make the benefit of His intercession forthcoming to us.

8. [This does not mean *critical* as rendered in the 1723 London edition.]

SERMON 67 ON ISAIAH 53:12

Isaiah 53:12. And he made intercession for the transgressors.

IF CHRIST WERE known in the greatness and vast extent of His worth, O! how lovely would He be! How incomprehensibly full are His offices of grounds of consolation to His people! But the mean [*base*] and low thoughts we have of Him and the poor consolation we feed on, do evidence much ignorance of Him and much unbelief of the solid worth and fullness that is in Him and in His priestly office in particular; and yet O! how full of consolation is it! “Such a high priest became us” (Heb. 7:26), even such a high priest as sinners had need of. There has been much spoken of one part of His priesthood, to wit, His *sacrifice* and offering up of Himself in the former verses of this chapter. Now, ere the prophet close, He gives a hint of the other part of His priestly office, to wit, of His *intercession*, a main commendation of Christ’s fullness. It is that which evidences Him to be a Savior, “able to save to the uttermost such as come unto God through him, because he lives forever to make intercession for them,” as it is in Hebrews 7:25. And it is a piece of the consolation of God’s people that Jesus Christ has this office by the Father’s allowance and that it is articulated in the covenant of redemption between the Father and Him, that as He shall *pour out his soul unto death, be numbered with transgressors, bear the sins of many, so he shall make intercession for the transgressors*. Therefore He is said (Heb. 7:21), ‘to be made an high priest with an oath by him that said unto him; The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek’ (Ps. 110:4). He was a priest on earth, by offering Himself in a sacrifice and by interceding for elect sinners; and He is a priest in heaven by His intercession and therefore is preferred to all the priests on earth, “Who did not continue by reason of death, but he continues forever” [v. 23], and none can start him wrong,¹ to speak so with reverence of Him.

We showed in our entering on this verse that this His intercession is not to be astricted to His prayer on the cross, that was but one {*an*}¹⁶⁸ evidence or particular instance of it; but it takes in His whole intercession because the scope of the prophet here is to hold out as what God promised to Him

1. [This is unclear; perhaps: *Start*: priority or position in advance of others in any competitive undertaking; also sometimes loosely superiority (OED). “None can question the superiority or superior place of His priesthood.”]

on the one hand in the covenant of redemption, so on the other what He intercedes for; and so His intercession, looked on in the covenant of redemption, takes in His whole intercession, especially as it is gone about in heaven, by virtue of His sacrifice once for all offered up when He was on earth.

Of Christ's priesthood: How agreed in the Covenant of Redemption.

We OBSERVED the last day *that according to the covenant of redemption, our Lord Jesus Christ behooved not only to die, but to be an intercessor*; or that it belongs to our Lord's priestly office, agreed upon in the covenant of redemption, not only to offer up Himself in a sacrifice and to die, but to make intercession for His people. *He made intercession for the transgressors*; or as all the rest may read in the future time, so this, *He shall make intercession for the transgressors*. But for the certainty of the thing, it is set down in the preterit or bypast time; the Father did take His word and so it passed as done in the court of heaven.

USE ONE. We cleared this point and proposed four uses of it,² the first whereof was to inform us about Christ's fullness, to discover His unsearchable riches and to let us see what an excellent high priest we have that continues an intercessor. Not only has He once for all offered up His sacrifice as the high priest under the law did once a year, but has entered within the veil to intercede and thereby to make the benefits of His purchase effectual and forthcoming to them for whom His sacrifice was offered; even as in Leviticus 16 (where the rules for the high priest's offering are given), after he had offered the sacrifice, he took the blood and entered within the veil, and by the sacrifice and his going in to pray, he made atonement for the people typically. Answerable to this, our Lord Jesus, "by his once offering, hath perfected forever these who are sanctified" [Heb. 10:14]; and by His going within the veil, He executes this part of His priestly office in interceding for transgressors.

Of Christ's intercession before His incarnation.

In prosecuting this USE we answered some QUESTIONS, which now we shall not insist to repeat; only there is a short question or two that further may be asked which will clear the former ere we go to the next use. And the first is, "If our Lord, before He came in the flesh, discharged this part of His priestly office?" The reason of the question or doubt is because in the New Testament His intercession is always, at least very ordinarily, subjoined to His ascension. The second is, "How His intercession now differs from His intercession before His incarnation, or in what respects the consolation of believers that flows from His intercession, is stronger now than the consolation of believers flowing therefrom was before He was incarnate?"

And the doubts and questions about it, and how it differs now.

QUESTION ONE. AS for the first, it cannot be denied but Christ was intercessor since He had a church in the world, for it is a part of His priestly office, and He was made a priest, by the eternal oath in the covenant of redemption (Ps. 110:4). "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever." And He is said to have "an unchangeable priesthood"

2. [See the USES in Sermon 66 on page 74r.]

[Heb. 7:24]; and there being but one way of access for sinners to heaven by Christ, who is called “the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world” [Rev. 13:8], it must be held for a sure conclusion that His intercession is as old as His sacrifice. And He was intercessor before His incarnation in these three respects:

1. In respect of His office, being designed to be intercessor; for (as we said) being designed to be priest and being Mediator before His incarnation, He behoved to be intercessor also; for that way He did mediate, and the benefits that came to sinners from the beginning, were the effects of His intercession. Therefore it is said (1 Tim. 2:5), “There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus”; and there was never another real Mediator, however Moses might be called a typical one.

2. He was intercessor before His incarnation in respect of the merit of His future sacrifice. He did not before His incarnation intercede by virtue of His sacrifice actually offered as now He does; yet there was virtue which flowed to the people of God from His sacrifice to be offered as well then as now, when it has been long since offered. The sins of all that ever were pardoned, were pardoned on the account of His sacrifice, and so also the spiritual benefits that did redound to them, did redound to them through His intercession then as now, by virtue of the same sacrifice, because of the nature of the covenant wherein it was agreed that His sacrifice should be of the same efficacy before His incarnation as after. For the day and hour when He should offer that sacrifice, was agreed upon; therefore it is said that in “due time” [Rom. 5:6] and in “the fullness of time” [Gal. 4:4], He came and died.

3. He was intercessor before His incarnation as after it in respect of the effects that followed on it to the people of God then and now. The people of God before His incarnation had communion with God and access to Him, though not generally in that degree of boldness. They presented their prayers through and were beholden to the same Christ for a hearing as we are; and therefore His intercession before His incarnation extended to them as to us in these respects, but with this difference, that He procured these benefits to them by virtue of the covenant and the efficacy of His blood to be offered; and now He procures them to His people, since His incarnation and ascension, by virtue of the same ascension and by virtue of the efficacy of the {His}¹⁶⁸³ blood offered.

QUESTION TWO. As to the second, “How His mediation and intercession now differs since His ascension, from His intercession before it, as to the strengthening of the consolation of the people of God?” For answer:

First, we lay down this for a conclusion, that though our Lord Jesus was Mediator both before His incarnation and now; yet since His ascension, He has a new way of mediation and intercession that exceedingly abounds to the strengthening of the consolation of His people; therefore it is ordinarily

subjoined to His ascension because of His new manner of discharging that His office. It is true, there is no addition to that grace which is infinite in Him, as if He could be more gracious; or as if in respect of the covenant, there could be larger promises as to essential things contained therein. But by taking on our nature He has a new way of being affected and a new way venting His affection to us, and is capable of another manner of touch with the infirmities of His people now that He has human bowels, though glorified and glorious; and the faith of His people has a ground superadded, whereupon to expect the communication of that grace, mercy and goodness that is in Him, though all the effects that followed to His people before His incarnation, had respect to His future incarnation; so these effects had respect to His future intercession in our nature as well as to His dying and laying down of the price. For these that were admitted to heaven ere He came in the flesh, were admitted the same way that we are.

But secondly and more particularly, if it be asked wherein this addition to the consolation of God's people by His intercession, after His ascension, appears or manifests itself? we may take it up in these six steps, which will also serve to illustrate the manner of His interceding. 1. It appears in this, that He appears in heaven in our nature; now the man Christ is in heaven interceding and as advocate answering for pursued sinners, or as ambassador and legate, agenting the affairs of them that are given Him of the Father, as it is in Hebrews 9:24, "He is not entered into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, to appear now in the presence of God for us"; where the apostle having been speaking of the excellency of His priesthood before and comparing Him with the type, he tells that He is not entered into the typical tabernacle, but into heaven itself, to appear there in the presence of God for us. And this is a solid ground of consolation to a poor believing sinner, that he has Christ in his own nature in heaven interceding, that what He has performed before by virtue of His office and of the efficacy of His sacrifice to be offered when He should be incarnate, He now being incarnate and ascended, performs it, we having God in our nature become a man like unto us to care for the things [*affairs*]^E of His people, and if any new question arise or debate is started, {to entertain the treaty, and to effectuate and make out their business, that nothing that concerns them misgive}.³

2. Their consolation is stronger in this respect, that He is in heaven by virtue of the efficacy of His sacrifice already offered; as the high priest when He had offered the sacrifice, took the blood with Him within the veil and interceded for the people, so our Lord Jesus is not now interceding by virtue of His sacrifice to be offered, but by virtue of His sacrifice already offered, having entered into heaven and taken the efficacy of His sacrifice

3. [In the 1723 edition the text in braces is rendered: "to disturb the peace of His people, He will defend their cause and keep it from miscarrying."^E]

with Him, to enter it (to speak so) in the book of God, to stand on record. Nay, He stands there Himself to keep the memory of His blood fresh; and by each appearance of Him there, who is never out of the sight of the majesty of God, there is still a representation of the worth and efficacy of His sacrifice and for whom and for what it was offered.

3. There is by the man Christ being in heaven, this ground of consolation superadded, that He has a sympathy with sinners otherwise than before, not as to the degree, nor as to the intenseness of His grace and mercy (as I hinted before), but as to the manner how He is affected; so that He has the true nature and sinless affection of a man and so has bowels [*compassions*] to be wrought upon, which appeared while He was on earth. Although we cannot take up the manner how He is touched, yet He is touched otherwise than God abstractly considered can be and otherwise than an angel in heaven can be touched, as we may see in Hebrews 2:17; 4:15: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin." And it behooved Him to be like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest and have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. He is sinners' friend that is intercessor and such an intercessor that intercedes from the impression that the holy and inconceivable sympathy, which He has with His members, has upon Him, as His expression to Paul speaks forth (Acts 9:4), "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Counting Himself a sufferer with His people, which cannot but have its own influence on His intercession and add to the consolation of His people, that what He intercedes for the procurement of to them, is some way on this ground, as being a favor to their glorified head.

4. Beside this sympathy, He has a longing (to speak so), to have all the wants and defects of His people supplied and made up and to have all the promises made to Him in behalf of the elect, fulfilled. Not any such longing as may in the least encroach on or be inconsistent with the glory and glorified state of our blessed Lord Jesus; but considering that there is a near relation between Him and His followers, He being the head and they the members and that He has a sympathy and affection according to that relation, it is answerable and suitable that He should desire and some way long for the perfecting of His body the church, which is called (Eph. 1:23), "the fullness of him who filleth all in all." And He has, no question, though a most pure and regular, yet a most kindly and strong desire and longing to have His body perfected, to have the elect gathered and brought in, as He had on earth a longing to have the work finished, which was given Him to do. And this cannot but be a weighty part of His intercession and very comfortable to His people, His longing to have such and such a person converted, such and such a person more mortified and more perfected and made more conformable to Him.

There is a word in Hebrews 10:13 that gives ground for this: “from henceforth expecting till all his enemies be made his footstool.” And what is spoken of this *expecting* of what is there mentioned, may be applied to other things. He is surely expecting till all these promises concerning His seeing of a seed and the justifying and glorifying of many be fulfilled, because that was promised Him in the former verse; and expecting till He divide the spoil with the strong, as is promised in the former part of this verse. Now our Lord Jesus having laid down His life, what is He doing in heaven? Even longing till these promises be fulfilled; not that He has any longing that implies a defect in Him simply, for He is absolutely glorified and glorious; yet such longing as is consistent with His glorified state, as (if we may make the comparison, though in everything it be not suitable) the souls in heaven are perfectly glorified, yet they have a longing for the union of their bodies, for the perfecting of Christ’s Body mystical and for the union of all the members in a soul and body with the Head. So Christ, considered as Mediator, God-man in heaven, has a longing and holy desire, which agrees with His office and is a qualification thereof and does nowise interrupt His happiness, that what concerns His elect may be perfected. Therefore it is said in the verse before, *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*, importing that it is a kind of new satisfaction to Him to get a sinner brought in to believe in Him and that He was waiting and longing for it.

5. He has an actual waiting and continuing desire that what He has purchased to such and such persons may be applied; and this is not simply to will, for He had that on earth, but a declaring of it in heaven that such and such things may be {made}⁴ forthcoming and made effectual for the behoove of His members, that what He intended in laying down His life may be brought to pass. It is the Mediator God-man willing, whose will as man, being perfectly conformable to the will of God, cannot be gainsaid (to speak so) in whatsoever He wills for the persons given Him. And this is answerable to that in John 17:24. “Father, I will, that these whom thou has given me may be with me where I am,” etc. ‘I will that such and such things engaged to me for them may be made good; that such and such persons be pardoned and brought through; that they may be preserved from temptation; may have their prayers heard; that they may be made to persevere and may be glorified.’ So that we cannot imagine a case wherein God’s people have need and a promise in the covenant, but there is an actual willingness in Christ to have the need supplied and the promise applied, according to the terms of the covenant.

6. We may take in here not only Christ’s willing that such a thing be done, but His effectual doing of it. And as this is a piece of His intercession, so it holds Him forth to be a notable intercessor (compare John 14:13, 16, 26

4. [The additional “made” was inserted with the 1702 third edition. The 1723/1792 render this “that such and such things may be made good and made effectual...”^E]

and 15:26, and 16:7). In John 14:13, He says, "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do"; which we suppose respects Christ as Mediator to be trusted as great Lord-deputy in our nature, to answer the prayers of His people, when put up according to the will of God. John 14:26 speaks of the Father's sending the Comforter; and John 15:26 of the Mediator's sending the Comforter. So does John 16:7. In one place it is, "What ye ask, I will do"; and in another place it is that "the Father will do." It is all one. But it is to show that what the Father does, He will do it by the Son the Mediator and He will actually perform it. And these three expressions, "I will pray the Father" and "I will send" and "the Father will send," hold out this, that as the Father does by the Son, so this is a part of Christ's intercession effectually to procure and send out to us what we have need of.

7. In all this there is in the man Christ an adoration of the Father, which, though it be not such as is unsuitable to His exalted and glorified state, yet is it well becoming Him that is man and in that respect is at His right hand to give to God. I shall only say further here, that though we cannot tell how He intercedes to satisfy ourselves fully, yet this is clearly held forth to us, that whatsoever is needful, by His being in heaven we may confidently expect it will be performed from the man Christ, from Him who is God-man in one person; and so His intercession with the Father is His actual procuring and doing such a thing and that not as God simply, but as Mediator. Therefore these two words are put in the forecited expressions, "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, and whom the Father will send in my name"; that is, 'by virtue of my procurement, by virtue of my sacrifice and intercession.' And the sending of the Comforter shows that it is performed by Him that is God-man, out of the respect He has to His members and on the account of His office, which He pursues for their edification. And so there is enough to answer the question and abounding consolation to His people, which is the next USE.

USE TWO.⁵ To show the notable consolation that flows from this part of Christ's office. O! what savoriness and unsearchable riches are in this part of His name, that our Lord Jesus as intercessor appears in the presence of God for us! We shall speak here of these five things: I. Wherein this is comfortable.⁶ Or to the extent of it. II. To the advantages that follow on it. III. To the grounds of this consolation, which are confirmations of it. IV. To this, at what times and particular occasions the people of God may and ought in a special manner to make use of and comfort themselves in it. And V. On what terms this consolation is allowed, that they grow not vain and proud of it.

I. For the first, our Lord's intercession gives a fourfold extent of consolation that makes it wonderful:

5. [See the Uses in Sermon 66 on page 741.]

6. [See also Durham's commentary on Revelation, Excurses 16 on Christ's Intercession.]

Of the comfort and consolation of Christ's intercession to His people.

The vanity of
the Arminians
that extend His
death & inter-
cession to all.

1. In it is universality as to the persons to whom it is extended, not indeed to all men in the world, but to all that will make use of it; and though it were simply of universal extent to all men in the world, yet it would comfort none but such as made use of it. And that vanity of the Arminians that extend Christ's death and intercession to all, can truly say no more for solid comfort; for they are forced to say that Christ died and intended His death for many that will never get good of Him. But we say all that He intended should get good of His death, do get the intended good of it; yet we say that whoever will make use of Him, shall get good both of His death and of His intercession. So (Heb. 7:25), "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God through him." Though the cause seemed to be desperate and the sentence pronounced [Gal. 3:10], "Cursed is he that continues not in all things written in the law," yet He is able to save them. Therefore it is said (1 John 2:1-2), "If any man sin" (O strange words!) "We have an advocate." What! An advocate for *any* man? Yea, for any man that will make use of Him. For as we showed before, though it is true that His intercession is bounded to His elect, yet it is as true that He refuses no cause that is honestly given Him to plead. "If any man sin we have an advocate." He will not say to such poor souls, 'I will not be for you, I have done all that may, but it is gone against me.' Neither will He prig [*baggle*] (to say so), with you. He will not say, 'I will have this or that, ere I undertake your cause for you;' but "if any man sin." If any man see his need and will employ Him—whether he be a great man or mean [*humble*] man; whether he be poor or rich, bond or free; whether he be an old sinner that has lived long in security, hypocrisy or profanity or be a sitten-up [*careless*] professor; whether he be young or old—if any of you all that are here will come to Him, He will not refuse to be employed by you. "By him therefore," as the apostle exhorts in Hebrews 13:15, "Let us offer praise to God continually." And as praise, so the sacrifices of other duties, and they shall be accepted. As the offer of the gospel runs on an universality and excludes none but these that by their unbelief exclude themselves; so His intercession runs on an universality, if any man sin and will employ Him, He is an advocate at hand. And seeing it is Christ and Christ as intercessor for transgressors that we are speaking of as the ground of sinners' consolation, let me in passing desire you to remember that He is pointing at you, men and women; and if there be any of you that have a broken cause to plead, any debt that you would gladly be freed of, any sin to be pardoned or your peace to be made with God, here is an advocate and the very best, offering Himself to be employed; such an advocate as said in John 11:41-42: "I thank thee, Father, for that I know thou hearest me always." This was true while He was on earth and will be true to the end of the world.

2. The extent of this consolation appears in respect of all cases. As His intercession secludes no person that will make use of Him; so it secludes

no case, though it looked like a lost cause and though the conscience had pronounced the sentence, God is greater than the conscience and can loose from it; though the act were passed in the law, He can cancel it. And here comes in the triumph (Rom. 8:33–34), “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that justifies.” Will the devil, the law, the conscience or anything, lay aught to the charge of the man whom God justifies? No. Why so? “It is Christ that died.” But that is not all; ‘Alas! may the soul say, how will I get good of Christ’s death? I cannot apply it and make use of it.’ He answers that “He is also risen again, and sitten down at the right hand of God, and there maketh intercession for us”; to wit, that His purchase may be applied. And there needs no more; you will get no more; you can seek no more; and that closes the triumph. There is no sin, before nor after conversion, no sin of ignorance, no sin against light, no enemy, no temptation, whatever it be, but that word answers all: “Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Where Christ takes the sinner’s case in hand, who will stand up against Him? He is too strong a party. If Satan stand at the high priest’s hand, it is the Lord that rebukes him (Zech. 3:1–2), that as it were, boasts him from the bar.

3. The extent of this consolation appears in respect of the degree and height of the perfection of the salvation that comes by Christ’s intercession, to all that make use of Him in all cases (Heb. 7:25): “He is able to save to the uttermost.” The word is very significant. He is able to save perfectly, to perfection and to perfection at the height of perfection; and what more would you be at? He can save from corruption and put without the reach of it; He can save from wrath that it shall not come near you; He can save from all the effects of sin and wrath; He shall not leave a tear on the cheek of any of His own, ere all be done; and that is the ground of it, “For he lives forever to make intercession for us.” If any should say, ‘He may save from one sin, but not from another or He may bring me a piece of the way to heaven and then leave me there;’ it is folly to think so, says the apostle. “For he is able to save to the uttermost, because he lives forever to make intercession.” Although His death seem to be transient, once for all perfected, yet that cannot mar the application of the benefits purchased by it; for He is intercessor and He that procured your entering in the way will carry you on in it. He that procured a sanctified conviction to come in, will through [complete] it. He that procured your justification and pardon of sin, will also apply it to your conscience and bring forth an intimation of it when He thinks fit and sanctify you thoroughly. And this is indeed great consolation to a sinner that He who has begun the work will perfect it; and He will not leave it till it be at such a height of perfection as it can be desired to be no higher.

4. The extent of this consolation is such that it reaches to all times. There is not a believer in any place or case, that is wrestling with any difficulty, that

can come wrong to Christ. He is ever in readiness to be employed; there is never an hour nor moment that He has His door shut. He died once, but now lives forever to die no more; and He lives forever to make intercession. He is entered into immortality to make effectual what He has undertaken in favor of His people; He is always at the bar and when His own are but little employing Him, He is minding their affairs night and day, watching over them every moment. See Luke 22:31–32 where the Lord says, “Peter, Satan hath sought to winnow thee, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Satan gave in a bill against Peter, when he had no mind of it, but the Lord repelled it. The greatest cheat or the most subtle adversary that steals out decreets,⁷ cannot circumvent Him. He is still watching on at the bar that nothing come in against His people to their prejudice; and if it do come in, it is that He may crush it in the first motion. O! how does the consolation of believers stream out here! “He will not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard on high; a bruised reed will he not break, and the smoking flax will he not quench, until he bring forth judgment unto truth” [Isa. 42:2–3]. He will not contend, nor say, ‘man or woman, how is this that you have put yourself in the mire and would have me to take you out of it; that you bring a broken plea to me and seek of me to right it?’ He will not ask whether you have money; all His employment is free. Nor will He put you back till the morrow, nor bid you wait on till another time. Morning and evening and at midnight, He is ready. And when the elect sinner has little thought, He is watching over His need, preventing many temptations, keeping from many ill turns, casting many challenges over the bar that the devil and the law put in. Therefore study His offices more and this among the rest; we much wrong Him in not studying of them and acquainting ourselves with them that we may feed upon them. Himself open up His name to us and to Him be praise.

7. [*Decreet*: A decree. Final sentence or determination of a judge (Jamieson).]

SERMON 68 ON ISAIAH 53:12

Isaiah 53:12. And made intercession for the transgressors.

O THAT SINNERS were seriously considering how much they are obliged to Christ! He has in the former words, *poured out his soul unto death* for sinners and was wounded for transgressors; and yet that was not all, though sin was our Lord's death, He has not cast out with sinners, but having gotten the victory over all enemies and sat down at the right hand of God, *he makes intercession*; and to make it the more full, it is said, *he makes intercession for transgressors*. All His offices have an eye to sin and sinners, and this part of His office among others.

We began to speak of a USE of comfort that flows from this;¹ and truly if any doctrine be comfortable this is that, sinners have an advocate with the Father. What would sinners do when their peace is broken and there is a door shut between God and them and His back is turned on them and the conscience is wakened and they cannot think on God but it is troublesome to them, if they had not a friend in court with whom the Father cannot but be well pleased?

This consolation being a main part of the use of this DOCTRINE and the ground of believers' boldness with God in the following of it forth, we proposed five things to be spoken to. I. To show the largeness and extent of the consolation that flows from this ground and of this we spoke. II. The particular advantages that the Scripture attributes to Christ's intercession and the consolation that is in them. III. The particular times, when especially believers are called to make use of this consolation. IV. Some grounds warranting them to make use of it. And V. Some caveats or advertisements to them that would warrantably comfort themselves from it.

To proceed now and to speak to these last four things. II. First, the particular advantages that the Scriptures attribute to Christ's intercession; and if you look through them, we will find that there is nothing that may be useful to a believer, either as to a particular or public mercy, but it is knit to Christ's intercession.

The particular advantages that the Scriptures attribute to Christ's intercession.

First, for private mercies.

I. Look to the beginning and growth of our spiritual life and to the pouring out of the Spirit; it is made the fruit of Christ's intercession (John 14:16):

1. [See USES, Sermon 66, page 741, and the outline in USE TWO, Sermon 67, page 753.]

“I will pray the Father, and he shall send the Comforter”; and (John 16:7), “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come.” This is the consolation of a believer, laboring under deadness of spirit, barrenness and unfruitfulness, that the pouring out of the Spirit is a remedy of that and the pouring out of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ’s intercession. It is this that procures the first conviction of the Spirit to an elect [person] laying in nature; it is this that continues these convictions and procures the Spirit’s quickening of them (John 16:8). If it should then be asked, how a person, lying in black nature, gets any good? It is answered, that it is Christ’s intercession that does the turn.

2. It is from Christ’s intercession that we are kept from many temptations, or when they assault that they prevail not utterly over us. The devil lies always at the wait and we are often secure; but our Lord Jesus (to say so) watches the *stot*,² or rebound of the temptation and wards it off as to the designed prejudice (Luke 22:31–32, “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired that he may have you, that he may winnow you; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not”). There are many temptations that He keeps off that they beat not on us, and when they assault us, He breaks the power of them that the believer succumbs not under them. Hence it is that we are kept on our feet; otherwise, what would become of us? When David fell in adultery and Peter denied his master, what would have become of them had it not been for this? There would be no living for us in the multitude of temptations if He were not interceding for us. What could we foresee of Satan’s snares? What strength have weak and witless we to resist temptations? What could we do with the *speat* [*flood*] of corruption when it rises like a flood upon us and Satan enforces his assaults upon us as if he were speaking with man’s voice or mouth, bidding us do this and that? But there is an intercessor that pleads our cause.

3. We have by this intercession the preventing of many judgments temporal and spiritual. When the ax is laid to the root of the tree and it is found barren and justice cries and the command comes out, “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?” how comes it that the ax strikes not? Why is it not hewed down? There is an efficacy in Christ’s intercession for sparing of it a while longer, as it is in Luke 13:6–7, “The dresser of the vineyard says, Spare it for this year; and it is granted. O but we would have a most sinful and miserable life if there were not an intercessor at God’s right hand!

4. Disposition for duty and help in the performance of duty flows from His intercession. It is this that makes us pray and that gives us boldness in prayer and in other duties, that “there is such a high priest over the house of God” (as it is in Hebrews 10:19–21). It is this that gives us ground of approaching to God and to expect a hearing; and (as it is in Luke 13:7–8) it is His digging and pains that makes the barren fig tree fruitful.

2. [*Stot*: Rebounding (Jamieson).]

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Some exemplars aside, the majority of the many errors in Scripture references in editions have not been noted and are corrected without notice.

- “7. If it be considered that all our”:
 “your” for “our” (1686ff). 53
- 2 Cor. 4:17: 4:14 (1702; the 1686 was not legible) 55
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- {O! haste, haste you out of it to Christ.}: omitted (2001). 142
- “put these three together”: “three” omitted (1726; 2001). 145
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“3. The great inconveniences that follow on it, and the {great} prejudices”: second “great” inserted (1686 and forward). 797

“And more particularly, all {the} members of the visible Church”: “the” omitted (2001). 798

{righteousness for his justification, and on Christ’s}: omitted (2001). 799

“and it fosters a disrespect to Christ”: “of” for “to” (1686ff). 801

“Therefore take it among your other reproofs”: “other” added (1702ff). 801

{do duty, and another part of his exercise to}: omitted (2001). 804

“He has not bidden us simply approach”: “you” for “us” (1686ff). 805

“It is true, though there are absolute promises”: “absolute” omitted (2001). 805

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